

2021 Report on Information Management

BACKGROUND

The Information Management Branch (IM) is responsible for establishing and promoting an overall framework for the coordinated and cost-effective management of the records and information holdings of the Corporation of the City of Ottawa, regardless of form (i.e. physical or electronic) and throughout their entire life cycle, to ensure:

- That all records and information holdings are managed as corporate assets to support effective decision-making, meet operational requirements (such as supporting the achievement of corporate strategic and program/service delivery priorities), protect and enforce legal and other rights and obligations including the public's right to access under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), and provide evidence of the Corporation's decisions, directives, and actions essential for government transparency and accountability;
- That the widest possible use is made of information within the City by ensuring it is organized to facilitate access to those who require it, at the right time, in the right form, and at a reasonable cost, subject to legal, policy and other constraints;
- That records and information holdings in all formats are retained only as long as needed, stored in the most appropriate and cost-effective storage medium and securely disposed of when no longer required to comply with legislative requirements and to control costs; and
- That records and information holdings serve to reconstruct the evolution of policy and program decisions and directives or have historical or archival importance are identified and preserved.

The overall framework includes policies, procedures, systems and standards that establish operating requirements. These give direction to management and staff, providing guidance and tools to facilitate the management of the entire life cycle of the City's records and information, namely:

- Planning;
- Collection, creation and receipt;
- Organization, use and retrieval;

- Storage, protection, retention, and disposition through transfer to the City of Ottawa Archives or secure, authorized destruction; and
- Centralized records and information management resource support to program areas to enable them to meet their Information Management operating requirements.

More specifically, IM helps all City staff meet their current and evolving physical and electronic records management obligations by:

- Maintaining 14 records offices in five City buildings and supporting various decentralized records locations;
- Maintaining the corporate Records Management Policy and Procedures, the Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS), and the associated *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* (By-law No. 2021-183);
- Securely disposing of records in accordance with the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* (By-law No. 2021-183), and applicable federal and provincial legislation;
- Providing guidance on the Information Architecture (IA design) of client SharePoint sites to assist with record compliance, information organization, search and reporting;
- Providing expertise in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of IM policies, information organization and best practices;
- Providing Tier 1 and 2 system support for two records management systems;
- Training staff on the records management applications, SharePoint and IM fundamentals; and
- Assessing business-specific systems for records-related risk.

Three policy instruments

IM is responsible for three policy instruments that direct City staff on how to manage their records:

1. The Records Management Policy identifies the requirements and expectations regarding the creation, identification and management of City records.
2. The Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS) is a tool that helps organize City records, as well as applies a schedule detailing how long records are kept and how they should be disposed.
3. The *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* provides the City with the legal authority to create, manage, and dispose of records. The City Archives is the

disposition authority for the City of Ottawa and IM staff work in close collaboration with Archives staff.

Three recordkeeping systems

The City currently uses three centralized information management systems to manage records:

1. Records Management System (RMS) is used to manage physical records. As described below, this application has reached end of life and is expected to be replaced in 2022 with an application currently being developed in-house.
2. Business Information Management System (BIMS) is used to manage electronic records. BIMS has reached end of life and is expected to be gradually replaced in 2022 with SharePoint and a recordkeeping add-on application, Records365, as outlined below. In anticipation of this transition, and due to the shift to working from home during the pandemic, some staff have already begun to use SharePoint to manage their records.
3. MINISIS controls certain records that have been archived. This system is managed by the Archives.

COVID-19 impact and response

The IM Branch continues to adapt to operational pressures stemming from COVID-19 by prioritizing workplans and adjusting staffing levels. The Office of the City Clerk continues to monitor the various resourcing announcements with regard to how IM can continue to contribute to the City's pandemic response efforts.

Specifically, COVID-19 continues to impact IM in several ways. First, it has accelerated the adoption of new applications and new technology in all departments, which has impacted recordkeeping. Records are often being stored in SharePoint sites with varying degrees of metadata and few of the sites are considered 'records ready' because they do not yet align with the CRCS. IM anticipates significant efforts with regard to site IA and metadata remediation, change management, training and support to staff in order to achieve recordkeeping compliance.

