Records are practices, not artefacts
an exploration of recordkeeping in the Australian Government in the age of digital transition and digital continuity

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

under the supervision of
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July 2020

Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Christopher William COLWELL, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged.

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Date: 6 July 2020

Acknowledgements

Anyone who has attempted a PhD will confirm that it is a solitary exercise. However, it is an endeavour that is not possible to complete without support and encouragement from so many.

To my PhD supervisors for the last 8 years, Dr Michael Olsson and Dr Hilary Yerbury, go my sincerest thanks for your tireless support, insight, patience, guidance and understanding. My thanks also to Hilary for your encouragement to begin the doctorate in the first place.

To my PhD cohort and colleagues at the University of Technology Sydney, go my thanks for helping to keep me sane and for your support, challenge and generosity with your ideas. In particular, my thanks to Dean Leith, Maureen Henninger and Sally Irvine-Smith. Thanks also to the global community of scholars, students and practitioners that form the Archival Educators and Researchers Institute (AERI). The opportunity to participate and get feedback on my work has been, and will continue to be, invaluable.

To my friends, family and work colleagues who enquired about my research and its progress (or lack thereof) for such a long time – thank you also for your support. My heartfelt thanks go to my employer, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, and to my immediate managers Thea Rosenbaum and Mikhail Lopushanski for supporting me in this endeavour.

I am also grateful to accredited editor Dr Terry Fitzgerald for his copyediting assistance.

Last, but my no means least, I would like to thank and acknowledge the research participants themselves. The four Australian Government agencies and their employees who agreed to participate in this study. Without you this would not have been possible.

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Abstract

Good record keeping is of critical importance to organisations, governments and societies at large, however the language of records management with its inflexible and dominant view of managing records as artefacts - the passive and objective by-products of business activity - tends to be the only lens through which the documentary reality of organizational life in the recordkeeping disciplines is examined. A more user-centric and holistic view is needed to produce better recordkeeping outcomes in organisations.

This study applied a practice theoretical approach to explore the perspectives about records held by various professions employed across four different Australian Government agencies. The study also explored the influences of organizational culture and professional background on these perceptions. Using comparable sites, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were carried out. This approach to the study is significant as it is the first study to use a practice theoretical approach to explore the everyday social practice of record keeping by those outside the recordkeeping disciplines in a contemporary public sector setting and it is only one of a few comparative case studies of record keeping practices.

The findings show that there is no one accepted definition of record, rather what is considered a record will differ in each organizational setting. Each agency (or *site*) creates its own 'shared practical understanding' of records in their particular context. *Site*-specific cultural-discursive, material-economic and socio-political arrangements (the *doings*, *sayings* and *relatings*) actively shape records and record keeping practices and the various affordances of records emphasised in that site. Additionally, across the Australian public sector and records creators do not find the language of records management accessible or useful. Creators of records also have their own internalised thresholds which they use to make judgements about records identification and capture.

This study has demonstrated that records are active social practices, not simply passive and objective artefacts. Conceptualising records as social practices, in which humans and objects play an equal role, presents a paradigmatic shift for the recordkeeping disciplines that have privileged the artefact over the human elements of practices. The use of the practice theoretical approach provides a framework to produce significant and novel insights for researchers and practitioners in the recordkeeping disciplines.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This thesis offers a new conceptualisation of the record and the practices of record keeping using a practice theoretical and a social constructivist approach. Records are products of social practices – the *site*-specific material, discursive and socio-political arrangements. In this sense records can be said to *be* practices, not the passive, objective artefacts that are by-products of business activity (the current position espoused by the prevailing positivist paradigm within the archival and recordkeeping literature and professions).

The true complexity of records and their affordances in an organisational setting is largely ignored or not understood in the recordkeeping professions. This is underscored by the lack of user-centric research about records in organisational settings and the lack of scholarly research about records in general from the records management perspective. Much of the research and scholarly writing about records has been conducted by archivists and archival scholars and is therefore framed from that perspective. This thesis, apart from providing a greater understanding of record keeping practices in organisations that can be used widely by the profession, also addresses some of that imbalance in the literature between archivists and records managers. It provides a scholarly contribution to the archival and recordkeeping body of knowledge from a records management perspective.

This introductory chapter frames the issues at the core of this study, namely that the user orientation in records management is lacking and that there is a divide in the understanding of records that exists between archival and recordkeeping professionals on the one hand and records creators in organisational settings on the other. It offers a brief historical overview of the state of records management in the Australian Government to provide background to the issues that were observed by the researcher as part of his own professional practice and which led to this research project. The chapter then outlines how these issues were, on reflection, reframed and formulated into a more open approach, before providing a brief overview of the theoretical framework and methodology employed. Finally, the last section provides a summary of the chapters that follow and the structure of this thesis.

The background to the study

In this study a number of terms are used to describe the practices of record keeping and those that participate in them in organisational settings. Record keeping (two words) is used to describe the practices of the users and creators of records in organisations who predominantly create, access and capture records in organisational systems that are set up and maintained by recordkeeping (one word) professionals. Recordkeeping professionals are those practitioners who are involved in managing records through their entire existence, i.e. records managers and archivists. The term recordkeeping is also used to describe the disciplinary area and literature of both archives and records management. Records management is the organisational function devoted to the management of records in an organisation as per the definition in the international standard on records management ISO 15489 (International Organization for Standardization 2016). Archival authorities are the various government archives and records authorities in Australia and elsewhere, such as the National Archives of Australia and the State Records Authority of New South Wales. These archival authorities, set standards for the government agencies in their jurisdictions in relation to records management and also have the responsibility for managing and providing public access to the archives (or records of continuing value) of that jurisdiction.

