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Records management capacity and compliance toolkits: a critical assessment

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Abstract

Purpose:

This article presents the results of a project which critically evaluated a series of toolkits for assessing records management capacity and/or compliance. These toolkits have been developed in different countries and sectors within the context of the e-environment and providing evidence of good corporate and information governance.

Methodology:

A desk-based investigation of the tools was followed by an electronic Delphi with toolkit developers and performance measurement experts to develop a set of evaluation criteria. Different stakeholders then evaluated the toolkits against the criteria using cognitive walkthroughs and expert heuristic reviews. The results and the research process were reviewed via electronic discussion.

Findings;

Developed by recognised and highly respected organisations, three of the toolkits are software tools the fourth is a methodology. They are all underpinned by relevant national / international records management legislation, standards and good practice including, either implicitly or explicitly, ISO 15489. They all have strengths, complementing rather than competing with each other. They enable the involvement of other staff thereby providing an opportunity for raising awareness of the importance of effective records management.

Practical implications:

These toolkits are potentially very powerful, flexible and of real value to organisations in managing their records. They can be used for a 'quick and dirty' assessment of records management capacity or compliance as well as in depth analysis. The most important criterion for selecting the appropriate one is to match the toolkit with the scenario.

Originality/value of paper:

This paper aims to raise awareness of the range and nature of records management toolkits and their potential for varied use in practice to support more effective management of records.

Keywords: Records management; Toolkits; Compliance; Assessment; Benchmarking; Research

Category: Research paper

Context

Records support more effective and efficient business, underpin e-government and service delivery, help to demonstrate accountability, transparency and corporate governance, and are the source of information for citizens in the context of open government and freedom of information. But, only since the end of the 20th century and the current millennium has the importance of effective records management been widely recognised:

“Good records management should be seen as a benefit, not a burden”
(Information Commissioner's Office, 2006, p.1)

In the UK at least this has been due to a combination of factors. Public sector organisations realised that effective records management was key to them being able to comply with new freedom of information legislation and environmental information regulations (Great Britain, 2000 and 2004). Many used the Model Action Plans (MAPs) produced by The National Archives (TNA) (e.g. The National Archives, 2002) to benchmark their current practice against the recommendations for compliance with the Code of Practice on records management under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, issued by the then Lord Chancellor's Office (Lord Chancellor's Office, 2002).

Both public and private sector organisations have been affected by scandals, failures and embarrassing situations which have involved, and in some instances been the result of, mis-management of records. In the USA the Enron and Worldcom financial scandals resulted in the US Congress passing new legislation, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act or SoX (United States of America, 2002), imposing more stringent recordkeeping requirements (Stephens, 2005). The Bichard Enquiry (<http://www.bichardinquiry.org.uk/>) explored issues arising from the Soham murders, including intelligence-based record keeping and the lack of records to support information sharing between public sector agencies. And Moss (2005) critically reviews the inadequacies of recordkeeping as revealed by the Hutton Enquiry. There are many other

examples of negative scenarios which have raised the profile of records management in today's e-information society.

On a positive note ISO 15489 (2001) provides an authoritative source for promoting effective records management as underpinning effective business management. Since the publication of this important best practice standard, guides have been produced and training opportunities provided to help organisations successfully implement it. Examples in the UK are the BIP0025:1-4 guides (BSI 2002, 2003 and 2007) and workshops provided by BSI, the Records Management Society (www.rms-gb.org.uk) and TPFL (www.tfpl.com).

In addition, since the publication of ISO 15489 (2001) a range of toolkits has been developed for different yet related purposes within the broad context of measuring records management capacity, compliance and/or readiness in the electronic environment. They have been developed by different organisations in different countries and from different sectors. This article shares the results of a short project, undertaken from September 2005 to February 2006, which investigated the development and application of some of these toolkits.

Project aims and research questions

The aim of the project was to critically evaluate four toolkits for assessing records management capacity and/or compliance from both the theoretical and practical aspects. In doing so it sought to answer the following questions:

- Why were the toolkits developed? Why did their developers see a need for a toolkit and invest in their development? What was the rationale?
- What is the purpose of the toolkits and who are the intended users? Are they the similar or different?
- What models, theoretical frameworks and/or principles underpinned the toolkits? Why were these chosen and were any others considered and rejected?

