



# The Dichotomy of Manual and Electronic Record Management Practices in Southwestern Nigeria University: The Empirical Analysis

**Ayotunde David ODEWALE (Ph.D)\***

Department of Local Government and Development Studies,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria  
[\*Corresponding author],

**Adeline R. ADEYEMI**

Office of The Registrar,  
Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu, Osun State, Nigeria

**John Monday ETEBOM (Ph.D)**

Department of Local Government and Development Studies,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

## Abstract

The paper examines the dichotomy between the manual and electronic records management practices in Southwestern Nigerian universities, especially in this era of global village, where Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become the pivotal tool in carrying out business in any organization. Despite this narrative, the university system still finds it difficult to completely migrate from traditional paper record-keeping to electronic records. Related literatures were reviewed. Primary and secondary data were utilised. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were sourced through existing literature. The paper revealed that both traditional/manual and electronic/digital means are used interchangeably in the records management of Southwestern Nigerian universities. The paper highlighted some recommendations and concluded that various records management practices used in the registries of universities in Southwestern Nigeria are manual and electronic record management practices. Universities in South-western Nigeria combine both traditional and modernized record management practices in their registries.

## Keywords

Records, Records Management, Manual Records, Electronic Records, University

## INTRODUCTION

The heart of the university administration is the registry, where all administrative and academic activities radiate into all sections of the University system (Allison, 2021). The registry division generates large volumes of physical and electronic records and documents on a daily and regular basis, also it deals with important records generated from the students admitted into the institution and all their academic records till they graduate; these records include their entry requirement certificates, semester results, transcripts, and other vital records of the students (Allison, 2021). University education is expected to serve as a pillar of any nation in proffering solutions to societal problems through research and teaching (Odewale, Adepoju & Edema, 2022).

The university is perceived as the universal city where innovation, research, teaching and community service are thriving especially in this era of the global village (Odewale, Etebom & Edema, 2022). Though the whole world has become a global village where every institution is expected to embrace tech-savvy to enhance productivity and performance, some of these institutions are still lagging in adopting new technology, they are still attached to manual record management practices. The ability of registry staff of universities to shrewd themselves to this technological

advancement can help in streamlining all the different processes of record management, from keeping student's information in one place, admitting new students, conducting examinations, verifying results, maintaining archive reports, preparing and providing transcript, course forms preservation, providing a schedule for classes, changing names of people, and preparing graduate academic records. The created records are of high importance to the university and as such need to be strictly preserved. Management of the generated records of students is the responsibility of the registry staff of universities, not only does the registry deal with keeping student information but have more to do with all personnel, be it academic staff, senior staff, junior staff, and the senate and council of the university.

There are divergences of opinion about the efficacy of record management practices in tandem with the use of tech-savvy for transactions in Nigeria's university system. However, critical observation denotes that in some of the university registries, it appears that record keeping of students is poorly practised and some of them are mutilated, torn, exaggerated, misplaced and irretrievable, most especially in public institutions due to the use of manual record management practices. Employees in registry departments of both private and public universities are characterized by an alarming rate of incompetency, and ineffectiveness in records management, due to a lack of computer literacy.

Various studies (Ngoepe, 2008; Nwaomah, 2015; Ridwan, 2015; Chidobi, 2015) have alluded to the fact that tech-savvy has not been adequately adopted in records management practice in university systems, especially concerning student management information in Nigeria universities. Forgetting the fact that records management practices in the university setting are beyond the student records alone, but all the staff, be it academics, administrative, junior staff, and even the university council and any other administrative matter.

It is also observed that most of the institutions including the university system find it difficult to completely migrate from traditional paper record-keeping to electronic record-keeping. The policy of Paper vs. electronic documents: The Electronic Records and Signatures in Commerce Act 2000, which broadly authorizes the adoption of electronic documents in place of paper documents, is still a mirage in most Nigerian universities. The budget for purchasing stationeries, especially those that are peculiar to record keeping in most of the universities' registry sections still outrageous, compared to what can be safe if majorly adopting electronic record management.

