

Full Length Research

Electronic Records Management by Secretarial Staff of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi and Port-Harcourt Polytechnic Rumuola, Nigeria

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This study aims to ascertain Electronic Records Management by Secretarial Staff of Auchi Polytechnics, Auchi and Port-Harcourt Polytechnic Rumuola, Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey method and questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The total population for this study is two hundred and forty-eight (248) secretarial staff of both polytechnics. Two hundred and eleven (211) secretarial staff was used as sample for the study using purposive sampling technique to select the sample for the study and only the secretarial staff found in their offices during the period of the study was selected and used for the study. It was revealed from the study that meeting agenda/minutes, official or business documents of the institution, correspondence/notification, draft/policies and students records are the major types of electronic record managed by secretarial staff, backup files, keep disk and tape drives clean, store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box, keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment and unauthorized persons must not be allowed to have access to the computer and storage devices are some of the major techniques employed to manage electronic records and cost associated with the purchase of computer systems, storage devices, formulation of policies and disaster, vulnerable to corruption/virus, lack of electronic records policy, poor skills/knowledge of electronic records, inadequate/fragile nature of electronic storage devices and problem of media deterioration are the major challenges militating against the management of electronic records. The study recommends that Government and the polytechnics management should make available adequate fund for the purchase and maintenance of computers hardware and software with sophisticated storage devices to enhance effective management of electronic records, to curb the issue of media deterioration and vulnerability to corruption/virus.

Key words: Electronic records management, secretarial staff, Auchi, polytechnic, Port-Harcourt

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INTRODUCTION

Akpomi and Ordu (2009) posited that every office in today's business world, be it government, industry or other human endeavours, require facts and accurate

information for quick and effective decision-making. In office environment of past, manager's dictated memos and letters and secretaries typed them but presently,

business have developed word processing centers and relied on personal computers and even electronic mail in an effort to lessen the need for secretarial support and make the employee-secretary very productive (Osuala, 2004). Akpomi (2003) posited that a secretary is an office-staff who combines the mastery of secretarial skills of typewriting and shorthand with office routine functions. The new technological equipment that altered the procedures and techniques for office functions include the computers, electronic mail, voice mail, and the Internet. Akpomi stresses that automation is an innovation and a consequence of the industrial revolution. Mayer (1977) cited in Akpomi and Ordu (2009) opined that secretary is an executive assistant, who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment and makes decision within the scope of assigned authority.

According to Edwin (2008), today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible. Today secretaries sent messages by telex, electronic mails (e-mails), fax and telephones. Other office gadgets available to the secretary are photocopy machines, duplicating machines, dictating machines, printers, among others (Akpomi & Ordu, 2009). Record is an important asset of every organization and should always be handled with care regardless of their formats. The importance of maintaining records efficiently is to ensure that they support the organization for better decision making, enhance accountability and transparency (National Electronic Commerce Coordinating Council (NECCC, 2012). Electronic records are stored on various magnetic and optical storage devices and are products of computers and computer software. The format of an electronic document does not change the fact that it is a record, but its electronic form and its dependence on machines for creation and reference do change the way these records must be stored and managed (CALRIM, 2002).

Records Management is not a new concept but instead has evolved from the ancient world to modern times. The prologue of computers in the actual mid-twentieth century impacted the factor of documentation in sustaining supervision and business operations while companies have been beguiled by amazing benefits of digital skills, particularly in the organization storage and recovery of data together with reputable security features (Cox, 2006). Beardman and Hedstrom (2013) posited that electronic records are records that are available in electronic formats and such records are accessed and utilized electronically. Electronic records management involves the creation, processing, storage, retrieval, organization, security and total control of records electronically using information and technologies (ICTS). These scholars further opined that without an organized

records and archives management, there will be a deficit in information access created. Such deficit contributes to inadequate and improper decision making within organizational and national establishments. The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (2004) defines records management as the management of information resources in a manner that makes information easily accessible, securely protected and stored, and correctly disposed of when necessary. Electronic records are informational or data files that are created and stored in digitized form through the use of computers and applications software (California Records and Information Management, 2002).