- What is the underlying design and technology used and why was this chosen?
- Who is actually using the toolkits, how and why? How practical are they to implement? How effective are they? What value and benefits have been gained by deploying them?
- What are the strengths of the toolkits?
- How do the toolkits compare in terms of appropriateness for different scenarios or contexts?

The work built on the results of a previous project which assessed the impact of ISO 15489 in the UK (McLeod, 2004a, b; McLeod, 2005; McLeod and Childs, 2006) and highlighted the need for practical tools to help organisations assess their compliance with the ISO standard.

Records management toolkits

The four toolkits selected for the study were (in alphabetical order):

- *Information Governance Toolkit (IGT)*
developed by the UK National Health Service (NHS) and only available via NHSnet; designed to assess Information management (IM) governance in NHS organisations
<https://www.igt.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/>
- *Information Management Capacity Check (IMCC) Tool and Methodology*
developed by the Library and Archives Canada; designed to assess IM capabilities of Canadian federal organisations
<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/002/007002-2003-e.html>
- *Records Management Capacity Assessment System (RMCAS)*
developed by the International Records Management Trust; designed to assess Records and Information Management (RIM) capacity in the

public sector, particularly for developing countries

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/rmcas>

- *RiskProfiler*

developed by ARMA International and NetDiligence; designed to assess RIM for compliance (available to all organisations for a fee)

<http://www.arma.org/standards/eassessment.cfm>

Two of the toolkits explicitly incorporate the requirements of ISO 15489 within their design and two encompass the spirit of what the standard seeks to ensure viz. “that appropriate attention and protection is given to all records, and that the evidence and information they contain can be retrieved more efficiently and effectively, using standard practices and procedures” (ISO 15489-1, 2001, p vi). The organisations producing the toolkits were keen to participate in the project, believing it would add value for the profession and wider potential user community.

A literature review at the start of the project found that records management toolkits had not been widely discussed and literature on the four particular toolkits was very limited, other than press releases on the Web.

Three articles were found referring to records management toolkits in general. Harries (2001, p36) refers to ‘workflow and object-orientated toolkits’, in the context of software packages that address electronic document and records management. Barata and Cain (2003) discuss a wide range of records management ‘toolkits’ which include methodologies, standards and codes of practice. And Bailey (2003, p.27) refers to the development of an Electronic Records Management Training Package as a tool for raising awareness and promoting best practice in records management where there is none. (This tool was in fact developed by Northumbria University (Hare, 2003) and has since been replaced with a training guide for administrators (JISC infoNet <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/records-management/guide-for-administrators>).

Other articles describe one or other of the toolkits covered in this project:

Carlisle (2004) on the ARMA toolkit; Demb (2004) and Griffin (2004) on the RMCS toolkit; Wells (2004) on the IGT.

A few articles were found on evaluating toolkits. Thebridge (2004) and Greenwood and Davies (2004) discuss toolkits in library contexts, the latter providing interesting and relevant background from the toolkit developer's perspective. They describe designing a toolkit for evaluating a project as a "formidable task" where affordability was key for both the funders and project co-ordinators and concluded that the toolkit development process "demonstrated the importance of properly framed evaluation in achieving excellence and in advocacy" (Greenwood and Davies, 2004, p 110 and p112). Their experience was relevant to both the evaluation process undertaken in this research project and the understanding of the outcomes from the perspectives of different stakeholders, viz. users and developers. Haswell and Banwell (2004) report on an investigation into existing toolkits for ICT evaluation but do not explain how to evaluate a toolkit.

Two articles were useful in exploring definitions of '*evaluation*' and '*toolkits*'. Banwell (2000, p173) describes '*evaluation*' as a complex field, associated with a range of other concepts including "performance measurement and benchmarking, quality, validity, effectiveness, value for money, best value and audit". Oliver and Conole (2000, p32) define '*toolkits*' as "decision making systems based on expert models" which they expand on saying:

"all toolkits include an expert model of a process derived from recognised theory and best practice ... [they] produce documentary evidence of assumptions, process and outputs ... for quality assurance and assessment purposes ... bringing best practice within the reach of all practitioners in a usable format" Oliver and Conole (2000, p35).

These definitions are important since the word 'toolkit' can vary from discipline to discipline, the types of tool can vary and the scope of an evaluation must be clear.