More so, some observations clearly show the challenges of complete migration from paper-based records management to electronic methods constitute a mirage. The traditional way of records management practice which involves the management and storage of hard-copy documents must evolve largely to accommodate the new trend of tech-savvy electronic record management systems to increase job performance, and ultimately enhance service delivery. Hence, this study examines the dichotomy between the manual and electronic means of record management in the Southwestern Nigeria Universities registry. The paper is divided into the following sections. Introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, and discussion of findings, while sections six and seven discussed conclusion and recommendations respectively.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The paper used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires and the conduct of interviews, while secondary data were obtained through existing literature. Multi-stage sample technique was used to select six universities from Southwestern Nigeria, i.e., two federal government-owned, two state government-owned and two private-owned universities. University of Ibadan (UI), and Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA) as federal government-owned, Lagos State University (LASU), and Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) as state government-owned, while Oduduwa University Ipetumodu (OUI) and Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD) were chosen as private-owned Universities. The study population of 894 respondents was drawn from the four (4) divisions of registry in the administrative structure of the university, which report directly to the registrar, which include: The Academic Affairs Division (226); Establishment Division (216); Council and General Administrative Division (182); and Admission Division (268). The sample size of 276 was administered from the population using Taro Yamani's statistical formula. In addition, interviews were conducted for selected Deputy Registrars to elicit information from the six selected universities. Secondary data were generated through books, journals, articles, and internet sources. The data collected were analysed using appropriate descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean value, and standard deviation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Records**

The term 'record' originated from the Latin word 'recordari' meaning to be mindful of, or to remember (Esse, 2002). Records are documents that serve as evidence of an activity or transaction performed by an organization. The International Standard Organisation (ISO, 2016), defines a record as "information created, received and maintained as evidence by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or the transaction of business". This definition agrees with the statutory definition of records (44 United States Code 3301), which defines records as "books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of the data in them".

Akor and Julie (2013) assert that a record implies any document, or source of information that is compiled, recorded or stored in written form or on film, by electronic process, or by any other means records are evidence of information about activities or transaction and transcends across all aspect of human life. Every day we perform events, activities, and transactions as an organization or individuals and it is very cogent to keep records of activities, events and information. These records may include paper documents, digital records in the form of recorded messages, emails or visual records. This affirms Oyinloye's (2013) definition of records as any written or oral evidence that has been collected and kept for use in making decisions. Usman & Udensi (2013) is of the view that a record is one of the most important organizational assets that have value even beyond its immediate environment. Records are the most vital organisational assets because a little mismanagement of records can cause great havoc in the organization. A piece of evidence about the past and present, especially in writing or some other permanent form. The University of Iowa Chapter 17 Records Management (Amended 3/31/22) defines records as “anything containing information which is made, produced, executed, or received in connection with the transactions and official activities of the University or executed in the conduct of University business, including research, teaching, service, and administration”. Examples include documents, books, paper, electronic records, photographs, videos, sound recordings, databases, and other data compilations used for multiple purposes, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics.

Records can be divided into two categories:

- i. Official
  - ii. Transitory/Convenience.
- i. **Official records:** Official records are legally recognized and judicially enforceable quality of establishing some fact, policy, or institutional position or decision. The single official copy of a document maintained on file by an administrative unit of the University which is usually, but not always, the original subject to the records retention requirements included in the Records Management Program and Retention Schedule.
- ii. **Transitory/convenience records:** Transitory or convenience records are duplicate copies of official records. These are extra copies of documents or records created or preserved for convenient access and/or for reference, including computer backups and duplicate computer files, and miscellaneous correspondence without official significance.