The prevailing viewpoint seen in the recordkeeping professional literature, and held by archival authorities and professional bodies, is that the record is the passive, objective, by-product of business activity. If captured and made inviolate it serves as authentic and reliable evidence of the business activity to which it relates, evidence in a recordkeeping context being most strongly associated with accountability (McKemmish & Upward 1993). Some records go on to serve a purpose beyond their original evidential role to users inside and outside the organisation as archives for their informational and historical value (Shepherd & Yeo 2001). Regardless of form, characteristics of 'recordness' must be present.; in other words, the record is complete, authentic, reliable and has integrity (Pember & Cowan 2009). While there are some variances to this point of view discussed in the literature, opposition to this prevailing positivist paradigm is rare (Brothman 2002).

Given this emphasis on reliability, integrity and authenticity since the early 1990s, the vexing question of how to maintain the same characteristics of 'recordness' in a digital age has occupied the attention of the recordkeeping profession and archival authorities in jurisdictions around the world. This was particularly evident from 1999 when email was officially recognised as a record (Stuckey & Liddell 2000). The profession has devoted much time energy and money to developing standards in relation to records management and specifications in relation to recordkeeping systems and metadata to guide professionals and software vendors in the development and implementation of compliant records management programs and systems e.g. the ISO 16175 series for records in electronic office environments (International Organization for Standardization 2010). These standards and specifications have all been written from the viewpoint of the recordkeeping professions, as they are the experts about records.

The standards outlined above have in turn driven the development of systems like the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS). The EDRMS is often seen as some kind of panacea to the problem of digital recordkeeping and corporations, and government agencies have spent large sums of money implementing these EDRMS systems to varying degrees of success. Indeed, the *Digital Transition Policy*, and its successor the *Digital Continuity Policy,* which are the policies that are attempting to digitally transform the whole of Australian Government and move it away from paper-based ways of working and become totally digital in outlook (Stuart 2017), have at their very core the assumption that these systems are available to manage records within organisations.

But in reality, the EDRMS has been designed to meet the recordkeeping specifications outlined above and be recordkeeping compliant. They are based around the fundamental tenets of recordkeeping, such as functional classification, that have some very real impacts on how these systems are rolled out and records are stored in organisational settings (Foscarini 2009). This in turn makes them unfriendly to most users and creators of records, and some authors have even gone so far as to declare the age of the EDRMS a failure because of its low rate of adoption due to their records management orientation (Joseph, Debowski & Goldschmidt 2012). A more flexible user-focussed approach is necessary for the profession to achieve full adoption and acceptance in organisational settings, especially in light of the advent of Web 2.0 technologies (Bailey 2008).

The research questions

User orientation in records management, unlike its cousin, library and information science, has been severely lacking. This is because, from the perspective of the recordkeeping discipline and the professional and archival bodies that have driven the work described earlier, it is the record that is of primary importance – not the user. What is forgotten is that the record might be a by-product of business activity but in most cases that business activity is *human activity.* People as well as objects (systems and records) are involved in record keeping practices in organisations and it is usually the users and creators of records who are tasked with the capturing of records into systems (however friendly or unfriendly) in an organisational setting. However, in order to capture records into organisational systems they must first understand what a record actually is.

At the heart of this research then is the divide that exists in organisations between the recordkeeping professionals understanding of records and their various properties, and that of the users and creators of records in organisations. Bridging this divide, and understanding how it comes about is of core importance if the archives of tomorrow are not going to be full of digital dust, that is, if digital records are not captured by users into systems that enable them to be managed appropriately (Evans 2015). If this capture is not done now, digital records have less chance of surviving into the future, unlike their predecessors that were created using paper or other more stable material forms.

The original idea for this study came from discussions around research into corporate governance and its relationship to records management. A distinct difference was noticed in the literature of the two disciplines in terms of how each described records – one as intellectual property and information asset (corporate governance) and the other as an instrument of accountability or evidence (records management). This difference in itself reflects what can be called the information and evidence tension that is addressed in the records management literature, or what Schellenberg referred to as the primary and secondary purposes of records (Shepherd & Yeo 2001).

Even given the user-centred focus of this research, the initial propositions for the project were inherently framed around an information/evidence view of the world. Initially it was thought that the objectives should be to explore the information/evidence tension

and its dimensions. However, after exploring the problem and the literature a little more, the practitioner evolved into researcher. A more open stance was adopted and it was decided to explore the phenomenon without preconceived ideas and try to gain new insights, as there is a need to explore other perceptions of the record besides those centred around information and evidence (Yeo 2007).

This research study explores perceptions of the record by users within organisations who are in other roles and disciplines. It asks the following three research questions:

Research Question 1: How do records creators in the Australian public sector define, construct and perceive records and their properties in an organisational context?

Research Question 2: Are there particular influences on records creators' perceptions, constructions and definitions that stem from professional or organisational perspectives?

Research Question 3: If there are definite professional or organisational influences on records creators' perceptions, definitions and constructions of records, which plays the major role?