Methodology

To achieve the aims and answer the research questions the project investigated:

- (a) the context and purpose(s) of each tool
- (b) the underlying principles and models of their design, and
- (c) their utilisation and the benefits realised together with their strengths and areas for improvement from the stakeholders' perspectives.

The qualitative methodology comprised four main phases:

- an initial desk-based investigation of the toolkits, entailing a focused review of the literature on toolkits generally, and obtaining factual information about the structure, design and output of each of the specific toolkits from manuals, background information and contact with the developers
- an e-Delphi study with toolkit developers and performance measurement experts to develop a set of criteria for evaluating any records management toolkit
- the toolkit evaluation undertaken by different stakeholders, using the project-developed criteria in cognitive walkthroughs and expert heuristic reviews
- review of the results and evaluation of the research (project) process, via electronic discussion.

Development of evaluation criteria via a Delphi study

The e-Delphi study was used to gather expert opinion on toolkit design and development and to determine a set of evaluation criteria. This technique was developed in the 1950s at the Rand Corporation to gather a consensus of 'expert' opinion (Gupta & Clarke, 1996, p.185). We used a relatively 'classic' Delphi technique (e.g. Linstone and Turoff, 2002) although it was conducted electronically via email. This approach enabled experts located in different

parts of the world to participate in the anonymous generation and agreement of evaluation criteria. They were a combination of three stakeholders involved in the development of the toolkits and two objective experts, one a records practitioner, the other a researcher with expertise in evaluation. The first round was used to elicit ideas for evaluation criteria. The experts' suggestions were analysed qualitatively to produce a first set of criteria, organised under categories. These were then fed back to them for ranking in order of importance and to identify any gaps. These results were then analysed quantitatively. However, there was little difference in ranking of the criteria; they were deemed to be of equal importance. (The evaluation criteria are given in Table 1). Though developed in the context of records management toolkits, these criteria are sufficiently generic that they could be used to evaluate any type of toolkit measuring an organisation's performance of their business processes.

Toolkit evaluation via a cognitive walkthrough and heuristic reviews

The evaluation criteria were then used to develop the structure of a cognitive walkthrough (Wharton, 1994; Bias, 1994) used by two researchers to conduct an independent and objective assessment of each toolkit. The cognitive walkthrough approach to evaluation has its origins in software engineering and involves a "detailed review of a sequence of actions" (Abowd, 1995). It is based on the information processing model of human cognition i.e. a goal is set, a system is searched for available action to meet the goal, the action is selected, the action performed, the user evaluates performance and remembers success or failure. The purpose is to evaluate the system *not* the user.

The researchers conducting the cognitive walkthrough were not records management experts though they were information management experts, and were obviously records creators and users with particular knowledge/awareness of the need to manage research records appropriately. The decision not to use records experts for this part of the evaluation was deliberate. It enabled them to evaluate the usability of the toolkit from a layperson's perspective, to become familiar with each toolkit, and to test the

suitability and clarity of the evaluation criteria. The researchers used their own organisational context (the subject team within the School of Computing, Engineering and Information Sciences at Northumbria University) as the context for using and assessing each toolkit, commenting on each step as they systematically worked their way through the toolkits sequentially from 'introduction to conclusion'.

Two further assessments were undertaken: one by a researcher with records management expertise, but no experience of using the toolkits under study; the other by a real toolkit user (one for each of the toolkits). With the help of the toolkit producers one expert user was identified for each toolkit in all but one case, where the expert user was a person known to the researchers. Asking the producers to identify these experts had the potential to introduce bias. However, it was important to identify users who were able to give a full evaluation, given only one expert user was to be used per toolkit, and this was a pragmatic approach to identifying them. The expert users had all used the particular toolkit in a real situation to ensure their evaluation was well informed and not superficial. Some were more experienced in using a toolkit than others.

These assessments took the form of a modified expert heuristic review (Nielsen, 1994).

"Heuristic review is a type of expert evaluation, where experts review a product's usability. It is an easy to learn method that can be quickly applied ... to roughly determine the usability of ... software products" (OCLC, no date).