### Records Management

Records Management is a field of management which governs how organizations create, receive, store, use, access, and dispose of records, regardless of whether records are in paper or electronic format. National Open University of Nigeria Lis 310 (Records Management and Archives Administration) course guide Module 1 pg. 5, in National University Commission (2008) expatiate that the term records management refers to the planning, budgeting, organizing, directing, training, and control involved in managing the life cycle of records in any medium. The objective of records management is to certify that all papers, manuscripts, raw data and information generated and turned into records are managed and maintained in a manner that meets all internal and external business needs of the creating company. It ensures that records comply with all regulatory and statutory requirements; defends the institution and its people against external demands and is capable of providing primary and secondary evidence of transaction or business process which is admissible in a court of law. Records management ensures that records are kept and maintained most economically; meet all environmental and other requirements and are finally destroyed or transferred in an auditable way.

The International Standard Organization (ISO, 2016) defined records management practices as the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records. Records management practices entail varying activities such as:

- i. Setting policies and standards
- ii. Assigning responsibilities and authorities
- iii. Establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines
- iv. Providing a range of services relating to the management and use of records
- v. Designing, implementing and administering specialized systems for managing record
- vi. Integrating records management into business systems and processes.

Kanzi (2010) asserts that a sound records management practice is the foundation for managing resources and the delivery of services to the public. Goodman (2004) is of the view that records management provides traces of activities and behaviours, it helps managers look back, and evaluate the present while planning for the future in such a way that the past mistakes are not repeated besides replicating the routes of past successes. ARMA International (2013), opined that poor records management practice has led to corrupt practices, lack of accountability and poor governance structures. This established the fact that Records are among the vital tools that business organizations require to attain their set objectives and effective record management practice ensures quality, accuracy, accessibility, authenticity and security of information in both paper and electronic systems. Oyinloye (2013) defines records management as the creation, distribution, maintenance, retention, preservation, retrieval and disposal of records. Records can be managed manually or electronically to enable the information therein to be used by future generations in setting policies.

Most universities in Nigeria are continuously deploying integrated records management as a means of improving decision-making as well as service delivery quality (Allison. 2021). Integrated in the sense that both physical and electronic records management is seen in Nigerian universities set up be it federal government-owned, state government-owned or privately owned universities.

## Theoretical Framework

The Records Continuum Model (RCM) is commonly referred to as Records Continuum Theory, as well as Australian continuum thinking and/or approaches. The records continuum model (RCM) is an abstract conceptual model that was created in the 1990s by Monash University academics, with the help of scholars like Frank Upward, Sue Mckemmish and Livia Lacovino. The model helps to explore and understand the activities involved in recordkeeping, especially in this digital age. The model was created as a response to challenges in evolving discussions about managing digital records and archives (traditional means).

**Table 1** Dichotomy between the Manual and Electronic Records Management Practices in the Registries of Universities in Southwestern, Nigeria

Assertion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Descriptive Statistics	
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean value	Standard deviation
The registry section of this university has a well-stated policy on the means of records management practices adopted	136 (49.3)	120 (43.5)	12 (4.3)	8 (2.9)	- (-)	1.6087	.70772
The university has a strong designed programme to systematically control records from their entire life cycle (creation to disposal) using manual or electronic means	84 (30.4)	160 (58.0)	24 (8.7)	8 (2.9)	- (-)	1.8406	.69540
Proper responsibilities and authority are given to each staff from formulation to the evaluation of these policies	105 (38.0)	124 (44.9)	33 (12.0)	14 (5.1)	- (-)	1.8406	.82459
Proper records creation is a major part of what we do here	102 (37.0)	159 (57.6)	15 (5.4)	- (-)	- (-)	1.6848	.57073
Capturing, registration, and classification of records are often carried out as an integrated service of manual and electronic in this university	85 (30.8)	160 (58.0)	27 (9.8)	4 (1.4)	- (-)	1.8188	.65766
Access to and tracking of records are easier by using electronic means in this university	74 (26.8)	111 (40.2)	79 (28.6)	12 (4.3)	- (-)	2.1051	.84843
Paper records are stored in a clean and dry environment with proper facilities like filing cabinets and filing racks instead of stacking them on the floor	104 (37.7)	74 (26.8)	27 (9.8)	71 (25.7)	- (-)	2.2355	1.20558
The storage of electronic records is very effective in this university	76 (27.5)	101 (36.6)	40 (14.5)	59 (21.4)	- (-)	2.2971	1.09152
The non-electronic/manual records management system is paramount in this university	55 (19.9)	163 (59.1)	31 (11.2)	27 (9.8)	- (-)	2.1087	.83282
The physical and analogue pattern of records management is safer than electronic records	48 (17.4)	57 (20.7)	52 (18.8)	99 (35.9)	20 (7.2)	2.9493	1.24651
The use of active records frequently is evident in this university	106 (38.4)	141 (51.1)	29 (10.5)	- (-)	- (-)	1.7210	.64249
Inactive records are being preserved until the end of retention in this university	63 (22.8)	135 (48.9)	66 (23.9)	8 (2.9)	4 (1.4)	2.1123	.83887

