REVIVING DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

HOW THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT CAN BE LEVERAGED FOR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

ARMA

Access
Information Protected.

With advances in information management techniques and practices in an array of areas, it’s time to rethink our strategies for document management. We’ve seen significant increases in the capabilities of our information systems since the early days of digital document management. We've seen enormous improvements in our overall strategies surrounding organizational information as a whole with the advent and maturity of information governance practices. What we haven't seen in most cases is a rethinking of our strategies around document management.

Understanding Organization-Wide Document Management Goals

Document management rose to prominence as our capabilities to convert paper-based information into digital information became more useful. Companies saw the potential for increasing the usefulness of documents through sharing and collaboration. In the early days of scanning and digitization, it was document management that stepped up to fill the gap for managing those digital versions of the paper.

Since the earliest days of document management, most systems mirror the physical storage capabilities of the past. Organization of documents is often into structures that are reminiscent of cabinets, and the off-white hues of hanging folders are now digital folders. Check-in and check-out functionality, where applicable, also mirrors centralized file room processes. Many of the methods employed and capabilities in much of the document management world are reflective of physical structures. Those systems remain in place in many organizations today (with upgrades in performance, security, and sharing functionality often applied in the decades since those systems were established).

How Document Management Fits Within An Organization's Information Ecosystem

Document management today still often fills a gap that exists between paper-based processes and enterprise content management (ECM) or information management (IM) systems. While some organizations' document management functions have become encompassed within ECM or IM systems, many still exist as standalone functions.

Those standalone document management systems and often- related capture processes (scanning, imaging, digitization), must be transparent in how they are associated with all other information activities and capabilities. The information contained within the document management systems and documents themselves must also align with other information processes; that alignment of information process is, in most organizations, tied to a consistent application of an information lifecycle. The strategic function that aligns all information activities and capabilities is what is known as information governance.

In understanding how document management fits in the overall information ecosystem, executives often require calculations of ROI to greenlight the project. ROI for document management efforts can be calculated in two ways: the accounting rate of return (ARR) method or the payback period method may be employed [1].

Information Governance

A strategic framework composed of standards, processes, roles, and metrics that hold organizations and individuals accountable to create, organize, secure, maintain, use, and dispose of information in ways that align with and contribute to the organization's goals.

The ARMA Glossary of Records and Information Management Terms 4th Ed.

1. William Saffady, *Simple Methods for Determining ROI for Records Management Projects*, (Information Management Magazine, ARMA 2018),

ARR can be calculated by taking the potential savings through the document management project and dividing those savings by the investment amount of the project. For example, if the savings of the project were $50,000 annually and the investment amount is $100,000, then the ARR in this example would be 50%.

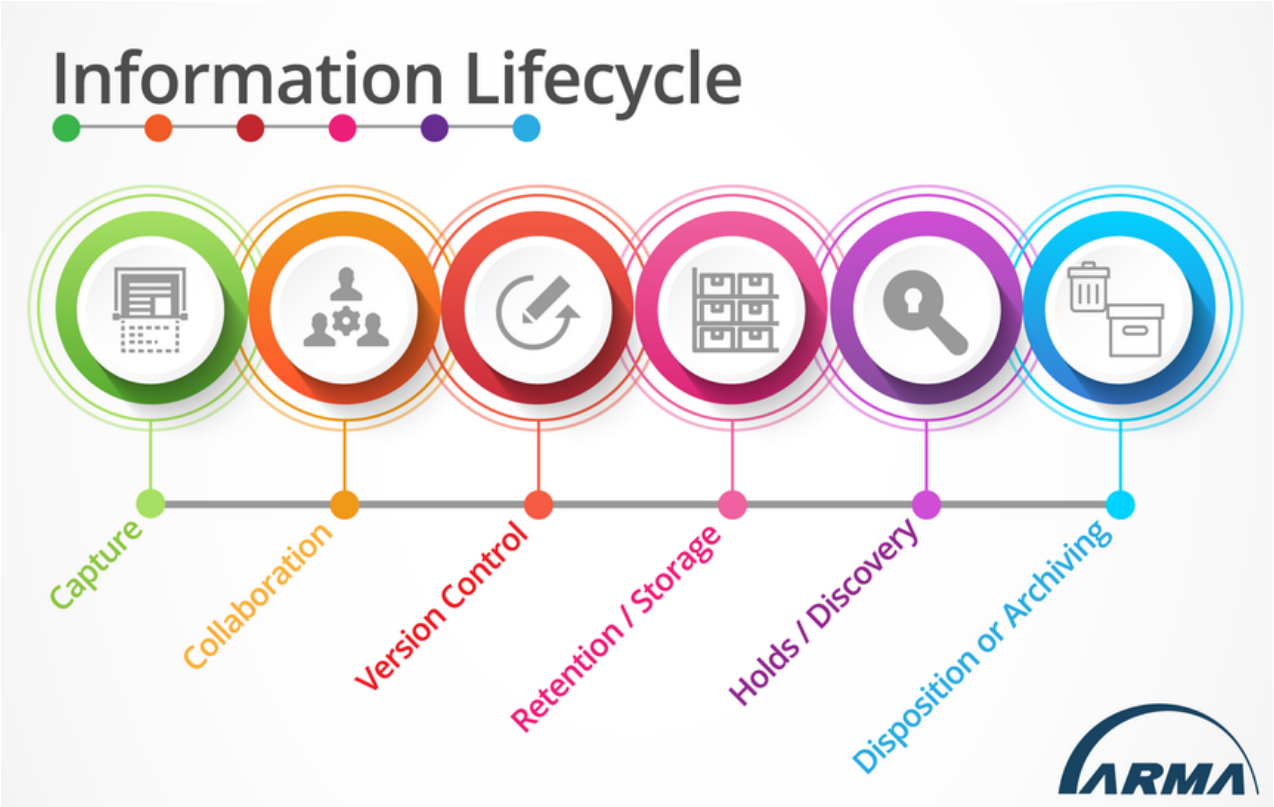
The payback period is calculated similarly to the ARR but looks towards the "break-even" point of the investment. For our example above, if the investment is $100,000 and the project savings are $50,000 annually, the payback period would be two years.

