**INFORMATION GOVERNANCE**

**Myths and Realities: Information Technology and Services**

**MYTH #1: This is a technology problem, and IT will fix it.**

**Realty:** This is not a “technology” problem, it’s everyone’s problem - although using technology has certainly been a major contributor to some of the issues. The one thing everyone tends to agree on is to buy more technology!

To just throw more technology at the problem only compounds it (automating a bad process just makes it worse faster) and like the TV show “Hoarders” on A & E, unless an intervention of some kind happens volumes of junk and orphaned data will just continue to build. Unless thoughtful and deliberate choices are made at a collaborative level to research real solutions and then choose the appropriate tools to implement, digital hoarding will just continue and get worse.

We can’t live without IT, and IT departments or divisions are dedicated to making sure your systems are running smoothly and that servers are humming along. There is a good chance that managing records are not even on their radar screen – until the server gets full and crashes due to volumes of ROT (redundant, outdated and trivial) taking up space.

Investing in technology isn’t quite the same as buying a new IBM Selectric typewriter that you kept for years, and the only thing to install or upgrade was a new ribbon. You didn’t need any licenses, no maintenance contracts, and no glitches, server failures, no databases or systems to migrate and maintain. Storage and management was a cinch – type a document, sign it signed, make one copy (unless you used carbon paper) send a copy off, file your copy in the drawer (or give it to the secretary or file clerk to take care of it).

Technology has not yet proven to be a substitute for the “dragon ladies” of yore. 15 years ago there was no such thing as Chief Information Officer (CIO) and that role identified itself with being in charge of the agency technology, and not managing records and information. The role of records management has been largely ignored or neglected in favor of technology, when the reality is that it is even more relevant than ever and should be applied to all the agency records, information and data regardless of the technology used to create it.

Come to think of it, the problems started when the secretaries and file clerks left the building. There has yet to be an application developed with the mind-reading ability to organize your information by just thinking about it, nor can you just put it Outlook and have it magically sort by itself. There’s no app for that!

**MYTH #2: IT’S TOO HARD! (Well, not really a myth – more of an excuse)**

**Realty:** It is not easy, if that was the case we wouldn’t be in this situation! Using that as an excuse will not save you money, make you more efficient, or make a judge more sympathetic.

***In spite of the technology used, not all records are created equal, nor will they have equal value as an asset to the organization when it comes to meeting the evidentiary needs of the business and legal obligations.***

Say your agency is the business of granting permits. We’ve gone from typewriters to desktops to mobile devices in a very short period of time (not to mention adding databases/systems to the mix), but your *core mission is still to issue permits*. A permit may look and feel different than in days gone by – applications for a permit used to be submitted in paper, but now you can use an e-form and submit things electronically. The business needs and legal requirements and obligations surrounding that process have remained largely unchanged, it is the technology used that tends to change and fairly rapidly. It *is* hard to keep up!

The use of technology to deliver goods, services and resources is a good thing, but only when the systems used have some kind of governance over them. Records, information and data do have a value to the agency, and that the choices of technology have a direct impact on the kinds of records, information and data being created, and all this information comes with public records obligations.