Management of Social Media Generated Records at the National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe

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Outline

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- A record is information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of businesses (ISO 15489, 2001)

- Due to technological advancements records are now being created on social media and can be accessed by outsiders through access to websites and social media platforms.

- Social media: collaborative online applications and technologies which enable and encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialisation amongst a community of users (Bowley, 2009). Social media records :records that are created, used, maintained and preserved using various social media tools.

Background of the study (continued)

- Higher education institutions, including universities, across the world are increasingly using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram for recruitment, to communicate decisions taken by institutions as well as announce results of researches/findings undertaken in these institutions hence the need for social media records management.

- Social media generated records (SMGR) have presented organisations with challenges of authenticity, proof, reliability, preservation, maintenance(Kamatula, 2017; Nathan & Shaffer, 2012; Kabata, n.d)

- A record is supposed to be trustworthy, reliable and authentic, able to serve as evidence, and to support accountability (Oberg and Borglund, 2006).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Failure to manage SMGR at NUST has resulted in challenges with customer care and poor service delivery where authentic and reliable information is not communicated to NUST's stakeholders.

- NUST has had to take to its official social media platforms to address authenticity and reliability of information on social media posted by some individuals on behalf of NUST and this points to challenges in the way social media generated records are managed at the institution.

- Electronic records, in particular, will be lost if people within the organization are not charged with the task of protecting them (The World Bank, 2000). As such social media records if not managed effectively can be lost before NUST uses them to support certain business decisions within the organisation.

- The study therefore sought to investigate how NUST manages its SMGR

Research objectives

- To establish if NUST recognises social media generated content as official records.
- To establish how social media records are generated and controlled at NUST.
- To identify the RM challenges NUST is currently facing with regards to its social media records.
- To find out how the NUST records management policy addresses issues of social media generated records.
- To identify if NUST uses any best practices for the management of their social media generated records.
- To establish measures NUST applies to ensure authenticity of social media records.

Research methodology

- **Qualitative** approach because of its ability to be carried out with limited respondents (Brief, 2012).

- **Case study** (NUST being the single case) and drew the population of the study from the Administrative units.

- **Purposive sampling**.

- **Interviews** with Registrar, Director- Communication and Marketing and the Director- Information and Communication Technology Services

- **Content analysis**: social media platforms for NUST (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube & Flickr) and the NUST website; NUST Records Management Policy, Communication Policy as well as the NUST ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Are Social Media Generated Records official records?

- *'NUST recognises social media content as official records e.g. the 2017 graduation live-streamed on YouTube is an official record'*, Director- Marketing and Communication
- Guidelines for deciding if social media posts are records include considering uniqueness, if the information contains the organisation's business, mission or policies, is the tool authorised by the organisation as well as whether there is business need for the information (NARA,2013).

Are Social Media Generated Records official records? (continued)

- Given the fact that in the Zimbabwean context, 'a record means any medium in or on which information is recorded' (National Archives Act, 1986) or 'a record includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, papers and any other thing on which information is recorded or stored by graphic, electronic, mechanical or other means…' (AIPPA, 2003) these social media generated records could be official records.

- However, **content analysis** showed that the NUST records management policy does not address social media records management and this could mean that social media generated records are not being properly regulated.

Responsibility for SMR generation, posting and control

- University Registrar, *"**NUST posts and controls social media records through the Communication and Marketing office."***

- There was little evidence of capture of records from social media platforms at NUST. Mainly the organisation posts to these platforms information already documented elsewhere within the organisation.

- *"**NUST uses its communication policy to exercise control in the posting of social media records**."* (Director- Communication and Marketing)

- Failure to capture other records on the social media platforms is a cause for concern because the platforms 'may stop (permanently or temporarily) providing the service (or any features within the service) to users …' (YouTube, 2012).

- Capture can be done manually through copying and converting word documents or taking screenshots and converting to PDF or by use of in built tools within the various social media for capture (Carey, 2016; Franks, 2016).

SMGR management challenges

- Director- Communication and Marketing, ***"NUST Faces a challenge of people or organisations who respond seemingly through automated responses that are not in any way related to particular posts"***

- This is consistent with social media records management challenges especially on the high accumulation rates for social media records such that the organisation may be unable to identify elements constituting an authentic record like content, context and associated metadata (Kamatula, 2017).

NUST records management policy and SMGR

- **Content Analysis**-The NUST Records Management Policy does not address social media generated records.

- The importance of a social media records management policy cannot be under estimated because if properly implemented a policy enables '…the creation and management of authentic, reliable and useable records, capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required' (ISO 15489, 2001) hence the need for policies to be communicated and implemented at all levels within the organisation.

Best Practices for SMGR capture & preservation

- Director- Information and Communication Technology Services "*We currently do not use any best practices for capture or preservation'.*

- Given the fact that '…the adoption of best practices is viewed as a mechanism for improving the performance of a process, business unit, product, service, or an entire organisation' (Szwejczewski, 2011) the aspect of introducing best practices in the capture and preservation of social media generated records can not be underestimated.

- Best practices for capture and preservation are given as including 'using web crawling or other software to create local versions of sites; using web capture tools to capture social media content and migrate to other formats; using platform specific application programming interfaces (APIs), manual methods and using tools built into some social media platforms to export content' (NARA, 2013; Day-Thompson, 2016)

- The successful capture of the social media content will depend on how the social media platform is configured, the needs of a particular organisation and the resources available to enable the successful capture. Capture can be through open or commercial software or using the native tools that come with the various social media platforms (Franks, 2016)

Measures to ensure authenticity of SMGR

- ***Director, Information and Communication Technology Services- 'In order to ensure control and authenticity of social media records NUST maintains one official account per social media platform. The rights and passwords to ensure access to the official accounts are granted to a few selected individuals. Also before posting the social media content, the communication and marketing office ensures that it is from specific offices with authority to relay that specific information'.***

- To ensure the authenticity of records, organizations should implement and document policies and procedures which control the creation, receipt, transmission, maintenance and disposition of records to ensure that records creators are authorized and identified and that records are protected against unauthorized addition, deletion, alteration, use and concealment. These policies must articulate clearly recordkeeping roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, for effective social media records management, organisations should establish social media working groups comprised of records management staff, web managers, social media managers, information technology staff, privacy and information security staff, agency counsel, public affairs staff, and other relevant stakeholders (ISO 15489, 2001; NARA, 2013).

Recommendations

✓ NUST should come up with social media use and social media records management policies to specify what social media platforms the institution uses for social media posts and offer guidelines for SMGR

✓ NUST should establish a social media working group comprised of the RM Department, Communication and Marketing office personnel, Information & Communication Technology Services staff and other relevant stakeholders so as to ensure that all its social media records are properly preserved.

✓ The NUST Records Management Policy should be revised to accommodate SMR in order to provide guidelines for RM.

✓ NUST introduces a viable RM unit (records centre or registry) to spearhead the adoption of best practices and standards for all RM activities at NUST

✓ NUST should introduce short courses on records management to cater for trends in RM as a result of various technologies. The short courses could target staff at NUST.

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