Demystifying the Information Audit

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What an information audit is

‘a systematic evaluation of information use, resources and flows, with verification by reference to both people and existing documents, in order to establish the extent to which they are contributing to an organisation's objectives’.

(ASLIB IRM Network, London)
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What an information audit is

Access, Quality, Responsibility, Awareness, Capability
Process Review
- Task analysis – information actions (creation, access, use, transfer, storage), cognitive processes, relationships to other tasks
- Deconstructs the task – identifies information priorities, flows and decision processes; identifies people/people and people/system interactions and dependencies

Information Content
- Identifies what is held, what is needed but not available, what is available but not accessible where it is needed
- Evaluates suitability for purpose

Capability and Behaviour
- Identifies skills gaps related to information creation, discovery, delivery, access, transfer, utilisation and storage
- Identifies behaviours that influence effective information information creation, discovery, delivery, access, transfer, utilisation and storage
Information Diagnostic

**Access**
- People/people and people/systems relationships
- Equity / volume / format

**Quality**
- Fit for purpose (accuracy, currency, consistency, completeness)

**Responsibility**
- Information ownership / responsibility / accountability
- Information sharing

**Awareness**
- Knowing what is available and where to find it
- Understanding quality / policies and procedures

**Capability**
- Employee skill and knowledge to create, access, utilise, transfer and store information
What an information audit does

1. Identifies information creation, acquisition, discovery, delivery, access, transfer, utilisation and storage processes
2. Supports the establishment of information policies and management priorities within contexts such as risk management, financial and legal compliance
3. Contributes to the design and implementation of technical infrastructure and information systems
What an information audit does

4. Ensures that appropriate and competent information life cycle management processes are in place

5. Enables personal information management practices and skills gaps that impede effective enterprise information management (EIM) to be discovered

6. Contributes to the continual improvement of information management practices within the organisation, in conjunction with other existing audit functions
## Information audit outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td>• inequity in provision or access; identification of gaps, duplications, overload situations; discovery of hidden resources; identification of fragmented/isolated technical systems; improved interfaces; simplified information management processes (reduced complexity and managing less); more efficient information flow</td>
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<td><strong>Quality</strong></td>
<td>• identification of sub-standard acquisitions or creations; improved traceability and transparency</td>
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<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>• identification of hoarding situations; improved sharing; improved accountability; matching of expenditure with need (no more over- or under-spending on information)</td>
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<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
<td>• improved ‘line of sight’; understanding of dependencies and relationships regarding information; understanding legal and regulatory compliance with regard to information</td>
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| **Capability** | • skilling, reskilling, upskilling  
• training needs analysis                                                                                                   |
... as well as identifying

- key business issues regarding information
- risks, actual and potential
- opportunities for improvement
The audit process

1. Planning
2. Data Gathering
3. Data Analysis
4. Data Evaluation
5. Reporting
6. Implementation
7. Ongoing Review
Evolution of the Information Audit

- Library/records-focused
- Information-focused
- Enterprise-focused
Alignment with the evolution of the information management profession

- Library/records-focused
- Information-focused
- Enterprise-focused
IA Research and practice in 2010-2015

USA
Knowledge services
Academic libraries

UK
Standards re methodology
Modeling information flows

India, Australia & South Africa
Evaluation studies of methodologies
Issues

• Nomenclature
  • Few information audits are actually called information audits – some examples: information review; resources review; information strategy development; inventory review …..

• Visibility
  • Information audits outcomes highlight problems as well as benefits so findings are not often published beyond the organization.

• Cost/benefit
  • Initial overhead costs can be significant and it is often difficult to predict potential benefits; value propositions and the use of pilot projects to illustrate sound contributions assist credibility and justification.

• Skill-base
  • Information audits are no longer the realm of information professionals and attract attention from practitioners outside the library and information sciences domain.

• Lack of standards
  • Numerous methodologies, processes and purposes are applied in different circumstances without necessarily acknowledging their generis association with information audit. An ‘international professional practices framework’ needs to be established.
THANK YOU

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