The ideas evolved as part of an Australian approach to archival management espoused by Ian Maclean, Chief Archivist of the Commonwealth Archives Office in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. Maclean, whose ideas and practices were the subject of the first Records Continuum Research Group (RCRG) publication in 1994, (McKemmish & Piggott, 1994), referred in a 1959 American Archivist article to a "continuum of (public) records administration" from administrative efficiency through recordkeeping to the safe keeping of a "cultural end-product". *Maclean (1959)* challenged the divide between current recordkeeping and archival practice, while Peter Scott, a contemporary of Maclean at the Commonwealth Archives Office, also recognized records continuum theory as a registry system that helped identify and document the complex and multiple "social, functional, provenance, and documentary relationships" involved in managing records and recordkeeping processes over space-time (past, present and future).



Post-custodial as an archival concept plays a major role in how the RCM was conceived. This term was born from an identified and urgent need to address the complexities of computer technologies on records creation and management over time and space. Post-custodial is discussed by Frank Upward and Sue McKemmish in 1994 as part of an exploration of changes in archival discourse commencing in the 1980s by Gerald Ham (Ham,1981) and expanded on by Terry Cook as part of a "post-custodial paradigm shift" from the traditional way of recordkeeping to electronic records management (Cook, 1994). Post-custodial concerning the RCM is explored by Upward and McKemmish as an entry point into a wider conversation about records and recordkeeping being part of a process in which archival institutions have a part to play beyond that of the archival authority handling, appraising, describing and arranging physical objects in their custody.

The model helps to understand and explore the multiple contexts of interaction that involve recordkeeping activities over space and time. McKemmish (2001) opines that the multiple contexts of interactions that involve recordkeeping activities over a period encompass contemporary recordkeeping, regulatory recordkeeping, and historical recordkeeping. Tech-savvy plays a significant role in appraising these multiple interactions within the premise of contemporary, regulatory and historical recordkeeping. The ICT is one of the umbilical cords attached to contemporary recordkeeping; even regulatory and historical recordkeeping may not suffice in the absence of tech-savvy in the process of record management practices. Continuum recordkeeping processes involve adding metadata and fixing documents, to enable them to be managed as contextual evidence. Records that still have value are retained and managed as historical recordkeeping via the context of provenance; however, records which have no archival value are destroyed once they lose their administrative value. Meanwhile, with the use of tech-savvy the records that have lost the administrative value can be destroyed, and at the same time can be retrieved if need be.

However, these are a few means of model dimensions explanation with diverse realities that happen in space-time, it can occur one after the other in electronic or computer environment and/or physical space (Reed, 2005). The model also enunciates the numerous views that are bestowed to documentaries including community, individual, organisation, and institutional perspectives. These reveal the need to observe various stakeholders and co-contributors in connection to engage the assessment of the documentary. Records are therefore not simply physical or computer presentations of the physical thing preserved in the repository but are a fact of diverse views, and narratives that provide their structure.