These questions are asked in order to gain new and rich insights into the ways that users in organisational settings understand records and to allow the researcher to begin mapping this unexplored aspect of recordkeeping. Above these questions is a primary question that this research will begin to elaborate:

What are the implications of these perceptions for Australian Government organisations as well as for the recordkeeping and archival professions and their associated theories and models of best practice?

Theoretical and methodological overview

Record keeping is a practice that is undertaken by users and creators of records in organisations as part of their everyday work activities. Indeed for the archival and recordkeeping professionals it is their sole practice, but for everyone else it is one practice among the 'nexus of practices' (Schatzki 1996) or the 'ecologies of practices' (Kemmis et al. 2012). Because of this the researcher focussed on a practice theoretical approach based on the work of Schatzki and Kemmis - one that focusses on the

relatings, sayings and *doings* (Kemmis et al. 2014) of record keeping. Practice theoretical approaches, like the discipline of recordkeeping itself, also place a focus on the context of the practice - the *site* of the practice (Schatzki 2005a).

The focus on the *site* or context of the practice, and the breadth and range of Australian Government agencies, meant that a multiple case study approach was chosen. A case study being "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"(Yin 2003). Case studies are particularly relevant when an understanding of the context and the experiences of the individuals are required (Darke & Shanks 2002). Case study research also benefits from theoretical propositions, such as those provided using a practice theoretical framework, to guide data collection and analysis (Yin 2003). The constraints provided by the types of organisations under examination (i.e. Australian Government agencies) and office environments, meant that an ethnographic approach, often favoured in practice theory, was not possible to apply. However, ethnographic techniques such as in-depth semi-structured interviews which are used to gain an understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman 1998) were incorporated into the research design.

Practice theoretical approaches have been applied in information studies and the notion of practice has found applications in the idea of the community/network of practice (Brown & Duguid 1991, 2001; Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998); information use environments (Rosenbaum 1993, 1996) and everyday information practices (McKenzie 2003; Rosenbaum 2010; Savolainen 2007) . In recordkeeping, Giddens' ideas have been drawn on to provide a more dynamic view of the records and the interactions between them and the records creators (Foscarini 2009). Perhaps the most notable, and most relevant example in the Australian context, is the use of structuration theory in the development of the Records Continuum Model (Upward 1996, 1997, 2000, 2005). However, while Giddens' structuration theory is considered an early practice theory (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011) the use of fully fledge practice-based approaches in recordkeeping research is a relatively recent phenomenon.

The value of practice theory to recordkeeping profession as a way of seeing a more nuanced view of recordkeeping and archival practitioners own practices has been demonstrated (Ivanov 2017). However, the practice theoretical approach has not been

used as a framework to explore recordkeeping practices of the users and creators of records within and across organisational settings. This combination of theoretical and methodological approaches presents a departure from previous user based research in the discipline and one which, given its largely exploratory and explanatory focus, draws some specific implications and contributes rich insight (Walsham 1995) regarding record keeping practices in organisational settings.

Significance of the research

This research is highly significant as it is the first study to use a practice theoretical approach as a framework to explore record keeping practices of the users and creators of records within and across organisational settings. The research makes a valuable contribution to the canon of academic and professional literature based on real-world practices and challenges the prevailing paradigmatic view that records are simply a passive and objective by-product of business activity. It proposes that the record is reconceptualised as a social practice and that the sometimes messy human/object relations in the practices of record keeping are seen as equal parts of the whole.

In addition to its academic contribution, the research is also highly significant as it is the first study to provide rich insights on how users and creators of records define and construct the concept of record in the age of digital records in contemporary Australian public sector organisations. These insights, based on current real-world practices, can assist recordkeeping professionals and archival authorities, the wider academic and professional discipline of recordkeeping, as well as the case study organisations themselves, to understand the full complexity of the social practice of record keeping in organisational settings and consider and formulate more context sensitive approaches to records management in organisations.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the research problem and the approach being taken to address it, in light of the researcher's experience as a recordkeeping professional in Australian public sector agencies and both national and state level. The research questions have also been identified and situated within the historical and current context of records management in the Australian Government.

The following chapters outline in detail the research project and its findings. *Chapter 2* provides an overview of the relevant literature, including an overview of user-centred studies in the recordkeeping and archival literature, the practice theoretical approach and other user centred and discursive approaches such as Soft Systems Methodology and Rhetorical Genre Studies that helped inform the overall theoretical approach to the study that was adopted. It adapts the entity/process model that is outlined in the seminal article "Information as thing" by Buckland (1991) to explore the literature in relation to the *record as artefact*, the *record as process*, *records processing* systems and the *record as knowledge* before going on to explore the *record as practice*.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed account of the methods used to conduct the research, including the considerations of the practice theoretical approach, how cases (*sites*) were selected and the main characteristics of the population chosen for the study (i.e. Australian Government agencies); an outline of the methods used and the reasons for selecting the case study approach; the data collection and analysis techniques utilised; and how risk was anticipated, mitigated and addressed as part of the study.

Chapters 4, 5 & 6 present the findings of the study. These are organised and presented to highlight how the findings illustrate the three inter-related parts of a social practice that exist simultaneously in a site of practice – the *sayings, relatings and doings*. *Chapter 4* presents the sayings – the *cultural-discursive* arrangements operating in semantic space (Mahon et al. 2017) and outlines the site-specific sayings, the general public sector sayings and the specific professional sayings.

