Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana

Report on delivery of PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit ‘Train the trainer’ Digital Recordkeeping Workshop

Recordkeeping Innovation Pty Ltd

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1 Background
During the week of September 7-11 2015 I delivered a workshop on digital recordkeeping, based on the relevant guidelines in the PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit. The workshop was delivered for 30 participants drawn from the Public Records & Archives Administration Department of the National Archives of Ghana and other records specialists from public institutions.

The aim of the workshop was to twofold;

- to provide professional development for all participants, and
- to equip PRAAD staff with the knowledge and skills to deliver short course training and workshops on recordkeeping including digital recordkeeping for Ghanaian civil service personnel in the future.

2 Participant expectations
Workshop participants were asked on Day 1 of the course to record their expectations. These included:

- general improvement in knowledge on digital recordkeeping
- learning about software for managing paper and digital records
- how to convert paper records to digital
- dealing with systems that are not designed to be recordkeeping systems
- how to add digital records content to existing training
- learning about metadata
- requirements for choosing RM software
- strategies for managing mail
- legal admissibility of scanned documents; and
- preserving digital records.

On Day 3 of the course these expectations were reviewed and any outstanding queries not previously addressed in the workshop were addressed. Participants reported that their expectations were met, although for some, an expectation of more practical demonstration based instruction on how to digitise paper records was missing. This is noted for future attention from PRAAD in ‘Key observations’, below.

3 Course content
The workshop consisted of 12 sessions over three days. There was also an introductory session before the workshop, in which the trainer and participants were able to get to know one another and talk about expectations, and a session after the workshop in which training techniques and plans for future action were documented, for both public agencies and PRAAD.
The 12 formal sessions of the workshop were:

- Overview of digital records and recordkeeping
- Digital recordkeeping ‘SWOT’ analysis
- Frameworks for good digital recordkeeping: Recordkeeping Capacity
- Frameworks for good digital recordkeeping: Appraisal, Record Plans, Disposal Schedules
- Digital recordkeeping challenges: Systems and Software Checklists, Managing Email
- Scanning / digitisation
- Writing policy on digital recordkeeping
- ‘Future proofing’ digital records
- Planning for and implementing digital recordkeeping
- Emerging trends and issues

Each participant was given a full set of the Toolkit materials to use during the workshop and take away. PRAAD now also has the use of the materials developed for the workshop including:

- Powerpoints
- Presenter’s Manual; and
- Handouts.

4 Evaluation results
A total of 23 completed evaluation sheets were received.

- 15 participants indicated that the structure of the program was excellent, 6 that it was above average and 1 that it was average.
- 21 participants said that the program materials and handouts were very useful, and 2 indicated that they were somewhat useful.
- 14 participants indicated that the length of the workshop was about right, with 8 saying it was too short, and 1 that it was too long. Several participants suggested that it would be a good residential program.
- 17 participants rated the facilitator’s presentation and knowledge of the topic as excellent, and 6 as above average.

Some suggestions from participants noted on their evaluation forms, for future consideration included:

- an interest in ‘practical demonstrations’ – perhaps this could be in the form of digitisation, records management software demonstrations or using excel spreadsheets for records control
- more sessions are desired – going into more detail on certain topics including classification, digitisation (scanning) and emerging trends (cloud, mobile working)
- using the introductory portions for presentations to senior government officials and policy makers; and
- an interest in more advice on project management and proposal writing.

5 Trainer’s observations
This workshop contained a lot of content and required a high degree of concentration and engagement from participants, a challenge which was well met. All participants were able to demonstrate comprehension and retention of the key concepts of digital recordkeeping and, for some newer entrants to the profession, of core recordkeeping understandings also.

In addition to providing participants with this knowledge, the workshop offered an opportunity for discussion on priority areas for future attention both across the public sector and in specific agencies. Each participant contributed to an action plan for their agency or for PRAAD for follow up actions in the next 6 months, 6 months – 2 years and 2-5 years’ time.

As an external observer, I would suggest the following issues and actions worth consideration for prioritisation by PRAAD:

- There is a need for short course classification training to enable agencies to develop classification schemes reflecting their core business. A one day course focusing on business analysis using agency annual reports could be considered.
- My explanation of the role of proactive appraisal designed to understand business context and risk and identify recordkeeping requirements was well received and there was interest in following this up with more training and advice. This could be timed to follow the release of the revised ISO 15489 Records Management, due in the first half of 2016 (in which this type of appraisal approach is described).
- Several participants requested practical demonstrations of scanning – both for business and archival digitisation.
- There was some discussion on setting up a project to design a simple mail management solution in PRAAD then in MDAs and agencies. This solution to involve a workflow design, specification of metadata, use of an Excel spreadsheet located on a Local Area Network and a desktop scanner or multi-function device.
- There was interest in PRAAD using the Recordkeeping Capacity Checklist from the PARBICA Toolkit to monitor and report on agency progress towards good basic recordkeeping infrastructure (policy, classification, disposal rules etc.). This should be considered, as both a way to assess the current state of recordkeeping in the government, and also encourage a solid foundation on which agencies can transition to keeping digital records.
- Some Ministries and agencies are using or looking at using Sharepoint. There was discussion on this tool's main strength being collaboration, document sharing and intranet management rather than recordkeeping, and where its weaknesses lie from a recordkeeping perspective. Participants were given links for more information on this. The PARBICA Toolkit contains functional requirements for software for managing records which can be used to evaluate tools like Sharepoint, or Documentum, a specialist RM software tool / EDRMS currently being assessed by SSNIT. It was noted that in some circumstances, resources permitting, using both tools side by side would be optimal, but that careful configuration and training in either could also allow an agency to meet some or most recordkeeping requirements for specified business activities.

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