Drawing from the above theoretical foundations, the RCM as a framework acknowledges the central role that recordkeeping activities have on the creation, capture, organization and ongoing management s records over time and throughout spaces such as organizations and institutional archives. Recordkeeping is a practice and a concept clearly defined in the archival and records literature by continuum writers as a broad concept of integrated recordkeeping and archiving processes for current, regulatory, and historical recordkeeping through the use of technologies driving systems.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study sought to examine the dichotomy between the manual and electronic records management practices in the university registries of Southwestern, Nigeria. As noted from the findings, the majority of the respondents (about 93%) affirm the facts that the registry section has a well-stated policy regarding the means of record management practices that guide their activities, and these policies are adequately observed from formulation to evaluation. Moreso, 88.4 % of the respondents agree with the fact that there is a strong systematic control of records from their entire life cycle of creation to disposal using manual or electronic means. The findings also showed that proper records creation, capturing, tracking, and clarification are evident in the registries of Southwestern Nigerian universities using both manual and electronic means. Also, the use of active records frequently is evident, and the preservation of inactive records until the retention schedules are strongly observed. The majority of the respondents also established the existence of paper or manual records for storage with adequate facilities like cabinets, and filing racks, the storage of electronic records is very effective in these universities.

To complement the data gathered through questionnaire administration, some stakeholders representing the users of record management practices were interviewed. On asking about the various records management practices used in the Southwestern universities, the majority of the interviewees opine on the fact that both traditional/manual and electronic/digital means are used in records management. The Deputy Registrar Establishment TASUED asserted that: The one I am familiar with is that people's records are kept in a file and updated. It's more of the old method but there are plans to make everything go digital. We still use the old traditional method, although the final decisions are imputed by an officer, so invariably both manual and electronic means are adopted for record management.

Moreover, to buttress the above assertion, the Deputy Registrar of Academic Affairs at UI also stated that:

Years back we had manual record keeping but the university is evolving into the use of ICT, but there is still the normal filing system and cabinet, and there are soft copies of these hard copies files made available to the people. The practice in the university is both manual and electronic practice.

One of the stakeholders interviewed representing the user of records management practices, the Deputy Registrar Academics Affairs LASU commented that;

A manual filing system still exists in this university, students' files are arranged in a cabinet and are tagged appropriately for easy identification. Although we have electronic means of storing information, the manual filing system is very much in use. Some files cannot be electronically stored, for instance, students' certificates cannot be electronically stored, which warrants the need for a manual filling system.

In addition, the use of archive management system and digital records management, cloud records keeping, computerization and filing records system, Document Retention, Electronic storage, Emails and instant message logs, file directing, ICT, MIS, and DBMS, Indexing and categorization, secure storage, physical and analogue practice, Proper record computing, Serial file organization, Storage and retrieval system were also identified as part of the various records management practices used in Southwestern Nigeria universities which could be classified as electronic means. Summarily, the study established the use of manual and electronic means of records management, with the use of paper or manual more visible than the electronic means in Southwestern Nigerian universities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drawn from this study:

- i. The University policy should encompass the use of tech-savvy or ICT in record management practice, this should cut across all registry units to enhance the efficient and effective performance of workers
- ii. A proper implementation process should be put in place, to ensure that the registry unit is operating in line with the University policy on the use of ICT in record management practice.
- iii. Traditional records management methods should be modernized for records that cannot be electronically processed and stored.
- iv. Electronic record management practices should be infused and inculcated in all cadres of staff in the university.
- v. The traditional way of records management practices must evolve largely in Southwestern Universities to accommodate the new trend of ICT in records management.

## CONCLUSION

The paper concluded that the various records management practices used in the registries of universities in Southwestern Nigeria are manual and electronic record management practices. Universities in Southwestern Nigeria combine both traditional and modernized record management practices in their registries.