Chapter 5 presents the relatings – those *social political* arrangements forming the social space (Mahon et al. 2017) and explores how participants relate to the role of records, the legislative framework and its definitions, and how record keeping is supported via executive leadership in the site. *Chapter 6* then presents the doings – the *material-economic* arrangements operating in physical space-time (Mahon et al. 2017) which explore the enabling and constraining factors to record keeping in the site, how at times sayings and doings conflict, the doings of professional groups and the question of 'significance' in relation to the practice of record keeping.

Next *Chapter 7* then presents a detailed discussion of these findings in relation to the initial research questions and previous literature and research in the recordkeeping and

archival disciplines and looks at the implications of these for theory and practice. It particularly explores the value of the practice theoretical approach to the discipline of recordkeeping and aspects of knowing in practice and the *site*-specific knowledge required to be a competent practitioner. It then also explores the implications of these findings for theory and for practice.

Finally, *Chapter 8* presents the conclusions arising from the study and discusses the limitations of the findings given the nature of the research. It then goes on to suggest a number of areas for future research, including the need for more studies of record keeping based on a similar research design.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

The English-speaking recordkeeping traditions trace their beginnings to two major publications: the 1898 *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (known as "The Dutch Manual") by Samuel Muller, J.A. Feith, and Robert Fruin; and *A Manual for Archive Administration* published in 1922 by Sir Hilary Jenkinson of the Public Records Office in the United Kingdom. Both of these publications introduced foundational organisational principles for archival records, and they were followed by T.R. Schellenberg's *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques,* published in 1956, which first detailed how these British and European concepts were to be adapted to the U.S. National Archives (Caswell 2016). Post-World War 2 technologies have since resulted in the much greater proliferation of records in organisations than ever before, and so other models of records management have been proposed, considered and developed.

In contemporary Australia, records management standards and programs generally focus on the management of records as evidence (Bak 2010) to ensure that records are available for accountability purposes, that records of continuing value are preserved, and records no longer required are securely and accountably destroyed. The International Standard on Records Management (International Organization for Standardization 2016, p. 3) defines records management as

> the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

Protection of public accountability, management of risk, compliance with legal requirements, and cost efficiency are key concerns (Kennedy & Schauder 1998). While there is some professional discourse on the management of records as information, the need for greater harmonisation between organisational processes such as risk management and security, and more embedding of records management into other organisational processes (Lemieux 2004, 2010; Lomas 2010), the current focus of the literature is that records management, i.e. the management of the record as evidence is

the primary deliverable and the benefits of good information management are an optional value-add (Cox 2001; Kennedy & Schauder 1998; Sampson 2002).

As a result of this focus on the management of the record as evidence there has developed a rather myopic view in the professional literature of the record as an object or artefact. This is due in part to the fact that the predominant recordkeeping model of the 20th century was the records life-cycle model (Atherton 1985). It is also due to the profession's heavy emphasis over recent years on the development of systems and processes for the capture and management of digital records. In attempting to make sure that the electronic record has its authenticity, reliability and integrity preserved in the same way as their analogue or paper counterparts, the preservation of the object itself has become the primary concern.

Even in today's more complex and contemporary digital working environment, focusing on the object has persisted and very little has changed in the professional discourse. Top-down systems-based implementations prevail and the complexity of human involvement is often underplayed or worse unexplored. Few existing studies have examined the interrelationships between people and records in originating agencies (Foscarini 2013). This researcher advocates that there is a need for the recordkeeping professions to be more adaptive, challenge traditional models of recordkeeping, and embrace a more people-centric approach.

This Literature Review adapts the framework from the seminal article 'Information as Thing' by Buckland (1991) to explore the professional literature in relation to the record and recordkeeping. It begins by exploring the existing professional definitions and models of recordkeeping using an adaptation of the framework used in the Buckland article. It divides the literature and models into the umbrella categories of *record as artefact*, *records processing*, *record as process* and *record as knowledge*. As part of this discussion, each section also outlines some of the alternative theoretical models and approaches considered for addressing the research questions. The chapter then goes on to explore and expound in more detail the framework that was eventually selected: contemporary practice theory. This section, entitled the *record as practice,* explores the concept of record keeping as an information practice, common features of contemporary and historical practice theoretical approaches and finally *practice architectures*.

The record

"The record is *the* foundational concept" in recordkeeping[1], as Caswell (2016, p. 4) so eloquently notes. However, the definition of 'record' could be considered one of the most debated issues in this field of study (Yeo 2007, 2008). The professional and academic literature has often been involved with the tangible aspects of record keeping, but rarely has it strayed into the more intangible aspects of record keeping and the nature of knowledge. This section of the Chapter structures the literature review of the record based on the tangible/intangible, entity/process framework used in 'Information as Thing' (Buckland 1991) (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Entity/process framework as adapted from Buckland (1991)

	Intangible	**Tangible**
Entity	Record as knowledge (individual tacit knowledge / non-physical records)	Record as artefact (thing, object / evidence / passive)
Process	Record as process i.e. to record (subjective / situational)	Records processing (records systems that deal with artefacts)

The literature is reviewed in the following order:

The record as artefact is the record (noun) that is an account in writing or the like that preserves the memory or knowledge of facts or events ('Macquarie Dictionary' 2005) It is the predominant way in which the recordkeeping professions deal with records in the form of documents, data, and objects. These are the outputs of the *record as process*. Information systems can only deal with this physical instantiation of a record which is looked at under the category of *records processing*.

