Revising Your RM Program: Moving Forward Using What You Have

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Records Management at MSU

- Mandate from the Board of Trustees in 1969 to
  - Be the repository for University records
  - Approve destruction of all university records
- Program not overhauled since early 1990s
  - Many changes to MSU Business Practices
  - Adoption of EBS system for human resources and fiscal management
- Highly decentralized organization
  - Change is slow
  - “Recommended, but not required”
Goals for the Program

- Strengthen the core RM operations
  - Improve intellectual control of records
  - Modernize RM processes to increase data accuracy
- Consider the needs of our users
  - Increase outreach with program users
  - Use technology to work within the environment
- Provide updated RM procedures
  - Ensure procedures are accurate and up to date
  - Have procedures in place to assist users with following appropriate policies
Small Projects...Big Improvements

- Short term projects
  - Finite time period
  - Limited financial resources
- What could we do with what we had?
  - Build a RM staging area
  - Implement electronic retention schedule approvals
  - Create a process for documenting “in-office” records destruction
#1: Build a RM Staging Area

- Records staged temporarily at secure storage facility
- Boxes shipped to off-site storage once every 6 weeks
- Log-in and transfer process required paper forms
  - No consistent wireless connection
  - Delayed data entry and multiple errors
- General confusion over the status of boxes at Storage
  - What has arrived? What has not arrived?
  - Time spent correcting data entry errors
- Poor intellectual control of RM inventory
#1: Build a RM Staging Area

- Archives was already expanding due to space concerns
  - Incoming donations
- RM area included as part of ongoing expansion project
  - Unused office space
  - Includes space for RM staging and Archival staging
- Additional expenses included:
  - Pallets
  - Laptop
  - Movement of one employee to a new cubicle
4 pallets

Holds 120 boxes

Completed March 2015

New Records Management Staging Area
#1: Build a RM Staging Area

- Increased ability of archivists to review records boxes
  - Make decisions on value of materials before sending boxes off-site
- Use the off-site vendor’s electronic data entry system
  - More accurate data entry
- Faster pickup
  - Multiple times a month
- Increased intellectual control and strengthened the core RM program
#2: Implementing Electronic Retention Schedule Approvals

- Retention schedules approved using paper process
  - Send schedules to General Counsel, Office of Record, and Archives for signature
  - Messy system with lots of confusion
- In 2013, MSU began using Versatile Retention to manage retention schedules
- Schedules were drafted and stored in VR, but not approved in system
  - Software was not used to full capability
#2: Implementing Electronic Retention Schedule Approvals

- Archives worked in concert with MSU IT to get Versatile Retention fully functional
  - Software tested
  - Patches installed
  - Software add-on purchased
- Electronic retention schedule approvals went live September 2015
  - Approvals completed via email and secure login
  - Using technology fully

[Versatile Retention Logo]
#2: Implementing Electronic Retention Schedule Approvals

- Easier for university departments to approve retention schedules
  - Multiple departments may review at once
  - Faster approvals
- More accurate change tracking
  - See what changes were made when by who
- Increases intellectual control and works within user environment
#3: Creation of In-Office Records Destruction Form

- University Archivist is responsible for signing off on all University records destruction
  - Board of Trustees mandate
- Not an enforced policy
  - Records transferred to Archives documented
  - Not all offices transfer records to Archives
- No consistent procedure in place for documenting “in-office” records destruction
  - Handled haphazardly upon request
#3: Creation of In-Office Records Destruction Form

- Form created in April 2015
- Simple, easy-to-use process
- One page form requires:
  - Records series
  - Date Range
  - Volume/Extent
  - Signature of Office Representative
  - Signature of Archivist
#3: Creation of In-Office Records Destruction Form

- Form introduced in RM training sessions, website, and via consultations
  - Most employees have found process easy-to-use
  - Over 130 cubic feet of records documented in less than one year
- Documented process for “in-office” records destruction
- Helps demonstrate that offices are following university best practices
Lessons Learned

- Understand your current resources
  - Don’t be afraid to ask “stupid” questions
  - Can you collaborate with others?
- Don’t try to reinvent the wheel
  - Use other institutions as resources
- Consider your organizational culture
  - Change your process rather than culture
  - Go out and find your users
- Start with some “low hanging fruit”
  - Leverage easy wins into additional support
Thanks For Attending!

Questions?

Email: gatlinhi@msu.edu
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Session Evaluation Form Available @

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or

complete paper copy
and turn in at back of room

Clockwise from upper left: Festival goers dance at Summerfest, 1984, Milwaukee Public Library Historic Photos; PrideFest Milwaukee parade heads to Veterans Memorial Park, 1995, Archives Dept., University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Libraries; Papa Lou leads woodwind band at Festa Italiana, 1983, Milwaukee Public Library Historic Photos; & Indian Summer Festival at Henry Maier Festival Park, late 1980s (?) Archives Dept., University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Libraries