Unuigbe (2009) opines that electronic records management is the process of capturing and maintaining records, activities and transactions of organizations or institutions using computerized and ICT-base systems and electronic record management tools. Information stored and recorded in electronic formats help records managers administrators and administrative heads to direct, control, communicate, plan, formulate policies and make effective decisions geared towards the success and development of the organization or institution. Okoye and Ugwuanyi (2012) noted that when planning for electronic records management, certain factors must be put into consideration such as provision of space for electronic storage facilities, ease of access through numerous metadata, search techniques, protocols and access which should not be hindered by distance, time or boundary.

As the world becomes more digital in nature, an ever growing issue for the records management community is the conversion of existing or incoming paper records to electronic form. Such conversions are most often performed with the intent to save storage costs, storage space, and in hopes of reducing records retrieval time. Maduaka (2014) revealed governing council records, matriculation records, convocation records, transcript records, students results are some of the types of records managed by secretarial staff. Dawes, Padero, Green, McInerney, Conelly and Dicarterino (2010) observed that electronic records need special handling, care and maintenance. They further stressed the following as some of ways or techniques employed in electronic record management: Backup files into disks often, preferably after every update, Keep disk and tape drives clean and give them periodic preventive maintenance, do not allow unauthorized persons to have access to the computer system or to the diskettes, tapes, CDs, USB cords and flash drives, Keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment, Store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box. Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000) state that effective records management systems provide information required for the proper functioning of organizations which includes polytechnics.

Various technological tools such as document scanners, optical character recognition software, and electronic document management systems are used to facilitate such conversions (Wikipedia, 2015). Records management in Nigeria is plagued by some factors such as inadequate skilled and inexperienced record management personnel, lack of sufficient funds, the placement of records management in a low priority pedestal in relation to other things, lack of record management policies and poor data storage facilities (Afolabi, 1991). These problems have eaten deep into records management practice in Nigerian institutions and organisations including the polytechnics.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The application of information and communication technology in today's offices has increased the rate of which records have been generated. These electronic records generated need to be properly managed like manual records. Electronic record management no doubt is quite beneficial to administrative staff and assists the staff in the effective and efficient management, handling and use of records electronically. Record is an important asset of every organization and should always be handled with care regardless of their formats. However, the management of electronic records requires funds, skills, knowledge and competence. It is against this background that this study attempts to investigate the types of electronic records managed by secretarial staff, the techniques employed and as well as the challenges encountered in the management of electronic records by secretarial staff of Auchu polytechnic, Auchu and Port-Harcourt polytechnic Rumuola, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a. To determine the type of electronic records managed by secretarial staff
- b. To ascertain the techniques used for preserving electronic record
- c. To discover the challenges of electronic record management

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- I. What are the types of electronic record managed by secretarial staff?
- II. What are the techniques employed by secretarial staff in managing electronic records?
- III. What are the challenges militating against the

management of electronic records by secretarial staff?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate Electronic Records Management by Secretarial Staff of Auchu polytechnics and Port-Harcourt polytechnic Rumuola. The population of this study consists of all the Secretarial Staff in Auchu polytechnics Auchu, Edo State and Port-Harcourt polytechnic, Rumuola, River State. The total population for this study is two hundred and forty-eight (248). The entire population was used and only the secretarial staff found in their offices during the period of the study was used for the study. Two hundred and eleven (211) secretarial staff was used as sample for the study using purposive sampling technique. This study employed questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire entitled "Electronic Records Management by Secretarial Staff (ERMSSQ) was used in this study. The questionnaire is made up of two parts. The first consists of biographical data of the respondents such as institution and gender. The second part consists of three sections that contained structured statements aimed at eliciting data on the Electronic Records Management by Secretarial Staff of Auchu polytechnics and Port-Harcourt polytechnic Rumuola. The data obtained from the copies of the questionnaire retrieved from the respondents were analyzed using simple percentage, frequency counts and mean.

RESULT AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1 shows the institution of the respondents used in this study. Auchu polytechnic with 171(81%) respondents, while Port-Harcourt polytechnic 40(19%) respondents. This analysis clearly reveals that Auchu polytechnic has more secretaries than Port-Harcourt polytechnic. Table 2 shows the gender distribution of respondents with female 167(79%) and male 44(21%). This is an indication that there are more females secretaries than the male counterparts. The analysis above obviously reveals that secretarial profession is female dominated.

Research Question one

What are the types of electronic record managed by secretarial staff?