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[1] Emphasis in the original. Caswell uses the umbrella term archival studies rather than recordkeeping to broadly encompass the cultural, social, political, technical and scientific aspects of the study of the archives.

Records processing is the literature that looks at the information systems that are built especially to deal with managing the record as the physical artefact, that is, Electronic Document Records Management Systems (EDRMS) and their attendant practices.

The record as process is to record (verb), to set down in writing or the like, as for the purpose of preserving evidence ('Macquarie Dictionary' 2005). *The record as process*, like information as process, is situational. In each context what to record and how to record it will be different, although there may be some similarities in processes within different contexts. *The record as process* focusses on the 'who', 'how', 'where' and 'when', rather than the artefactual output.

The record as knowledge is the meaning of record that is part of the tacit knowledge of each individual and socially constructed in a community, or, is a form of non-physical record translated via people or other non-textual or physical means. It also refers to the amorphous 'organisational record' that is the aggregated form of all knowledge in an organisation.

Record as artefact

The prevailing viewpoint in the recordkeeping professional literature and among archival authorities and professional bodies is that a record is an artefact that is the passive, objective, by-product of business activity. If captured into a recordkeeping system and made inviolate it serves an authentic and reliable evidence of the business activity to which it relates, evidence in a recordkeeping context being most strongly associated with accountability (McKemmish & Upward 1993). Some records also serve a purpose beyond their original evidential role to users inside and outside the organisation due to their informational and historical value (Shepherd & Yeo 2001). But regardless of its physical form, characteristics of 'recordness' must be present, that is, the *record as artefact* is complete, authentic, reliable and has integrity (Pember & Cowan 2009). While there are some variations to this point of view discussed in the literature, opposition to this prevailing positivist paradigm is rare (Brothman 2002).

As such, the focus of the recordkeeping literature is on the *record as artefact* and therefore it is usually oriented towards definitions that emphasise the characteristics just mentioned. However, despite the plethora of definitions, there still remains no universally accepted definition of record within the profession (Yusof & Chell 1999). Although it can be said that definitions of records in the professional literature tend to

be universal or principles-based, they also tend to decontextualise and idealise the record so that definitions work in all contexts (Foscarini 2013). In this sense they can also be quite abstract.

Sitting behind these principle-based and positivist definitions is the understanding that there are records and non-records. Records are products of business transactions, and this is how they differ from other forms of information. (Borglund & Oberg 2008; Reed 2005). Records have a transactional contextual natures, evidential qualities, intents, purposes and functionalities, rather than any particular physical characteristics. For a record to be a record "the evidence-related nature of their content, the specific documentary forms they take and their particular contexts of creation, management and use have been preserved to allow them to continue to function as evidence" (McKemmish 2005, pp. 15-6).

In summary, conventional professional definitions of records state that they

- are recorded information that is evidence of business activity
- can be in any format
- are trustworthy and managed to provide critical characteristics that prove integrity, authenticity, reliability
- are linked to business activities
- are kept for the period of time they are required for use in current business, to support accountability and for cultural purposes.

<div align="right">(Kennedy & Schauder 1998; Shepherd & Yeo 2001)</div>

Both Yeo (2007) and Williams (2014) note that definitions are useful for creating shared understandings within a community of practice, while acknowledging the post-modern critique of definitions themselves – that it is impossible to proclaim an objective truth about the thing being defined. Williams (2014), in her overview of the concepts, roles and definitions of archives and records also notes the usefulness of definitions in explaining to outsiders the values and boundaries of the field. She notes that as well as academic contributions, there are two prevailing types of definitions in the recordkeeping literature: "exclusive definitions" and "inclusive definitions" (p. 12). The former are usually the province of the archival authorities and standards bodies and are weighted in terms of the evidentiary or primary value of records, while the latter try to balance both the primary and secondary value of records, that is, records as evidence and information.

In the Australian Government context, there are two definitions that are of primary importance. One is contained in the *Archives Act 1983* (the Archives Act) and the other is in the Australian and International Standard AS ISO 15489–2016 Records Management. The Archives Act defines the legislative meaning of a record, while AS ISO 15489–2016 is a Code of Best Practice under the Archives Act that defines a record from the point of view of professional best practice.

Prior to 2007, the Archives Act defined record as

> a document (including any written or printed material) or object (including a sound recording, coded storage device, magnetic tape or disc, microform, photograph, film, map, plan or model or a painting or other pictorial or graphic work) that is, or has been, kept by reason of any information or matter that it contains or can be obtained from it or by reason of its connection with any event, person, circumstance or thing (Management Advisory Committee 2007, p. 2).

This was amended in 2007 to

> a document, or an object, in any form (including any electronic form) that is, or has been, kept by reason of: (a) any information or matter that it contains or that can be obtained from it; or (b) its connection with any event, person, circumstance or thing. (*Archives Act (Cth)* 1983, p. 5).

The Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill explains the reason for the amendment:

> to conform to the Australian and International Standard AS ISO 15489–2002 Records Management, this item inserts a new proposed definition which is not format specific…. The definition clarifies that a record does not have to be in a concrete form—it can be in any form, including an electronic form (Management Advisory Committee 2007, p. 2).

While the definition in the Archives Act is now media neutral, it still might be considered an "inclusive definition" as it is very broad and includes nearly everything that has been kept by an Australian Government agency[2].