Mapping Document Management Processes (Leveraging an Information Lifecycle)

Processes around documents must mirror the processes around all organizational information. A consistent lifecycle for all information in an organization must be applied, with room for the unique nuances of document management to assert themselves. For this consistency across systems and classes of information (including documents), one should leverage an information lifecycle model.

All organizational information has both a point of creation and an end-point of disposal (or that information is moved into archives – think of founding documents and historical artifacts of an organization). While the point of creation may be different in document management (a scanning process or integration with another information system through integration), it's essential to align the lifecycle mapping with other organizational information systems.

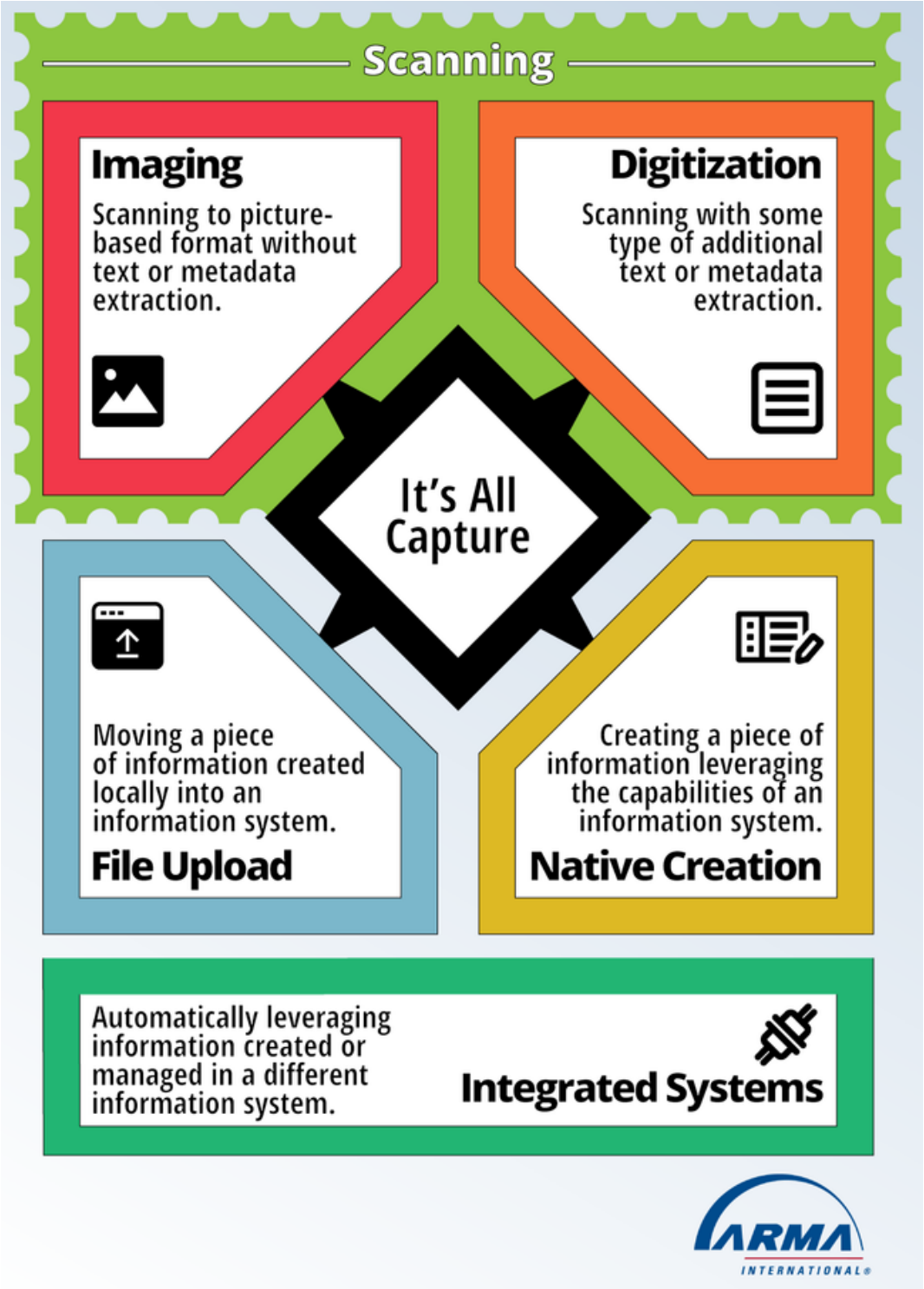
ARMA defines an information lifecycle graphically with the figure on the following page:



All organizational information, documents or otherwise, must have a creation point (we'll discuss this in a moment). The information is then usable by the organization through its' collaboration phase. When a piece of information is changed or edited, we should be employing version control to ensure the potential restoration of any accidental changes, and we maintain any prior versions required for records purposes. Information, or in this case documents, should be retained or stored for the required lengths of time for external regulations and compliance purposes, but also for the length of time that they remain useful for the organization (whichever is longer). We should, in most organizations, be able to apply holds or eDiscovery processes whenever there is related litigation - holds and processes that ensure that relevant information isn't deleted or disposed of during the course of any form of litigation. At the end of the lifecycle, the information should be disposed according to pre-defined disposition processes and/or sent to archives.

For document management, the information lifecycle generally starts with scanning or system integration. System integration generally moves the intake of documents closer to their origination and may create documents out of

other form-based processes. Scanning (either imaging or digitization) is a type of capture (a broader term that also includes file upload and native file creation).



Scanning processes in most organizations have matured from imaging (simple scanning of paper documents into picture-based formats like JPG, PNG, or TIFF) to digitization (scanning of paper documents that includes either metadata extraction or text recognition that converts the paper into a machine-readable format like

DOC or PDF). If your organization is still employing basic scanning processes and hasn't yet matured to digitization processes, this is an area of potentially great benefits without a significant amount of effort.

Further, document management systems' metadata fields should align with organizational goals for metadata fields in other broader systems, such as ECM systems or IM systems. If an organization isn't undertaking an information governance-focused approach (more on that later), it is possible for the document management team to proactively leverage other systems' taxonomies and employ those within the document management system - leveraging a project management methodology for those changes.

Looking to the Unique Processes of HR and AP

Human Resources (HR) and Accounts Payable (AP) often have unique aspects related to document management. Often, these two groups are handling significant amounts of either confidential information or personally identifiable information (PII). Information access controls employed in the HR and AP arenas are often more strict than other areas in organizations because of the handling of confidential information and PII.

The processes that are employed in HR and AP, though, are often more mature than those used in other areas of the organization. Because HR and AP are often cut off from leveraging other organizational systems, these two groups often rely heavily on document management systems for their information handling.

Another of HR and AP's uniqueness in organizations is that often their processes are highly repeatable. For example, an employee fills in a tax form - that same form is filled out by every employee of the organization. These repeatable processes allow for a higher degree of potential automation that can greatly increase consistency and reduce the potential for human error.

Another area for potential improvement that requires little effort and may have substantial benefits is the identification and automation of core processes in HR and AP. One potential pitfall is the integration between document management, process management, and other HR or AP systems; those systems will likely need to be connected to achieve significant benefits with process automation.