Table 3 shows the types of electronic records managed by secretarial staff of Auchu polytechnic and Port-Harcourt polytechnic. The major type of electronic records managed by secretarial staff of Auchu polytechnic and

Table 1: Institution of the respondents

Institutions	No	%
Auchi polytechnic, Auchi	171	81
Port Harcourt polytechnic Rumuola	40	19
Total	211	100

Table2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	No	%
Male	44	21
Female	167	79
Total	211	100

Table 3: Types of electronic record managed by secretarial staff

Types of electronic records		Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total		Mean	
	Institutions	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	X
Correspondence/ Notification	Auchi polytechnic	150	88	8	5	13	8	171	100	479	2.80
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	32	80	6	15	2	5	40	100	110	2.75
Students records	Auchi polytechnic	102	60	65	38	4	2	171	100	440	2.57
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	22	55	18	45	--	--	40	100	102	2.55
Meeting agenda/minutes	Auchi polytechnic	152	89	19	11	--	--	171	100	494	2.88
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	36	90	--	--	4	10	40	100	112	2.80
Official or business documents of the institution	Auchi polytechnic	149	87	22	13	--	--	171	100	491	2.87
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	34	85	4	10	2	5	40	100	112	2.80
Draft/policies	Auchi polytechnic	109	64	57	33	5	3	171	100	446	2.61
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	28	70	8	20	4	10	40	100	104	2.60
Students results	Auchi polytechnic	99	58	41	24	31	18	171	100	410	2.40
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	18	45	16	40	6	15	40	100	92	2.30
Financial transaction/report	Auchi polytechnic	101	59	36	21	34	20	171	100	409	2.40
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	22	55	10	25	8	20	40	100	94	2.40
Remuneration, promotion, and annual leave of staff	Auchi polytechnic	89	52	46	27	36	21	171	100	395	2.31
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	16	40	10	25	14	35	40	100	82	2.05
Work schedule, routines, ethics, rules and regulations.	Auchi polytechnic	74	43	56	33	41	24	171	100	375	2.19
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	12	30	14	35	14	35	40	100	78	195
Official e-mail, Facebook, tweeter and other social media records.	Auchi polytechnic	76	44	43	25	52	30	171	100	366	2.1
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	16	40	8	20	16	40	40	100	80	2.00

Criterion mean = 2.50

Port-Harcourt polytechnic is meeting agenda/minutes with 152 (89%), 494(90%) mean score for Auchu polytechnic and 36(90%), 112(2.80) mean score for Port-Harcourt polytechnic. Another major type of electronic records managed by secretaries of both polytechnic is official or business documents of the institution with 149(87%), 491(2.87) mean score for Auchu polytechnic and 34(85%), 112(2.80) mean score for Port-Harcourt polytechnic. Other types of electronic records managed by secretarial staff of both polytechnic are Correspondence/ notification with 150(88%), mean score of 479(2.80) for Auchu polytechnic and 32(80%), mean score 110(2.75) for Port-Harcourt polytechnic. Draft/policies with 109(64%), mean score of 446(2.61) Auchu polytechnic and 28(70%) and mean score of 104(2.60) Port-Harcourt polytechnic. A majority of the secretaries responded to students records as one of the electronic records they managed with 102(60%) and a mean score of 440(2.57) Auchu polytechnic and 22(55%) with a mean score of 102(2.55) Port-Harcourt polytechnic. This study simply revealed that meeting agenda/ minutes, official or business documents of the institution, correspondence/notification, draft/policies and students records are the major electronic records managed by secretarial staff of Auchu polytechnic and port-Harcourt polytechnic. This finding is in conformity with Maduaka (2014) who revealed that governing council records, matriculation records, convocation records, transcript records, and students results are some of the types of electronic records managed by secretarial staff.

Research Question Two

What are the techniques employed by secretarial staff in managing electronic records?