The definition in the International Standard on Records Management, however, is more "exclusive" and follows the evidence line of thinking or the primary purpose of records. By its definition, which is widely cited and used around the world, records are "information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business" (International Organization for Standardization 2016, p. 3).

Inherent in the predominant artefactual view of records that evolved in the mid-20th century is the life-cycle view of records and the concept of *current* and *archival* records (Dingwall 2010). This archives–records relationship has led not only to a focussing on the object within the profession but a duality within the professional literature that usually sees the record described in terms of either information or evidence (Shepherd & Yeo 2001; Yeo 2007). The evidential role of records was first emphasised by Jenkinson (Shepherd & Yeo 2001) and other pioneers in the 1920s who set out the first guidelines for the profession, with the records life-cycle being conceived by Phillip Coolidge Brooks and Emmett J. Leahy of US National Archives in the late 1930s. It first appeared in print in Brooks' article "The Selection of Records for Preservation" in 1940 (Brooks 1940). This model was further developed and the focus on the evidential role of records was subverted by the notion of primary and secondary values of records, as espoused by Schellenberg in 1956. The primary value represented the importance to the organisation for administrative, fiscal or legal purposes, and the secondary values were to other users outside the organisation as either historical evidence or for their informational value (Shepherd & Yeo 2001).

The records life-cycle model was developed in an analogue world, when management of a physical object was the norm, and it was the dominant model of the records-management archives relationship for the greater part of the 20th century (Atherton 1985; Johnston & Bowen 2005). It is based on the premise that the life of a record can be divided into eight separate stages in two phases, starting with a records management

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[2] In the Archives Act an object does not include a building or other structure or a vessel, aircraft or vehicle

phase and then following on from that an archival phase. The model focusses just on the records as objects. The records management phase consists of:

1. creation or receipt of information in the form of records

2. classification of the records in some logical system

3. maintenance and use of the records

4. their final disposition through destruction or transfer to an archive.

The archival phase consists of:

5. selection/acquisition of the records by an archive

6. description of the records in inventories, indexing, etc.

7. preservation of the records

8. reference and use of the information by researchers and scholars.

(Atherton 1985)

These two phases were often managed by completely separate organisations, with the records management phase being managed by the organisation based on its needs, followed by a handover of the records to an archive supporting a different set of users and stakeholders and that was invariably also governed by different policies and procedures. The archivist had little or no input into how records were initially captured, described and organised, and the records manager may have neglected to identify permanently valuable records for the future that were beyond the organisation's own need for them. Each profession had its own focus and attention, with its records serving a range of different purposes in different institutional contexts. (Lewellen 2015). This primary/secondary value, or evidence/information tension, in relation to records still exists within the recordkeeping professions and the literature; however, there is some debate in the academic literature that seeks to explore and extend our understanding of records and the problems associated definitions that solely focus on evidence and information.

One author prominent in the literature that explores the concept of the record in terms far wider than the primary and secondary value of records is Geoffrey Yeo. His two-part framework explores records as representations, prototypes and boundary objects (Yeo 2007, 2008). In exploring alternative and defining features of records, he proposes a definition of records as "persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers or their authorized proxies" (Yeo 2007, p. 342). He notes the following six "affordances" or values of records that might offer only a weak association with evidence and information but are valid nonetheless: – these are memory, accountability; legitimisation of power; a sense of personal or social identity; continuity; and the communication of such benefits across space or time. Yeo (2007) asserts that emphasising only evidence or information is limiting because it undervalues the true complexity of records:

> Emphasis on evidence is often intended to link recordkeeping to the worlds of law and corporate governance; emphasis on information suggests an alignment to librarianship or computing. A focus on memory perhaps implies an association with history or cultural identity. All these perspectives are valid, but none is comprehensive. The representational view of records is multidisciplinary and embraces a wide spectrum of understanding. (Yeo 2007, p. 343)

Ultimately though, Yeo's exploration, whether as a representation, prototype or boundary object, is still focussed on the *record as artefact*.

Records processing

Records need to be managed and, as Buckland (1991) notes, information systems can only deal with "Information as Thing" or in this case the *record as artefact*. Since the Pittsburgh Project (Marsden 1997) and other electronic recordkeeping research in the 1990s, there has been an emphasis within the recordkeeping community on developing systems and processes of managing electronic objects in the same way as their paper or analogue counterparts. The vexing question of how to maintain the same characteristics of 'recordness' in a digital age has occupied the attention of the recordkeeping profession and archival authorities around the world, particularly in the years post-1999 when email was officially recognised as a record (Stuckey & Liddell 2000). Much time, energy and money has been devoted to researching and developing standards and

specifications in relation to records management, recordkeeping systems and metadata to guide professionals and software vendors. These standards and specifications have all been written with a focus on the preservation of the electronic object as evidence at their core.

In an organisational context, the adoption of the EDRMS has been important. For approximately two decades, the deployment of an EDRMS has been the main way in which organisations have sought to implement compliant digital recordkeeping frameworks. The body of literature that looks at these implementations and the lessons learned are generally singular case studies (Di Biagio & Ibiricu 2008; García Garrido 2008; Gregory 2005; Maguire 2005; Wilkins et al. 2007; Wilkins, Swatman & Holt 2009), although in one or two cases multi-case studies or articles addressing themes across a larger survey population have been written (e.g. Abdulkadhim et al. 2015; Johnston & Bowen 2005; Nguyen et al. 2009; Young 2005). These papers, in the main, do not engage with theoretical propositions, but offer practitioners in the field advice on aspects such as procurement; implementation models and stages; the configuration of software; engaging and retaining management support; and change management.