## REFERENCES

1. Akor, P. and Julie, U. (2013). An Assessment of Record Management System in Establishment Division of Two Universities in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 4(12):87-96.
2. Allison, G.O. (2021). Records Management Practices And Job Performance Of Registry Staff Of Universities In Ogun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Management Science Research*. 5(9): 69-78.
3. ARMA International (2013), "Educational resources", available at: [www.armavi.orgeducation](http://www.armavi.orgeducation), (accessed 8 September 2019).
4. Chidobi, R.U (2015) Extent of ICT Application in the Management of Administrative and Student Personnel Records in the Public Universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. *World Journal of Education*. 5(4): 64-71.
5. Cook, T. (1994). Electronic records, paper minds: the revolution in information management and archives in the post-custodial and post-modernist era. *Archives and Manuscripts*. 22 (2):300–328.
6. Esse U.O.A. (2002). Preservation and Management of Public Records: The Role of Federal and State Governments. Proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting of Committee on Archival Development, July 18-19. p.8
7. Goodman, S.K. (2004), Records continuum model in context and its implication for archival practice. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*. 22 (1) 34-45.
8. Ham, F. G. (1981). Archival strategies for the post-custodial era. *American Archivist*. 44 (3): 207–16.
9. International Standards Organization (ISO 15489-1, 2016). Information and documentation – records management – Records management — Part 1: Concepts and principles. <https://www.iso.org/standard/62542.html>
10. Kanzi, N. (2010). An investigation of the role of records management with specific reference to Amathole District municipal. Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10948/1169>
11. Maclean, I. (1959). Australian experience in records and archives management. *American Archivist*. 22 (4): 383–418.
12. McKemmish, S., & Piggott, M. (1994). *The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives: first fifty years*. Clayton: Ancora Press.
13. McKemmish, S. (2001). Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice. *Archival Science*. 1(4): 333– 338.
14. National Universities Commission (2008). Guidelines for open and distance learning in Nigerian universities. Retrieved from <http://www.nuc.edu.ng/nucsit/file/ODL%20REVISED%20GUIDELINES%20FOR%20NIGERIA%20UNIVERSITIES.pdf>
15. Ngoepe, M. S. (2008). An Exploration of Records Management Trends in the South African Public Sector: A case study of the department of provincial and local government. A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Information Science at the University of South Africa, 2008. Available online at [http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2705/dissertation\\_ngoepe\\_%20m.pdf?sequence=1](http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2705/dissertation_ngoepe_%20m.pdf?sequence=1)
16. Nwaomah, A. E. (2015). Information And Communication Technology (ICT) Usage On Students Records Management Effectiveness In The Nigerian Universities. *International Journal of Social Relevance & Concern (IJSRC)*.3(6), 12-26.
17. Odewale, A. D., Adepoju, B.M. & Edema, J.O. (2022). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Educational Activities in Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife Nigeria. *The Journalish: Social and Government*, 3(1), 28-34.
18. Odewale, A. D., Etebom, J.M., & Edema, J.O. (2022). Distance Learning (e-learning) in Obafemi Awolowo University During COVID-19 Pandemic School Lock-down in Nigeria: The Prospects and Challenges. *UNIZIK Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, January-June 2022. 2(1), 8-17.
19. Oyinloye, O.T. (2013). Elements of records management. Rafmic International Limited. Pg. 9-11.
20. Reed, B. (2005). Reading the records continuum: interpretations and explorations. *Archives and Manuscripts*. 33 (1): 18–43.

21. Ridwan, S. M. (2015). Application of Information And Communication Technology In Management Of Information Resources And Services In Kaduna State Tertiary Institutions' Libraries Kaduna-Nigeria *European Scientific Journal*. SPECIAL edition 1; 10-18.
22. Usman, A.P. & Udensi, J. (2013). An assessment of record management system in establishment division of two universities in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 4(12): 87-96.
23. [44 U.S. Code § 3301 - Definition of records | U.S. Code | US Law | LII / Legal Information](#) Institute (cornell.edu)
24. <https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/administrative-financial-and-facilities-policies/records-management>