Table 4 reveals techniques employed by secretarial staff in managing electronic records. Thus respondents' opinion on the techniques employed by secretarial staff in managing electronic records includes Backup files with 156(91%) with a mean score of 498(2.91) Auchu polytechnic and 34(85%) with 114(2.85) mean score for Port-Harcourt polytechnic, Keep disk and tape drives clean 158(92%) with a mean score of 490(2.90) Auchu polytechnic and 34(85%) with a mean score of 114(2.85) Port-Harcourt polytechnic, Store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box with 144(84%) with a mean score of 486(2.84) Auchu polytechnic and 33(83%) with a mean score of 113(2.83) Port-Harcourt polytechnic. others are, Keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment 147(86%) with a mean score of 481(2.81) Auchu polytechnic and 32(80%) with a mean score of 112(2.80) for Port-Harcourt polytechnic and Unauthorized persons must not be allowed to have access to the computer and storage devices 149(87%) with a mean score of

477(2.79) Auchu polytechnic and 32(80%) with mean score of 112(2.80) Port-Harcourt polytechnic etc. The findings of this study clearly shows that backup files, keep disk and tape drives clean, Store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box, keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment and unauthorized persons must not be allowed to have access to the computer and storage devices are some of the major techniques employed by secretarial staff of Auchu polytechnic and Port-Harcourt polytechnic to manage electronic records. This study agrees with the work of Dawes, Padero, Green, McInerney, Conelly and Dicarterino (2010) which emphasized that electronic records need special handling, care and maintenance. They advocated the following techniques: Backup files into disks often, preferably after every update, Keep disk and tape drives clean and give them periodic preventive maintenance, unauthorized persons must not have access to the computer system or to tapes, DVDS, CDs, USB cords and flash drives, food and drink should be kept away from storage media or devices and store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box etc.

Research Question three

What are the challenges militating against the management of electronic records by secretarial staff?

Table 5 reveals the challenges militating against the management of electronic records by secretarial staff. However, the opinion of respondents of both polytechnic with respect to the challenges militating against electronic records management includes Cost associated with the purchase of computer systems, storage devices, formulation of policies and disaster 38 (95%) with mean score of 118(2.95) Port-Harcourt and 160(94%) with 491(2.87) mean score for Auchu polytechnic. Port-Harcourt polytechnic mean score is slightly higher than that of Auchu polytechnic. Vulnerable to corruption/virus ranked second 156(91%) with means score of 493 (2.88) Auchu polytechnic and 34(85%) with mean score of 112(2.80) for Port-Harcourt polytechnic. Lack of electronic records policy got a high response 182 (89%) with mean of 483(2.82) Auchu polytechnic and 32(80%) with a mean score of 112(2.80) Port-Harcourt polytechnic, Poor skills/knowledge of electronic records 143(84%) with the mean score of 474(2.77) Auchu polytechnic and 30(75%) with mean of 106(2.65) Port-Harcourt polytechnic. Auchu polytechnic mean is higher than that of port-Harcourt polytechnic counterpart. Others with high response are Inadequate/fragile nature of electronic storage devices 123(72%) with a mean score of 465(2.72) Auchu polytechnic and 30(75%) with the mean of 108(2.70) Port-Harcourt polytechnic and

Table 4: Techniques employed by secretarial staff in managing electronic records

Techniques	Institutions	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total		Mean	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	X
Encapsulation	Auchi polytechnic	89	52	32	19	50	29	171	100	381	2.23
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	22	55	12	30	6	15	40	100	96	2.40
Conversion	Auchi polytechnic	115	67	22	13	34	20	171	100	423	2.50
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	28	70	8	20	4	10	40	100	104	2.60
Migration	Auchi polytechnic	116	68	32	19	23	13	171	100	435	2.54
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	28	70	6	15	6	15	40	100	102	2.55
Backup files	Auchi polytechnic	156	91	15	9	--	--	171	100	498	2.91
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	34	85	6	15	--	--	40	100	114	2.85
Keep disk and tape drives clean	Auchi polytechnic	158	92	10	6	3	2	171	100	496	2.90
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	34	85	6	15	--	--	40	100	114	2.85
Unauthorized persons must not be allowed to have access to the computer and storage devices	Auchi polytechnic	149	87	8	5	14	8	171	100	477	2.79
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	32	80	8	20	--	--	40	100	112	2.80
Store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box	Auchi polytechnic	144	84	27	16	--	--	171	100	486	2.84
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	33	83	7	17	--	--	40	100	113	2.83
Keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment	Auchi polytechnic	147	86	16	9	8	5	171	100	481	2.81
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	32	80	8	20	--	--	40	100	112	2.80

Criterion mean = 2.50

Table 5: Challenges militating against the management of electronic records by secretarial staff