A few studies have sought to engage with records use within EDRMS, but these have primarily looked at records search behaviours and the implications of these for training in the use of EDRMSs (Joseph 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Joseph, Debowski & Goldschmidt 2013a, 2013b; Nycyk 2008; Singh, Klobas & Anderson 2007; Singh, Klobas & Anderson 2008a, 2008b; Singh, Klobas & Anderson 2008c). In looking at records use with a view to better understanding users' behaviours and improving the design of systems, Borglund and Oberg (2008) attempted to categorise the types of record use in organisations by reference to the Schellenberg's notion of the primary and secondary value of records, but found this to be too imprecise. Their research shows that there exists extended record use beyond or between the primary and secondary purposes of use proposed by Schellenberg. This again highlights the limitations of the information/evidence duality within the recordkeeping literature and demonstrates how there is a much wider understanding of the affordances and uses of records. Beyond such studies of the concepts of record use and retrieval there has been very little scholarly research on EDRMS in organisational settings, although Foscarini (2009) and Lewellen (2015) provide two notable exceptions.

It has been noted that current approaches to records management, including implementations of EDRMS, tend to follow 'hard systems' approaches that dominate current management and systems thinking (Foscarini 2010). Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) could be used as a research tool to analyse recordkeeping environments from the perspectives of different participants in an environment by moving away from the classic systems idea that all systems have goals or objectives and towards the idea that these systems of human activity pursue purposeful activity in a social context (Foscarini 2010).

Soft Systems Methodology

It is widely accepted that SSM is phenomenological in approach (Holwell 2000) and so seeks to understand the everyday doings of people and things in organisations (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). Underlying SSM is an appreciation of how individuals and groups establish meaning, including the meaning of record, and how this can be supported by information systems (Checkland 1999). SSM recognises the subjectivity in all human affairs and considers organisations to be 'human activity systems' with various root definitions that affect perceptions of information systems in organisations (including those relating to records). It conceives of a world made up of ill-structured and hard to define problem situations and shifts the focus from the information system to the individuals, thus allowing for a plurality of models to be constructed using systems concepts as a guide, each reflecting a different worldview. (Checkland 1999; Checkland & Holwell 1998).

Checkland & Scholes (1999, p. 24) define human activity systems as "systems that feature human beings in social roles trying to take purposeful actions". SSM provides a set of tools for structuring or facilitating the study of the social construction of reality in particular contexts, and because of this Houghton & Ledington (2002, p. 82) suggest that SSM "ought to provide a foundation for creating more effective forms of information management".

The Processes for Organisational Meanings (POM) model developed by Checkland & Holwell (1998) was initially proposed by this researcher as a framework for this study. The POM Model (see Figure 1.1) emanates from SSM and is a representation of the ongoing workplace interactions involved in meaning creation, including those relating

to records. It depicts the relationships between the organisational context in which individuals and groups create meanings, form intentions and take purposeful actions with the aid of information systems. Checkland & Holwell (1998, p. 107) note that, like most models, POM

> does not purport to be a descriptive account of the organisational process. What it does purport to be is a defensible device with a structure and a language which can be used to make sense of life in real organisations and their provision of information systems. Real life itself is always richer and more complex than any of our images of it.

The POM is meant to define connected processes, not structures, and although it is constructed as a cycle with pathways linking all elements together, there does not have to be a clear starting point for using the model.
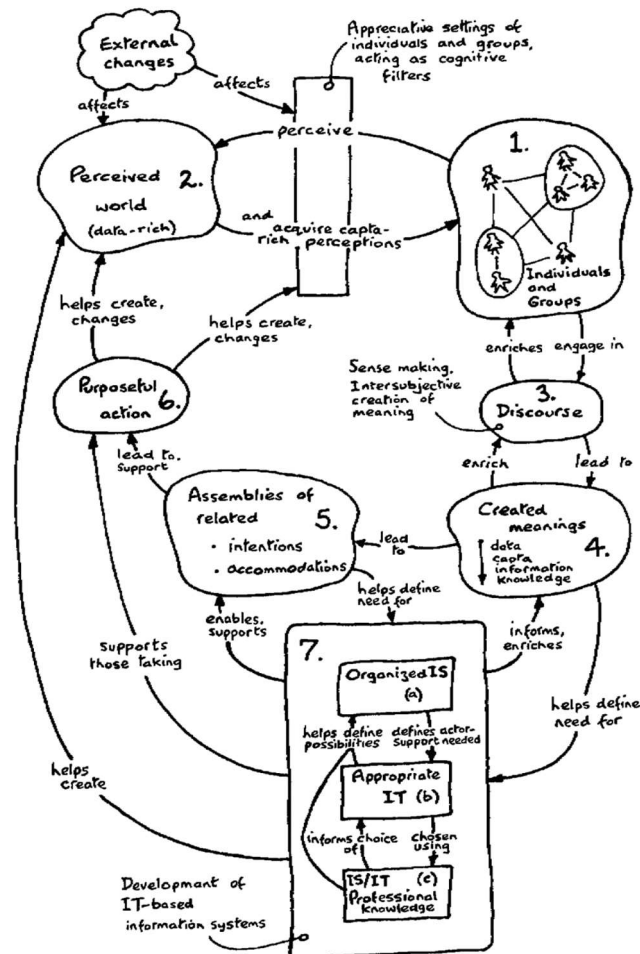
Source: Checkland and Holwell (1998)

Figure 1.1. Processes of Organisational Meanings model
(Checkland & Holwell 1998, p. 106)

Element 1 consists of people as individuals, group members and members of organisations or professions who participate intra- and extra-organisationally. Checkland (1999) suggests this is a concept similar to the 'networks of practice' put forth by Brown & Duguid (1991). As Whittington (2006) notes, practitioners draw upon the set of practices available from their organisational and extra-organisational contexts, which may compose both locally generated practices and those originating from outside that have become internalised.