Leveraging Document Management for Organizational Improvement through Information Governance

Document management remains just one avenue through which we manage organizational information through a lifecycle. Other systems coexist beside document management systems, such as enterprise content management (ECM) systems, information management (IM) systems, records management (RM) or records & information management (RIM) systems, and enterprise file synchronization and sharing (EFSS) systems. There are also a myriad of other systems that may have standalone integrated file systems that we should likewise be aware of, such as sales systems, personnel systems, payment systems, and industry-specific applications. With such an array of places where organizational information may reside, it can quickly become a liability to an organization that doesn't have consistency across its diverse systems landscape.

This challenge that organizations are facing in the vast array of systems and applications that store information is why information governance is rising to prominence. Information governance is the high-level strategy, policy, and practices that organizations employ across all organizational information, document management included.

Document management should be pushing its best practices and well-established processes through into an organizational-wide set of practices and policies. Document management teams and departments are positioned well as significant stakeholders to these organization-wide scoped efforts.

Organizations should view document management as one of the bedrocks of any information governance plan, given the longevity of those programs and potential for vast amounts of knowledge sharing. Sharing the knowledge of these long-standing initiatives serves as a great starting place for the beginning stages of an information governance effort.

To undertake an information governance effort, an organization must begin by assessing all current practices, policies, risk tolerance, and categorization structures (often referred to as an *information architecture* when taking an organization-wide perspective) to determine how much consistency currently exists (or doesn't) in the organization.

The next step in an information governance effort is to apply further consistency across practices and policies by bringing together a steering committee for information governance efforts that includes a wide array of stakeholders. ARMA defines the stakeholder groups that should be involved in an information governance effort into some broadly applicable categories:

- **Information governance leadership** (often a certified Information Governance Professional [IGP]): This is either the individual or group leading information governance efforts. They should have the organizational authority to make decisions and be responsible for outcomes.

- **Information management**: Individual representatives from each area of information management, including document management (often viewed as a subset of information management), must be involved in the steering of the information governance effort. Individuals in this category should be available to share potential pitfalls, roadblocks, and guidance for the execution of the program based on their existing organizational, process, policy, and systems knowledge.

- **Business units**: Representation of the various business units must be involved to articulate the specific needs of the business throughout the information governance process.

- **Technology**: Representation of IT and technology must be a part of the information governance team to share the capabilities and functions of the various systems where information governance will be actualized.

- **Legal**: eDiscovery and legal representation should be present to ensure that the organizational processes and policies employed in information governance meet the legal requirements and needs of the organization.

- **Risk/compliance**: Risk and compliance representation ensures that overall positions on risk management and compliance requirements are taken into account through all policies and practices to be established or made consistent through the organization.

- **Privacy**: Privacy professionals have risen to prominence in information governance planning because of the myriad of privacy laws and regulations that have spawned over the last several years (EU's General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR], California Consumer Privacy Act [CCPA], and many others). Privacy representation in the information governance team will ensure that privacy practices can be made consistent through all organizational systems and policies.

- **Security**: Security professionals (both information security and often physical security) should be informing information and information system standardization efforts and assessing potential security risks of the future program.

Next Steps Towards Organizational Improvement

With your information governance steering committee, you can together work towards consistent organizational goals across all information. Those goals should be deeply informed by the knowledge gained from several decades of document management programs. Leveraging the knowledge and experience of document management is one of the greatest keys to the success in improving information processes throughout an organization into the future.

Additional Resources:

Ebook: From Vendor to Partner
- https://learn.accesscorp.com/ebook-questions-for-vendor.html

Special Report: Going Paperless is Easy, Getting Started is Hard
- https://learn.accesscorp.com/ebook-going-paperless.html

Publication: The Information Governance Body of Knowledge (IGBOK)
- https://www.arma.org/page/IGBOK

Publication: *Digital Document Management* by William Saffady
- https://www.arma.org/store/ViewProduct.aspx?id=10469706

About Access

Access is the largest privately-held records and information management (RIM) services provider worldwide, with operations across the United States, Canada, Central and South America. Access provides transformative services, expertise, and technologies to make organizations more efficient and more compliant. Access helps companies manage and activate their critical business information through offsite storage and information governance services, scanning and digital transformation solutions, document management software including CartaHR, and secure destruction services. For 10 consecutive years, Access has been named to the Inc. 5000, the ranking of fastest-growing private companies in the U.S. For more information on Access, please visit AccessCorp.com.

About ARMA

ARMA International is a community of professionals in the information management and information governance industry, providing educational resources and networking opportunities in North America and around the world. For more information on ARMA, please visit ARMA.org