Challenges	Institutions	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total		Mean	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	X
Lack of electronic records policy	Auchi polytechnic	152	89	8	5	11	6	171	100	483	2.82
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	32	80	8	20	--	--	40	100	112	2.80

Table 5: Continuation

Vulnerable to corruption/virus	Auchi polytechnic	156	91	10	6	5	3	171	100	493	2.88
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	34	85	4	10	2	5	40	100	112	2.80
Poor skills/knowledge of electronic records	Auchi polytechnic	143	84	19	11	7	4	171	100	474	2.77
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	30	75	6	15	4	10	40	100	106	2.65
Problem of media deterioration'	Auchi polytechnic	111	65	46	27	14	8	171	100	439	2.57
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	26	65	10	25	4	10	40	100	108	2.70
Inadequate/fragile nature of electronic storage devices	Auchi polytechnic	123	72	48	28	--	--	171	100	465	2.72
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	30	75	8	20	2	5	40	100	108	2.70
Cost associated with the purchase of computer systems, storage devices, formulation of policies and disaster	Auchi polytechnic	160	94	--	--	11	6	171	100	491	2.87
	Port Harcourt polytechnic	38	95	2	5	--	--	40	100	118	2.95

Criterion mean = 2.50

Problem of media deterioration 26(65%) with a mean score of 108(2.70) for Port-Harcourt polytechnic and 111(65%) with mean score of 439(2.57) Auchi polytechnic. However, there is a mean difference between Port-Harcourt polytechnic and Auchi polytechnic. The findings of this study simply indicates that Cost associated with the purchase of computer systems, storage devices, formulation of policies and disaster, Vulnerable to corruption/virus, lack of electronic records policy, Poor skills/knowledge of electronic records, Inadequate/fragile nature of electronic storage devices and Problem of media deterioration are the major challenges militating against the management of electronic records. This study is also in conformity with Afolabi (1991) who posits that Records management practice in Nigeria has a number of problems, which include insufficient skilled and experienced records management personnel, low priority of records

management in the scheme of things, and insufficient funds.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

- a. A majority of the secretarial staff from both polytechnics revealed that meeting agenda/minutes, official or business documents of the institution, correspondence/notification, draft/policies and students records are the major electronic records they manage.
- b. The study clearly shows that backup files, keep disk and tape drives clean, store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box, keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment and unauthorized persons must not be allowed to have access to

the computer and storage devices are some of the major techniques employed by secretarial staff of Auchi polytechnic and Port-Harcourt polytechnic to manage electronic records.

- c. Cost associated with the purchase of computer systems, storage devices, formulation of policies and disaster, vulnerable to corruption/virus, lack of electronic records policy, poor skills/knowledge of electronic records, inadequate/fragile nature of electronic storage devices and problem of media deterioration are the major challenges militating against the management of electronic records.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st Century records are no longer confined to print format. Many records generated in our institutions today are in electronic format which needed to be managed for efficiency. Secretarial staff of Auchi polytechnic and Port-Harcourt polytechnic generates and managed lots of records in electronic formats, such as meeting agenda/ minutes, official or business documents of the institution, correspondence/notification, draft/policies and students records. Techniques such as backup files, keep disk and tape drives clean, store discs and tapes in a vertical position in a storage container or disk box, keep food and drink away from storage media as well as equipment and unauthorized persons must not be allowed to have access to the computer and storage devices are employed by secretaries in both polytechnics for managing electronic records. However, secretarial staff of these polytechnics is faced with some hic-cups with regards to electronic records management. Some of the hic-cups are cost associated with the purchase of computer systems, storage devices, formulation of policies and disaster, vulnerable to corruption/virus, lack of electronic records policy, poor skills/knowledge of electronic records, inadequate/fragile nature of electronic storage devices and problem of media deterioration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Government and the polytechnic management should make available adequate fund for the purchase and maintenance of computers hardware and software with sophisticated storage devices to enhance effective management of electronic records, to curb the issue of media deterioration and vulnerability to corruption/virus.
- b. Polytechnic management should design working record management policy to serve as guide to secretarial staff.

- c. The polytechnic management should organize at regular interval seminar and workshop to sensitize and train secretarial staff on the need and how to manage electronic records.
- d. Secretarial staff should be meticulous in their handling of electronic records because of its fragile nature.

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