

The Required Information Technology Skills of Malaysian Federal Records Managers

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Abstract

While studies investigating the required information technology skills amongst various professions have been widely reported in the literature, very few have attempted to focus on records managers. Against this background, this paper reports the findings of study investigating the required information technology skills of records manager in the context of Malaysia. Employing a survey research method involving 182 records manager working in Malaysian Federal Ministries, the study unveiled the required information technology skills as perceived by them. The findings of the study are useful as a guide to revise the curriculum of records management program offered by the Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Keywords: skills, information technology, records manager, records management, Malaysia

1. Introduction

To execute any given job, one has to have competency. Without proper and appropriate competency, a task or a job cannot be delivered efficiently and effectively. The required sets of competencies for any given job are dependent on the job specifications. The higher is the complexity of the job, the higher would be the required competencies. Hence, the required sets of competencies for a job

as engineer would surely be different from those of doctors or lawyers. Similarly, the job as records manager, would have its own sets of required competencies. In this light, developed countries such as Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States of America have developed their own sets of competencies for their records practitioners. As a result, records management practices in these countries are far more advanced by comparison to other countries including Malaysia. Literatures on competencies studies unveiled that numerous studies have been carried out investigating the competencies profiles of various professions such as librarians, healthcare professionals, IT workers, business managers, entrepreneurs, human resource managers and teachers ([1],[2],[3]) However, studies focusing on competencies of records manager are still very limited. Against this concern, this study attempts to address this gap i.e. to investigate the competencies profile of records manager in the Malaysian federal ministries. However, for the scope of this paper, the focus would be on the information technology competencies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Records Manager

According to Robek, Brown & Stephens records manager is the individual within

an organization who is assigned the responsibility of systematically managing the recorded information generated and received by the organization in accordance with accepted records management principles and practice [7]. In Malaysia, the profession of the records manager is also known as Departmental Records Officer. Departmental Records Officer is the position appointed by the Chief Secretary or Head of Department of the ministries or government agencies. The main responsibility is to act as a liaison officer who coordinates activities of ministries, departments, government agencies and statutory bodies with the National Archives of Malaysia.

2.2 The Emergence of Electronic Records

The advancement of Information and Communication Technology or ICT, its application and the abundance of software and hardware in the market has contributed to the existence and creation of electronic records. Thus, as most countries are geared towards e-government including Malaysia, electronic records are used extensively in the government agencies for administrative purposes [6]. The growing use of electronic records signaled the need of records managers to be better equipped with the relevant Information Technology skills.

2.3 The Required Competencies of Records Manager

The Association of Commonwealth Archivist and Records Managers or ACARM noted that a records manager should be appointed in all organizations [4]. Their responsibilities would include overall supervision of the record keeping arrangements in the organization. In addition, the job will also require them to establish, develop, and promote the strategy for organization-wide standards for records management. In particular, the operation-

al responsibilities would be (i) providing written and verbal advice and consultancy to staffs at all level on all aspects of records and information management, (ii) developing and maintaining links with divisions and departments and (iii) identifying and managing records management projects. ACARM have also identified the core competencies of records manager as consisting of core competencies, functional competencies and managerial competencies [4]. Table 1 below presents the detail elaboration of the competencies. The listing of competencies as identified by ACARM has clearly indicated the need of information technology skills. Considering that the detail elaboration of information technology skill was not provided by ACARM, the conduct of this study was aimed to investigate the required information technology as perceived by records manager in Malaysia.

Table 1. Competencies of records manager

Core	Functional	Managerial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge & history of the organization • Knowledge of the relevant public sector environment • Professionalism • Communication & the promotion of records management • Team working • Planning & time management • IT literacy • Flexibility • Customer care / Client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information policy • Information management • Information technology • Records management and archival practice • Administration • Specialist knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching and developing • Influencing • Manage performance • Maintaining standards • Manage people • Manage projects

3. Research Methodology

The research method employed in this study was survey using questionnaire as the data collection tool. The questionnaire was developed based on the review of previous literature and combined with the findings obtained from a preliminary study using interviews with selected

records manager. In the questionnaire, eight items with corresponding 5-point Likert Scale, measuring information technology skills were developed for the respondents to rate. The population of the study was all records managers working in Malaysian Federal Ministries with a total number of 301. Prior to the actual data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested and pilot tested with several records managers so as to ensure validity and reliability of the findings obtained later. Based upon 301 distributed questionnaires, only 182 were returned and found useful yielding to a response rate of 60%.

