**Government of South Australia**

*State Records*
of South Australia

# Recordkeeping Metadata

## What is metadata?

Australian Standard *AS ISO 15489 2002 – Records Management* defines recordkeeping metadata as:

> data describing context, content and structure of records and their management through time.

Records managers, archivists, librarians, database administrators and other information managers have collected and used metadata for many years, in both hardcopy and electronic environments.  However the need for consistency and a standard approach to metadata is paramount in an electronic recordkeeping environment due to the need for system interoperability and migration of data between systems.

## Why the need for a standard?

A standard that outlines a set of metadata elements describing recordkeeping products, processes and characteristics can be used to ensure that recordkeeping systems are fit for their purpose and consistent across agencies.

The minimum requirements for recordkeeping metadata in South Australian government agencies are given in the *South Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Standard (SARKMS)*. SARKMS was modelled on the *Australian Government Recordkeeping Metadata Standard* issued by the National Archives of Australia.

When selecting an EDRMS or implementing a business system it is particularly important to identify what metadata the system will capture and whether it is sufficient according to SARKMS.  In particular, it is desirable to automate metadata capture as much as possible to reduce the amount of manual entry required.

Implementing metadata does not always require complex systems.  Where paper-based recordkeeping systems are in use, minimum metadata at the file level can be managed in a simple spreadsheet.

Each Australian jurisdiction has its own published metadata standard for recordkeeping and there are international standards on metadata for recordkeeping (ISO 23081, MoReq2 - *Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records*) and online resources (AS 5044-2010 AGLS, Dublin Core, DOI).  A new Australian Standard (AS/NZS 5478) has been drafted that provides a recordkeeping metadata element reference set.

## Is the recordkeeping metadata standard compulsory?

SARKMS must be used by State Government agencies. However, State Records recognises that in many cases it will not be simple or cost effective to comply with the standard retrospectively. The most appropriate time to implement SARKMS is when new or enhanced records management or business systems are being implemented.

All South Australian state government agencies and local government authorities i.e. those covered by the *State Records Act 1997,* will need to become compliant as electronic systems are adopted to ensure their records management is adequate as outlined in the *Adequate Records Management Standard*.

## What does recordkeeping metadata include?

Recordkeeping metadata includes:
- registration and classification metadata - the metadata that gives a record its unique identity in a records system and classifies it in a classification scheme
- content, structure and context metadata - the metadata that gives a record content including title, abstract structure, type, format and context as well as identifying who created it, where, when and its relationship with other records
- recordkeeping process metadata - metadata that provides information or evidence about processes a record may have undergone such as viewing, transmitting, transferring custody, accessing, reviewing, sentencing etc.

## Why apply recordkeeping metadata?

Recordkeeping metadata in a business or records system is required for the following reasons:
- unique identification of records
- authentication of records – to prove that the record is what it purports to be
- persistence of record content, structure and context
- accountability - management of records over time in an electronic environment
- administration of terms and conditions of access and disposal
- tracking and documenting of the records' use history
- enabling the discovery, retrieval and delivery of records to authorised users
- restriction of unauthorised use.

In many cases elements of metadata are records in themselves as they describe a transaction applied to a particular record. As such, they are subject to the requirements of the *State Records Act 1997*. As an example, metadata that provides evidence that a particular person accessed a record on a certain date is itself an official record.

## Where will recordkeeping metadata be sourced?

Recordkeeping metadata can be sourced from a number of environments and systems in use in agencies. A great deal of recordkeeping metadata is already captured in existing agency systems including:

- business systems - many business systems already capture large amounts of data that will be able to meet the requirements of SARKMS.  Information created by and captured within business systems can frequently be categorised as records.  Business systems can also be used to identify and describe people, business units, workgroups, activities and functions

- disposal schedules - General Disposal Schedules and agency specific disposal schedules are a useful source for records disposal related metadata

- email systems - agency and Across-Government wide e-mail systems can provide significant recordkeeping metadata about the context of a document

- *Keyword AAA* and agency specific thesauri - for agencies that have adopted use of the *Keyword AAA* or their own specific thesaurus merged with *Keyword AAA*, this can be used to identify relevant transactions, business activities and business functions that need to be captured

- document and records management systems - these systems can be a useful source of recordkeeping metadata

- recordkeeping systems - corporate recordkeeping systems implemented in several agencies are a great source of metadata for elements relating to business functions, mandates (Legislation, Regulations, Standards, Codes of Practice, Community Expectations), agents (People, Workgroups, agencies), locations and use of records

- archives management systems - archives management systems used by State Records are a source of metadata particularly about records and record series at an aggregated level, including agency data, previous agencies, mandate, and documentary form, preservation and disposal metadata elements

- Websites - agency and Across-Government websites (Internet and Intranets) in many cases already provide basic metadata elements.  In many cases, web sites are a record and the metadata required for managing them as records need to be captured.

## How is recordkeeping metadata stored?

Two approaches are available for the storage of recordkeeping metadata:

- embedding metadata with the particular record - this approach is often seen in simple word-processing documents where metadata can be captured when a record is created and can be viewed via the File/Properties menu

- maintaining metadata in a separate "repository" or database and linking it to the appropriate record - this requires the development and maintenance of reliable, rugged two-way links between the record and its associated metadata.

A decision on the most appropriate storage method should be made after detailed consultation; and will be dependent on organisational needs, technological requirements and State Records requirements for the storage of permanent records and their associated metadata.

# Further Information

Further information and reading on recordkeeping metadata is available at the following websites:

- National Archives of Australia http://www.naa.gov.au
- State Records of New South Wales http://www.records.nsw.gov.au
- Public Records Office of Victoria http://www.prov.vic.gov.au

# Availability

Copies of the *South Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Standard (SARKMS)* can be obtained from the State Records website: http://www.archives.sa.gov.au.

## Version control

| Version number | Date of issue | Details |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1.2 | 5 September 2005 | New |
| 1.3 | 17 April 2008 | Format; contact changes |
| 1.4 | 28 August 2009 | Format; contact changes |
| 2.0 | 30 August 2011 | Format; contact changes |
| 3.0 | 30 June 2014 | Content revisions |

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