

NARA Plan for Achieving PDRM Goal A3.1
Federal Records Council Meeting
1/24/13

Assumptions

1. There is room for improvement in electronic records management, as evidenced by the results of Records Management Self Assessments and other studies.
 - a. End users find it burdensome to manage their electronic records if that means touching each file and making a separate recordkeeping decision about each one.
 - b. Relying on unmotivated and busy end users to manage electronic records results in inconsistent capture of electronic records.
2. Automated tools for managing electronic records could reduce the recordkeeping burden on end users and lead to more consistent results.
3. Promising tools already exist in the records management field and in other industries. The advanced search space, including machine learning or predictive coding as used in eDiscovery, is one of several promising areas for records management exploration. Autocategorization is another.
4. New tools may be needed, but the community does not yet know exactly what the requirements for the new tools are. We need to do market research first, then a gap analysis.
5. There are many acceptable ways of managing electronic records. 5015.2-certified RMAs are one acceptable way, but there are others. Others include integrating records management requirements into production systems or relying on Records Management Services to capture and manage records from the environment.
6. Some methods for managing electronic records may work better in some environments or with some types of records than with others. For example, social media records may be managed best using different methods than static electronic documents like formal reports.

Assertions

1. NARA actively supports automation of as many records management tasks as possible, as long as results of automation improve on the status quo. If automation allows an agency to capture and manage more electronic records than its current processes, and transfer more permanently valuable electronic records to NARA than its current processes, NARA will support the use of automation.
2. NARA will work with agencies that want to increase the use of automation for records management.

3. NARA will not require the use of automation in records management. If agencies can get good compliance with the CFR and adequately manage their electronic records without it, conventional RM tools and processes are acceptable.
4. NARA will not mandate any particular tools for automating records management. However, we will work with the records management community to identify and share information about tools that support good automated records management, providing practical information about how records management compliance can be achieved.

Vision

Short term (in the next year) we will identify specific tasks in RM that might be automated, collect information about tools that might allow us to automate them, share that information widely and encourage pilot projects and reports of innovative use of tools to automate RM tasks and decrease the burden of RM on agency end users. We will encourage pilots to start this year and report on anything they learn as soon as possible, but pilots can and will continue beyond the target date for creation of the A3.1 2013 plan at the end of December.

These pilots will explicitly address the different needs of large and small agencies. In order for Goal A3.1 to be successful, we have to find tools that help automate RM in ways that are affordable and practical in both the large and small agency environment.

Long term, NARA will explore defining a standard package for electronic records and metadata and encourage the commercial sector and open source community to develop tools that can package records in this standard way. As the standard gains traction, it should become easier and easier for records systems and processes to become interoperable and for developers to produce new tools that interact with records in predictable ways.

For records managers, archivists, and the general public, it should become easier to pass records from one system or stage of the life cycle to another across systems, across cloud storage providers, and eventually to the web for public access. The goal is to have as little human intervention at the record level as possible during transitions from one system or custodian to another, thus allowing records management processes to scale up to necessary transaction volumes.

Strategy for Goal A3.1:

1. Market research (seeking tools that are currently available that could automate one or many steps of records management) and concept development (seeking industry engagement in developing new tools to reach our long term vision). Tools for this part of the strategy include:
 - a. Industry day: NARA and agencies explain their vision and unmet needs to industry. Open to agency attendees as well as industry.
 - b. RFI: NARA requests information on tools and approaches that can address our short and long term challenges

- c. Shared information: information gathered from industry day and RFI will be widely shared with the records management community
2. innovation, pilots
 - a. NARA will work with agencies that want to increase records management automation. NARA will provide flexibility to help innovators try something new under the umbrella of an A3.1 pilot. Simple MOUs will document the pilot agreements.
 - b. Agencies that pilot agree to share info, lessons learned, reviews of tools, with NARA and other agencies
 - c. NARA will also provide a platform for information sharing among agencies about tools and innovative projects that have already been done or that are not being conducted as a formal pilot. NARA will encourage contributions from both large and small agencies, acknowledging that tools and projects that work for the largest agencies may not work for the smallest.

The goal is to use the results of the market research, industry engagement, and feedback from agency pilots to identify:

- Tools that are available now for agencies to use
- Areas where the tools are adequate but other hurdles are in the way
- Areas where current tools cannot do what we need to do
- Strategies for encouraging development of the necessary tools

The 2013 plan for development of affordable automated tools will be drafted in Fall 2013 based on this input. The plan will focus on developing tools that do not exist now and on reducing the barriers to implementation of tools that are already available.

Agency Next Steps:

1. NARA has set up a wiki for collaboration of an interest group based on ERM Automation and Innovation: A3.1. The link is: <http://erm-automation.ourarchives.wikispaces.net>. Join the wiki!
2. We've created a seed list of records management tasks that might be automated. Add items, subtract items, and comment on this list.
3. Help us compile lists of tools that can be used to automate these tasks. We've already created a page for tools to capture social media records, one of the three main categories called out in A3.1 (e-mail, social media, other types of digital record content). Add tools to this list or comment on tools you've used.
4. We've created a space for agencies to suggest ideas for pilot projects and document their pilot projects. We'll expand this space for more information sharing once pilots are identified. Add to this list.
5. We've created a planning space for the industry day. If you'd like to help plan this event, sign up.
6. Contact A3.1 project lead Meg Phillips for discussion, ideas, and questions any time. (Meg.phillips@nara.gov or 301-837-3111)

NARA next steps:

The CRO will be sending a memo in the next week publicly announcing this project and inviting agencies to help the community by conducting a pilot of an automated records management tool. The memo will include instructions on how to propose a pilot. Pilots can use any tool and can automate any step or steps of records management. Just tell us what you're trying to do, how you think this pilot might help, and how you'll ensure that you're still meeting your basic records management obligations.