In a heuristic review the experts bring their own knowledge to their assessment; they have previously learned and internalised appropriate heuristics which they apply in a more informal way to the evaluation task. They do not necessarily follow the set of sequential steps used by the cognitive walkers but conduct their evaluation as a more random, non-linear

process. However, in our approach the project-developed criteria were also used by the records expert and the expert toolkit users. Use of toolkit users extended the normal scope of a heuristic review beyond an evaluation of the user interface and ease-of-use of the toolkit by, for example, reviewing the usability of the results and analysis, and the tangible and intangible value and benefits of the process and outputs within the context of everyday activities.

All of the evaluation was conducted virtually, either electronically or via telephone calls and email correspondence, with the exception of one toolkit, the IGT. This required access over the NHS secure intranet and entailed two on-site visits. In all but one case, the IMCC, it was possible to have face-to-face discussions with the toolkit producers to either clarify factual queries or learn about the toolkit. In both the cognitive walkthroughs and the heuristic reviews the (electronic) evaluations were conducted independently and individually for each toolkit by answering the questions which formed the evaluation criteria.

The individual results were collated into one document for each toolkit. The project staff discussed in depth the results for each toolkit, noting commonalities and disagreements. A final consensus evaluation was then agreed for each toolkit. Additionally, commonalities between the results for all the toolkits enabled generic recommendations for good practice in developing and revising records management toolkits to be drawn up (McLeod, Childs and Heaford, 2006a). The fact that two researchers had completed a cognitive walkthrough of each toolkit meant that in the analysis the project staff could be alerted to any subjectivity in the data from the expert users that could have been the result of familiarity with the toolkit. This methodological approach to the evaluation involving three types of users (expert users, a records management expert who was not a user of the toolkits in a real situation and non-records management experts who were expert researchers) enabled triangulation of the data collected and hence the robustness and validity of the results; in other words there was a 360 degree evaluation of each toolkit.

Analysis of the results and research process via e-discussion

The final phase of the investigation was an electronic discussion with the developers involved in the initial e-Delphi who were presented with an analysis of the evaluation results. They were asked to comment on the results and the approach taken to the research.

Findings

The results of the assessment are presented in two forms. First, is a brief textual summary of each toolkit, which addresses some of the research questions posed, in particular why the toolkits were developed, their purpose and intended users. This is followed by a summary evaluation under each of the remaining research questions. For further details of the toolkit features and use see the separate guide to records management toolkits (McLeod, Childs and Heaford, 2006b <http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/ceis/re/isrc/themes/rmarea/tlkit/>)

Overview of each toolkit

- Information Governance Toolkit (IGT)

Use of the IGT is internal to the NHS and NHS organisations. Its aim is to assess NHS organisations' *information governance* and their compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; records management is included in the assessment. The toolkit is applied organisation-wide. It was first issued in the NHS financial year 2003-04 and is revised annually. Its use is a mandatory annual requirement as part of the NHS assurance framework. The Healthcare Commission (<http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk>) also uses the toolkit as part of their audit of NHS organisations' performance. An NHS Records Management Code of Practice has recently been developed (Department of Health, 2006) and will inform the content of the IGT. The version assessed by the project covers the following elements: information governance management, records management (primarily health records), freedom of information (including records management for administrative records), data protection, confidentiality, data quality/accreditation, information security, and the NHS National Plan for IT. The assessment, in the form of easy-to-answer questions, is completed through teamwork involving a small number of

'reviewers' and 'users' and one administrator. Data is input into a Web-based tool via radio buttons. Results are presented in an easy-to-understand way using traffic lights. The toolkit provides a simple system for organisational benchmarking/auditing, with comparison to last year's results and guidance for future improvement. Help and guidance on using the toolkit is available via the Web, along with links to a comprehensive collection of internal and external resources (e.g. standards, legislation, good practice, examples). The results of other NHS organisations are available for comparison; NHS organisations publish their results for the public to see and the Healthcare Commission's audits are also publicly available.