To address the recordkeeping impacts from the new technology, IM expanded services will include:

- Providing IA guidance on client SharePoint sites;
- Recordkeeping services in client SharePoint sites; and

- Designing and providing training on SharePoint.

Another challenge is how to get a large part of the organization, who have been working from home and outside of official repositories, to declare and preserve those records as soon as they are able. Clients will present a wide range of approaches to recordkeeping. IM is currently seeing a decline in physical recordkeeping and, in response, is assisting clients to capture and manage records whether physically or electronically.

IM does not have the capacity to support the forthcoming, third technology currently being procured. This need was anticipated and described as follows in the 2020 Report on Information Management within the [Office of the City Clerk 2020 Annual Report](#), under the section regarding Information Governance [emphasis added]: “New applications and new technology are constantly appearing on the scene. **Technology is now outpacing information governance.** Tools within the M365 investment allow for improved governance and findability, but new roles may be required to respond to emerging information governance risks. The City Clerk is monitoring this situation, and in partnership with various stakeholders, will be developing recommendations for appropriate roles and guidance in 2021”.

Management has recorded these risks in the Office of the City Clerk’s risk register. Until additional resources become available, IM will need to delay its IT project schedules and its operational response times will be affected.

Additionally, records operations are affected by the implementation of a recommendation from the [Audit of Facilities Management](#), dated November 24, 2020. Changes are required to bring three administrative buildings, Ben Franklin Place, Mary Pitt Centre and City Hall, into compliance with accessibility and building code requirements. Beginning in late 2021, Facilities Services started assessing the physical layout and implemented modifications to some workspaces. Staff in affected areas are required to pack up their offices, which has resulted in a large number of physical files being returned to records offices in addition to generating a large number of requests for new physical files. This work is ongoing into 2022.

Lastly, IM continues to work diligently to adhere to all guidance provided by Ottawa Public Health and the Human Resources Branch. All measures with regard to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and administrative protections have been followed. Management continues to monitor the various announcements to identify any impact to IM and its clients.

KEY PROJECTS

Updating and changing two recordkeeping systems

IM is working with ITS to replace two recordkeeping systems.

- RMS is used for physical records and will be replaced with an in-house application. The new RMS application will have much the same look and functionality, with the goal of minimizing change management and end-user disruption.
- BIMS is used for electronic recordkeeping and will be replaced with SharePoint and an additional recordkeeping add-on, Records365.

Key IM staff are working on both of these projects simultaneously.

Rebuilding RMS, for physical records

The existing RMS application was built in-house in 2003. The application is integrated into most lines of business and manages a total of 4.3 million records. Examples of records managed include Employment and Financial Assistance case files, Sexual Health Clinic files, building permits, contracts and agreements, immunization files for school children, union grievances and negotiations, Fire Services inspections and investigations, etc.

The RMS application was built on the PowerBuilder platform, which ITS no longer supports. An in-house project to build the new application commenced in Q1 of 2019. The new RMS is being built in the Microsoft365 (M365) environment. One of the benefits of building it this way is that there is no need to install applications on computers. Instead, work can be done in the cloud and immediately accessed by testers. Multiple phases of testing and building have taken place, in an iterative approach.

Work on this new RMS application is ongoing. RMS is expected to launch mid-2022. For additional details on this developing work, please see the section “Initiatives for 2022 and beyond”.

Replacing BIMS, electronic records

Over the past three years, ITS has been rolling out the M365 platform, including SharePoint. ITS has built and continues to build SharePoint sites for clients one business unit at a time, designing the sites to meet specific business requirements for

each area. SharePoint serves as a replacement to network drives, providing a web-based location for staff to organize, manage, and collaborate on digital records.

IM is leveraging this investment in SharePoint and is using it in part to replace BIMS. While SharePoint has some records functionality, it is not sufficient to meet City recordkeeping requirements on its own.

IM and ITS staff worked together in 2021 on a Request for Proposals (RFP) to purchase add-on software, which will allow for recordkeeping in SharePoint. The RFP process resulted in a proof of concept (POC) with the company RecordPoint and their Records365 software (R365). The POC was successfully completed, and a contract was awarded to RecordPoint.

