

Navigating the Digital Highway – a call to Action

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call to the whole world that we need to work smarter in sharing our knowledge, information, and data for the benefit of the whole of mankind. Our scientists, politicians, newscasters, and others did this by sharing data and information leading to medical accelerated breakthroughs used across the planet. And still, our world's scientists continue to collaborate in the fight against this virus and many other medical mysteries.

How do they do this?

With the amazing technological tools of the internet, artificial intelligence, business systems, sharing software, voice, and visual communication tools at our fingertips. These accessible, and very clever technologies offer capabilities for achieving great things into reality.

Somehow Gene Rodenberry's visionary 1960's Star Trek does not seem so farfetched after all. "Beam me up Scotty", was once a fantasy. The food replicator an impossible dream. The handheld communicator of Star Trek and the communication watch of Dick Tracy were science fiction of my childhood. These are now my reality thanks to Apple, Microsoft, and many other clever inventive people within these organisations.

As I enter my fourth decade as a Records and Information Management practitioner I wonder "How far will we go?"

I am immensely proud to be part of a profession that supports managing, protecting, and preserving information, data, and collective knowledge. Why? We are the leaders in this field. Our profession designs, builds, applies the information and data governance framework and tools essential to capture and preserve our community and corporate history. We teach subject matter experts how to apply correct practices that support such advancements as the COVID-19 and other medical, technological, and variety of other breakthroughs that are used for the benefit of mankind.

As I ponder the journey of humanity, I think how keeping of records has shaped our history, present and future. We learn. We grow. And this is reliant on effectively creating, keeping, and sharing records of our decisions, actions, plans and ideas.

Our records are used to create lessons to teach the next generation. Preservation of our decisions, events, culture, practices, both abhorrent or praiseworthy and wonderful, is essential for us to not repeat the mistakes of the past, and to build on humanities successes for a better future.

No other creature on the planet does this. We are unique in this practice. It enables us to grow, improve, and make dreams into a reality.

Sounds very dreamy and philosophical, doesn't it?

Yet, I think we must be something of a dreamer to remain passionate in this space. We face so many "viruses" of our own. One of the most viral of all, is apathy towards personal responsibility in record keeping across organisations.

This virus robs us of the power that great record keeping brings into an organisation. When the vision of what great wealth our records and data hold within each of our organisations is dulled, we deteriorate, and the organisation gets sick. The satisfaction of creating something great is compromised. Having reliable, accessible, and complete data and records to inform our decisions means we can turn our vision into reality for the benefit of our organisation, community, and the broader good of humanity. Particularly if we share our great accomplishments with others and show them the way to “make it so” in their own space.

Every single person within the organisation has personal responsibility to keep full records of their business activities in compliance with organisational and legislative standards. A break in the chain is a virus to the health of our organisation and can have even broader implications. Hurt to our community, other business partners, individuals, and even the person who failed in their record keeping responsibilities. (See article on Gosford Bridge Collapse within the members library for details.)

Today, I thought I would brush up on the latest ambitions within government’s that are applying their records, information, and data for collective good. The United Kingdom is ambitiously planning for 2050. This article demonstrates the dependence they have on great records and data to bring alive their vision of their future for the road networks. <https://www.snclavalin.com/en/beyond-engineering/digital-highways-towards-a-naked-road-network-driven-by-data>

Records and Information Management practitioners seem to always be part of something really big but often *we are so back of room busy we do not take time to pause, and consider that the work we have undertaken is really, really important* to the ongoing discovery, planning, implementation and application of every major human achievement.

My call to you today, is *stand proud that you are a Records and Information Management practitioner*. March proudly, and lead by example in your records and information management practice. Share your knowledge and understanding for the benefit of us all. Promote the value of good practice to your sphere of influence within your organisation and bring them on board with your passion and enthusiasm. They will respect you for it. Keep alert of what is happening around you within the organisation, and the wider world so you can harness opportunities for continued improvement. And don’t forget to give yourself a pat on the back for choosing one of the most enduring, constant, and valuable occupations that have been with mankind through the whole of history.

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