- Information Management Capacity Check Tool and Methodology (IMCC)
The IMCC, although aimed at helping Canadian federal departments and agencies to assess their current *information management capabilities*, is freely available on the Web in a variety of textual forms (html, rtf, pdf, ppt); it is a 'methodology' not a software tool. The tool comprises six key elements of information management practices (i.e. organizational context; organizational capabilities; management of information management; compliance and quality; records and information life cycle; user perspective) with criteria under each element, and assessment of each criterion at one of five capacity levels. The methodology comprises setting up a project team, collecting data from staff (through workshops and interviews) and by analysis of documentation, establishing results and assessment through discussion, and producing a report and action plan for future improvement. Guidance on conducting the review is available but there are no explicit links to background resources (other than the Library and Archives Canada Web site). The tool is very strong on the 'process' of evaluating information management capacity and, by involving so many staff members, develops teamwork and communication channels, engages people with records management, and should result in the setting up of a process of continuous improvement. However, such an approach can be very human and time resource intensive.

- Records Management Capacity Assessment System (RMCAS)

RMCAS is designed to help assess *records and information systems capacity* in public sector organisations, particularly those in developing countries. It is a downloadable software tool freely available from the Web. It focuses on *corporate governance* issues: law, policies and procedures; ICT–records management integration; resources and training; records management programme management; awareness and ownership; business function–records management integration. The toolkit is versatile and may be used at different organisational levels (e.g. sector, organisation, department, project, system). Questions can be answered via radio buttons or text replies. Each capacity statement is traceable to internationally recognised best practice. Assessment does not have to be completed in one go; the assessor can return to the toolkit at their convenience. A wide range of outputs is produced, e.g. 2-d / 3-d graphical summaries, detailed and customisable reports, detailed reports for individual respondents' further interpretation. RMCAS is a powerful, detailed, sophisticated, comprehensive tool; however this means that investment in learning how to use it is required for users to become familiar with terminology and to reap the value of its complexity and depth / breadth of coverage and analysis. A separate user guide in pdf is available from the producer's Web site and the software provides extensive online help.

- RiskProfiler

RiskProfiler is a Web-based software tool available on payment of a fee, of a level such that it should be within the means of all but the smallest of organisations. The tool assesses an organisation's *records management programme* against internationally recognised standards with the aim of identifying risks of non-compliance with legislation and regulations. It covers the organisation's demographic details; policies and procedures; overall program structure; classification plan effectiveness; records security and protection; active records program effectiveness; inactive records program effectiveness; monitoring and training. The toolkit is very easy and intuitive to use. Questions are easy-to-answer with radio buttons and some limited textual input. Assessment does not have to be completed in one go; the assessor can return at their convenience. Summary report cards are produced showing scores for each section and any issues that should be addressed,

linked to a brief summary of best practice for future improvement. Traffic light results are also provided. The tool also enables an organisation's results to be compared against the anonymised results of other organisations in their sector, as well as with their own previous assessment.

Answers to research questions

- What models, theoretical frameworks and/or principles underpin the toolkits? Why were these chosen and were any others considered and rejected?

Relevant national / international records management legislation, standards and good practice underpin all of the toolkits. This provides authority and is a quality indicator. ISO 15489 (2001) explicitly underpins RMCAS and RiskProfiler and is referred to by the IGT, but is not explicitly referenced in the IMCC toolkit. In some of the toolkits the evaluation criteria are clearly traceable to specific statements in the legislation/standards/good practice, with links to good practice guidance to enable change and improvement. There was no indication that alternative models etc. had been considered and rejected.

- What is the underlying design and technology used and why was this chosen?

Three of the toolkits (IGT, RMCAS, RiskProfiler) are software tools for data input, analysis and report generation. However, in each case, the automated analysis process is 'hidden', the tools functioning as 'black boxes'. The IMCC comprises documentation describing the process to be undertaken. In addition to the transparent assessment of information management capabilities the process engages staff with records management and encourages change. Interestingly, none of the software toolkits explicitly catered for the needs of those with impairments (e.g. visual or mobility) by, for example, following WC3 guidelines (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php>).

- Who is actually using the toolkits, how and why? How practical are they to implement? How effective are they? What value and benefits have been gained by deploying them?

The IGT has a clearly defined user group (UK NHS organisations) and its use is mandatory. Producers of the other toolkits have their own (confidential) information about their toolkit users. In some cases the users match their target audience and in others (e.g. those freely available on the Web) they are broader. In the four real examples provided by the expert users, each toolkit was found to be very effective. They were used for different purposes:

- an initial consultancy assessment for a small non-profit making organisation where the outputs were valuable in communicating the state of recordkeeping
- to give “a rather complete overview of where we stood in the ‘battle of compliance’ and thus in our goal to establish good overall record and information management” in a large government department
- to self-assess the status of information management maturity in two national bodies prior to their merger and to determine a desired state of maturity post merger. “It was a great tool to bring people together to discuss issues of IM [information management] and to learn more about what other people in the institution do”
- for a mandatory annual assessment in an NHS Trust, which was an “effective way of focusing the Trust across the range of IG [information governance] requirements including RM”, the results forming an annual work plan against which to measure progress.