4. Findings

Table 2 presents the findings of the demographic profiles of the respondents. Between the two genders, male respondents were 29.7% while the remaining 70.3% were female. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were aged between 36 and 40 years which contributed 35.2% of the entire sample. The lowest age group which contributed to only 4.4% was aged between 26 and 30. With regard to length of service, the majority of respondents i.e. 57.7% reported to have been working between 6 and 10 years. Only 1.1% reported to have been working between 21 and 25 years.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender	Male	54	29.7
	Female	128	70.3
Age	Between 26 & 30	8	4.4
	Between 31 & 35	49	26.9
	Between 36 & 40	64	35.2
	Between 41 & 45	50	27.5
	Between 46 & 50	1	0.5
	Between 51 & 55	10	5.5
Length of Service	Between 1 & 5	16	8.8
	Between 6 & 10	105	57.7
	Between 11 & 15	17	9.3
	Between 16 & 20	32	17.6
	Between 21 & 25	2	1.1
	Between 26 & 30	10	5.5

Table 3 depicts the responses of the required skills measured in terms of percentage while Table 4 presents the mean rating and the standard deviation of the items. The figures in these tables show that the most required skills as perceived by the respondents was relating to Internet which recorded a mean value of 4.14. The highest score on this skill could be attributed to the fact that in this information age, the use of internet is almost inevitable as it provides enormous amount of information. The second most required skill was knowledge of maintaining accessibility of records dependent equipment and technology which scored a mean value of 4.11. Considering that most of the records in their organizations are kept in various mediums and format, hence the need to have the skills and knowledge on these mediums and format could perhaps explain the score rating. The third most required skill, which recorded a mean value of 4.05 was knowledge of technical standards of electronic records data formats such as audio, video and graphics. Perhaps, as most records kept in their organization appeared not only in various mediums but also diverse format, hence the need to have skills and knowledge on this aspect is seen critical. The lowest recorded mean value was for item that says 'skills of developing documentation for recordkeeping systems', which scored a mean value of 3.73. The low score could perhaps be explained by the fact that most record keeping systems used in these government agencies were outsourced, hence the documentation of these systems were also developed by the receiving companies.

TABLE 3 Percent Responses on Required Information Technology Skills

Scales*	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of information technology (IT) platform structure	0%	0%	7.1%	86.8%	6%
Knowledge of the elements of recordkeeping systems	0%	3.6%	23.1%	69.2%	6.0%
Skills of developing a documentation for recordkeeping systems	0%	0%	27.5%	72.5%	0%
Knowledge of maintaining accessibility of records dependent equipment and technology	0%	0%	2.2%	84.6%	13.2%
Knowledge of technical standards of electronic records data formats such as audio, video and graphics	0%	0%	3.3%	88.5%	8.2%
Knowledge of capturing and managing e-mails in official recordkeeping systems	0%	0%	20.3%	74.7%	4.9%
Skills of using general office computer applications	4.9%	0%	9.3%	61.0%	24.7%
Skills of using internet for searching information	4.9%	0%	8.2%	49.5%	37.4%

*1 = Strongly Not Required, 2 = Not Required, 3 = Uncoded, 4 = Required, 5 = Strongly Required

TABLE 4 Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Responses on Required Information Technology Skills

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Knowledge of information technology (IT) platform structure	3.99	0.364
Knowledge of the elements of recordkeeping systems	3.80	0.564
Skills of developing a documentation for recordkeeping systems	3.73	0.448
Knowledge of maintaining accessibility of records dependent equipment and technology	4.11	0.378
Knowledge of technical standards of electronic records data formats such as audio, video and graphics	4.05	0.337
Knowledge of capturing and managing e-mails in official recordkeeping systems	3.85	0.480
Skills of using general office computer applications	4.01	0.889
Skills of using internet for searching information	4.14	0.941

5. Conclusion

The conduct of the study has been to investigate the required information technology skills for records managers. The findings of the study have shown all the necessary information technology skills required for records manager in doing their job. It is hoped that the findings of the study would help relevant authorities in the Malaysian government to identify necessary training for all of their records managers. In addition, the finding should also be helpful to the Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA to revise its curriculum as it is the only university in Malaysia that provides tertiary level education for records management programs.

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