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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN OFFICE RECORDS MANAGEMENT: A POST-PANDEMIC IMPERATIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The sudden transition to digital work during the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way companies handle and secure office records. Physical files and on-site archives were suddenly off-limits overnight, forcing many workplaces, particularly in the public sector, into a digital space. Face Rishabh Pant was not so smooth, though. The pandemic also shed light on a frequently ignored problem within records management: the digital divide, the inequitable divide in access to digital tools, infrastructure, and training that impacts the ability to effectively manage records in today's workplace.

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT AND RECORD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EDRMS)

Digital records management transformation was long overdue, but the pace at which it was mandated due to COVID-19 has caused a level of exposure for many organisations. For example, while some organisations promptly switched to cloud-based EDRMS, others encountered problems such as poor internet access, outdated hardware and a shortage of trained staff to monitor city documents and records remotely.

Ifinedo (2021) posited that this gap is not only in the access to devices or internet, but also a digital divide in digital literacy, implementing ICT policies and systems usability. Rural and less-resourced facilities generally lack the infrastructure and capacity to adopt completely digital records. This asymmetry has some serious consequences, especially when compliance, accountability and data security may hang in the balance.

In addition, the investigation by Yusof, Ismail and Zainol (2020) indicated that in the Malaysian government agencies, the adoption of the EDRMS was affected by the resistance to change, lack of strategic leadership, and users' training too.

Even with digital systems being adopted, most users were not prepared to tag metadata, use versions and keep documents organised. This resulted in inefficiencies in the business process and a reduced return on investment. Bridging this gap necessitates a multifaceted strategy.

a. Capacity Development

Ongoing up-skilling in digital skills is key. Employees of all levels, particularly support and administrative personnel, should be educated in not only navigating digital records

platforms, but also understanding the digital files themselves and in making sure it is all kept safe.

- b. Accessible Technology
EDRMS should be platform-independent and mobile-compatible to allow remote access. Solutions that are too technical or resource-heavy often discourage user adoption.
- c. Policy Support and Governance
Clear national policies and institutional guidelines must set minimum standards for digital records management, emphasising inclusivity and equitable access.
- d. Cultural and Linguistic Inclusivity
As noted by Mohd Daud and Norazman (2022), integrating real-life simulations and multilingual support into training programs enhances learning outcomes and user engagement.

Bridging the digital divide in office records management is more than an IT issue; it is an organisational imperative. Without addressing these gaps, organisations risk falling behind in transparency, operational efficiency, and service delivery. The post-pandemic era should not merely be about recovery but reformation. By democratizing access to digital records tools and knowledge, we lay the groundwork for resilient, inclusive, and future-ready office environments.

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