- What are the strengths of the toolkits? How do the toolkits compare in terms of appropriateness?

All of the toolkits have strengths. Because they each have a different purpose, audience and/or design, they ‘complement’ rather than ‘compete’ with each other. One advantage of the toolkits is their flexibility; users can adapt them to their own needs, using them either comprehensively or in a ‘quick and dirty’ fashion. The toolkits met their stated objectives, and were practical to implement, albeit with the need for minor improvements. The real-life users said the toolkits met their own particular objectives, were effective, and

assisted in improving records management within their organizations. They would all use such toolkits again. However, the results from using any toolkit depend on the thoroughness and accuracy of the data 'input' by the user. This thoroughness and accuracy would clearly be improved by the involvement of records management and archives staff in the process.

Conclusions and recommendations

Toolkits are so rich that ideally the evaluation of these toolkits would have been much longer involving, for example, more expert users. A more in-depth and lengthy application in our own (university) organisational context and/or evaluating each toolkit using the scenario or approach they were designed/targeted for in the university context, would have been interesting. This would have meant involving senior management and other stakeholders in using the IMCC and RMCAS toolkits; involving the university's records manager and consulting all of the documentation for ARMA's RiskProfiler toolkit; and involving multiple reviewers with the IGT. But the constraints of the project design, existing knowledge of the toolkits at the time the project was designed, and the desire to conduct a timely project precluded this.

Despite these limitations the project delivered some valuable outputs, viz.:

- i. a set of evaluation criteria to use for evaluating and selecting any records management toolkit and potentially, with some adaptation, other information management toolkits (Table 1);
- ii. a guide to four toolkits, including real case examples, and recommendations for their practical use (McLeod, Childs & Heaford, 2006b);
- iii. a series of generic good practice recommendations for toolkit developers in the initial development or revision of a records management toolkit (McLeod, Childs & Heaford, 2006a, Appendix B).

The results highlight the similarities of the toolkits (e.g. their design based on best practice and internal/external standards) as well as their differences (e.g. format and intended audience). They demonstrate the variety offered by just a

small number of toolkits and consequently their combined potential value for many organisations.

None of the toolkits evaluated was suitable for all organisations and all situations; indeed none made that claim. They are all relatively easy to use, the more detailed ones requiring more subject expertise to gain maximum benefit and ensure reliable and accurate results. They offer the potential to assess compliance and/or capacity, benchmark against standards (in some cases benchmark against other organisations), identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improving an organisation's records management. The case examples provided by the expert users illustrate how toolkits can be used for different purposes and at different levels, e.g. in a 'quick and dirty' manner or in detail. At the same time they can be used to *work with others* during the data collection and/or analysis stages, to raise awareness, communicate and build partnerships for managing records effectively.

So what should users look for in selecting an appropriate toolkit? The conclusion was that the most important criterion is to *match the toolkit with the scenario*, i.e. to select a toolkit whose purpose and intended audience matches that of the user.

Developed by recognised and highly respected organisations, committed to their use, development, support and maintenance, each one offers something different and, together, they offer a valuable resource and powerful opportunity for records managers, information managers, information security managers, information and corporate governance officers, auditors and others to assess, benchmark, monitor and develop better records management in support of organisational goals.

Toolkits such as these are potentially very powerful and flexible and of real value to organisations in managing their records. They deserve to be part of the records professional's total toolkit, indeed non-records professionals may also use them. Their application is limited only by the imagination of those who use them. But judging by the limited literature on them awareness of

these tools was not high at the time of the research. They were not well known or well-established in terms of being automatically considered and commonplace. However, since this project was completed the interest in toolkits appears to have increased and new ones have been developed. For example, Anderson (2007) has discussed the ARMA toolkit in this study and the Local eGov Standards Body began work on an information governance assessment toolkit for local government bodies (<http://www.legsb.gov.uk/blueprints/item.php?id=512>) based on the NHS IGT studied in our project. Also in the UK, Blake (2007) profiled a new self-assessment tool developed by The National Archives in the UK. In the form of an evaluation workbook, it is designed to help public authorities assess their conformance to the Code of Practice on managing records in the context of section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Lord Chancellor's Office, 2002)). Despite these developments there remains little formal evaluation or publications about their use.