Successful records management is dependent on how SharePoint is structured, that is, the IA. This is true no matter what recordkeeping add-on is used. In August 2020, IM formally identified initial IA concerns to the project steering committee. In August 2021, IM documented additional feedback based on the POC stage of the RFP. The steering committee decided that the ITS approach would continue, but with an understanding that ITS would make changes to accommodate recordkeeping requirements. IM anticipates some remediation of client SharePoint sites going forward. This will include such work as renaming content types, creating new content types, adding new metadata columns, and creating new libraries. IM and ITS will work on this remediation together in the future, and ITS is pursuing an additional staffing resource to provide support.

For additional details on this developing work, please see the section “Initiatives for 2022 and beyond”.

Prioritizing work and staffing resources

The same IM staff are working on both projects simultaneously and will also be assisting with the configuration of SharePoint sites. As RMS is at end of life, and because it is so well established in many lines of business, priority will be given to new RMS over R365. This may cause some delays in the launch of R365.

Business statistics

Some key statistics for 2021 are:

- Over 4.33 million physical records were managed in RMS, the physical records system, with 87,902 new records created.

- 658,632 electronic records were checked into BIMS.
- 997 staff took IM training courses on SharePoint Basics, records management systems, and the fundamentals of records classification.
- 47 changes were made by IM to the CRCS. This includes 26 changes made to align with changes in business process, federal and provincial legislation or industry best practice. The Archives made 21 changes to their Continuous Disposition Authorities (CDA) appraisals.
- 9,750 physical records and 978 boxes were ordered back from commercial off-site storage for staff to consult.
- In accordance with the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* and with departmental approval, 72,635 physical records were securely destroyed and 3,745 records were transferred to the City Archives.
- 940 technical support calls for metadata and security access control updates and organization change were processed.

Initiatives for 2022 and beyond

New RMS rollout

The new RMS application is expected to launch mid-2022. Features will continue to be built by ITS and then approved by IM. Once the application reaches its final form, formal testing will be done, as well as user acceptance testing with some key client groups.

The new RMS is being rebuilt to be as similar to the original as possible, in order to minimize change management and end-user disruption. However, some guidance for staff will be necessary. A suite of training tools will be developed in 2022.

Once RMS is launched, IM will onboard clients, and migrate the existing records.

Converting from physical recordkeeping to electronic recordkeeping using SharePoint

In 2021 IM began working with several teams who have business processes that enable the switch from physical recordkeeping to electronic recordkeeping. The metadata established in RMS provides an excellent starting point for configuring metadata in SharePoint. One example is that document sets in SharePoint can be used to replace physical folders. This work will continue in 2022.

The R365 rollout

Expected to start mid-2022, client SharePoint sites will be onboarded into R365 one business unit at a time. The approach will involve four major components.

1. Evaluating each SharePoint site, making changes and updates to the IA.
2. Classifying the content of each library and building retention rules inside of R365.
3. Coaching and training staff, to improve SharePoint adoption and ensure appropriate use.
4. Migrating existing BIMS records to the appropriate client SharePoint sites, making BIMS read-only for those clients.

The onboarding approach will be done one program area at a time. The work will therefore take some time to complete. This approach is necessary, as the contents of each SharePoint library will need to be evaluated for appropriate use, classified by IM with the business owner's agreement, and libraries will need to be reconfigured by ITS with IM and client input. Additionally, if sites are onboarded and then further modified (with new libraries and new metadata) sites will need to be revisited and the R365 rules for those sites will need to be reconfigured.

COVID-19 recordkeeping cleanup

2022 is the third calendar year of dealing with COVID-19. IM is now developing its plans to assist employees who have been working from home and outside of official repositories, to declare and preserve those records. When circumstances permit, IM will identify key clients and arrange the declaration of records into RMS, or the clients' SharePoint sites. It is anticipated that the majority of key records will be unstructured and be stored in a wide variety of locations: Outlook, OneDrive, shared drives, Teams sites, local drives, WebEOC, and others. Staff anticipate this work to take several months. This work may also require ITS to facilitate the transfer of records into repositories or the remediation of metadata. This recordkeeping challenge is present in most organizations.