A final interesting point was raised by one participant in the process of evaluating the *project*.

“I would like to have seen more analysis of the problem of evaluating records management specifically (i.e. RM is deeply integrated with business functions and ICT, how do you best address that in a RM evaluation? which viewpoint, direction do you take? How do you weigh the value of variable results?) ... I would have liked to have seen a rough baseline of best practice for RM Evaluation.”

Whilst the evaluation of records management itself was outside the scope of this project, it is an important issue. It encompasses other aspects, e.g. value, performance measurement, quality, and would be an interesting area for research.

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Table 1: Toolkit Evaluation Criteria

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| <p>1. Provenance of Toolkit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Producer's name• Producer's category• Producer's track record in the RM field• Sustainability of toolkit• Process of development of toolkit• Date of current version• Toolkit kept up-to-date• Vendor support• Acceptable use statements• Fees/extra charges for various support functions• Any additional comments about provenance <p>2. Toolkit Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toolkit targeted at different sectors• Toolkit targeted at different types of organisation within a particular sector• Toolkit targeted at different sizes of organisation• Toolkit targeted at different staff categories within an organisation• Any additional comments about toolkit audience <p>3. Toolkit Coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toolkit purpose• Type of records• Toolkit addresses the full life cycle or continuum of records management processes• Toolkit results accurately represent the state of the organisation's RM situation• Toolkit results completely represent the state of the organisation's RM situation• Any additional comments about toolkit coverage | <p>4. Toolkit Content Based On Legislation / Standards / Best Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislation used to develop the toolkit• Standards used to develop the toolkit• Sector policy, guidelines and compliance requirements used to develop the toolkit• Best practice used to develop the toolkit• Clear traceability of the tools evaluation criteria to specific statements in legislation / standards / policy, guidelines, compliance requirements / best practices, etc.• Any additional comments on toolkit content <p>5. Toolkit Process / Format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information gathering process• User's own internal documentation to be consulted when using the toolkit• Toolkit is automated for data input and analysis• Any additional comments about toolkit process / format <p>6. Resource Requirements to Use the Toolkit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money• People• Time taken for evaluation process to be completed• Time commitment of staff• Any additional comments on resource requirements to use the toolkit |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

7. Accessibility / Compatibility of the Toolkit

- Accessibility of the toolkit to disabled people or people with an impairment
- Accessibility of the software tool from a technology viewpoint
- Compatibility of the software tool
- Any additional comments on accessibility / compatibility of the toolkit

8. Usability of the Toolkit

- Clearly articulated methodology
- Background information provided
- Training available for operators and users
- Help files
- "How to guidance" to move through the toolkit from stage to stage
- Easy to learn
- Easy to remember
- Clear language
- Clear user instructions
- Options for both new and experienced users
- Visually pleasing
- Enjoyable
- Easy to recover from user errors
- Easy to understand and interpret the results of the evaluation
- The software tool is accessible from many different locations
- The contents of a software tool can be printed out
- The software tool can support large amounts of data
- With a software tool, the user can save evaluation drafts and return to them at a later time
- With a software tool, the results of the evaluation can be exported to other platforms
- Any additional comments on usability of toolkit

9. Evaluation Approach

- Who collects and inputs the data
- Toolkit can be customised
- Depth of the toolkit's evaluation criteria
- Consensus is required on answers to the toolkit's evaluation criteria before data input
- Methods for providing answers to evaluation questions and criteria
- Data can be input over a period of time, on a stop - restart basis
- Process for analysing the data
- Ability of the software tool to accommodate conflicting information during the evaluation phase
- Data can be analysed over a period of time, on a stop - restart basis
- How the results are presented
- "How to guidance" to respond to the results of the evaluation to improve practices and enable change
- The toolkit can be reused any number of times under the same license
- Any additional comments on evaluation approach

(See Mcleod, Childs and Heaford (2006b) for the criteria with explanatory examples and notes)