Element 2 represents the data rich world these people perceive selectively through their various assumptions – these are referred to as 'appreciative settings' a term taken from Vickers (1987), appreciative systems and 'cognitive filters' (Land 1985). Checkland (1999) calls the data they extract from this process and pay attention to 'capta'. Element 3, the organisational discourse, is the arena in which meaning is created inter-subjectively. This leads to Element 4, the attribution of meaning, which yields 'information' and, when related to larger structures, 'knowledge'. This hierarchy (data, capta, information, knowledge) and process of meaning creation is depicted in Element 4.

Assemblies of related meanings, intentions and accommodations are reached between different groups (Element 5) to allow purposeful action to be taken (Element 6), which in turn creates changes in our perceived world. Element 7, the system that serves, is divided into three parts. The formally organised information system (Element 7a) is based on Element 7b, the IT and telecommunications that support organisation members to conceptualise their world, find accommodations, form intentions and take actions. Element 7c represents the professional know-how needed to operate, maintain, modify and deploy/configure the technology. Shared understanding also informs and defines the need for the development of formal IT-based information systems.

Checkland (1999) views discourse and the intersubjective creation of meaning as the foundation of the POM Model. As such, his view is similar to the Foucauldian concept of discourse where knowledge/truth is intersubjective and a product of the shared meanings, conventions, and social practices operating within and between discourses (Olsson 2010). As the POM Model focusses on the intersubjective creation of meaning via discourse, it highlights the role of 'appreciative settings' (Element 2). Checkland and Holwell (1998) observe that although appreciative settings may well be unique to one individual, they may also be attributed to a group of people who are closely associated with each other. Organisational or professional members may have appreciative settings with common characteristics that both impact the perceptions of individuals towards records and influence the shape, nature and success of any records

management program, as such these cultures are components of an organisation's information culture (Oliver 2010).

Since SSM is phenomenological in approach (Holwell 2000), it is similar to practice theoretical approaches that seek to understand the everyday doings of people and things in organisations (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). In fact, as Foscarini (2010, p. 403) notes, SSM has similar philosophical underpinnings to practice theory and embraces "substantial notions of structuration theory". However, SSM, like rhetorical genre theory (Foscarini 2010) to be discussed later, is quite heavily focussed on discourse and only includes practices that involve interaction with information systems. A practice theoretical approach would not limit the enquiry to practices focussed solely around information systems in an organisational setting. A practice theoretical approach would therefore allow for greater exploration of the full range of record keeping practices, including the relationship between internal and external practices. For these reasons, a practice theoretical approach was chosen as a research framework rather than SSM.

Record as process

The *record as process*, like information as process, is situational. In each context what to record and how to record it, and indeed what is considered a record, will be different. The current focus in the professional literature in terms of the process of record keeping are the outputs of the process (i.e. the *record as artefact*). Techniques prominent within recordkeeping such as functional analysis and business process analysis map business processes in terms of the steps involved and their documentary outputs, rather than attempt to understand the 'how' of the human-centred processes of record creation in workplaces and communities of practice.

In the early 1990s the interpretivist and post-modern archival literature began to explore the nature and perception of the record and archive, with the one of the primary influences on thinking and discourse being Derrida's *Mal d'Archive* (McKemmish et al. 2005). Several prominent recordkeeping theorists, including Cook (2001a, 2001b); Cook & Schwartz (2002); Ketelaar (2001); Nesmith (2002, 2006) and Harris (1996, 1997), engaged with post-modern theory, thus influencing the development of the field by introducing it to the idea of critical reflection on the role of records and recordkeeping professionals in what are essentially social practices and emphasising the constructivist practices of recordkeeping professionals themselves. Developed in dialogue with the studies in recordkeeping analysed here, these two streams of writing

have collectively contributed to what Ivanov (2017, p. 106) calls the "interpretive paradigm in archival and recordkeeping research".

Around this time the literature began to challenge the traditional linear and life-cycle views of records, particularly the notion of archives as physical objects and physical places. The advent of electronic records meant that archival records might no longer be transferred to an archival institution but instead physical custody may be distributed and access provided electronically (Cox 2001; Yeo 2007). Part of the post-modern perspective that began to emerge was the formulation of the Records Continuum model (RCM) (Upward 1996, 1997, 2000, 2005), which took ideas from structuration theory (Giddens 1984) and extended them to the practice of recordkeeping by conceptualising records as logical rather than physical entities. The RCM it is now the predominant framework for the management of records in Australia and internationally and is the basis for the International Standard on Records Management ISO 15489-2016, the current best practice framework for the Australian Government.

In his seminal work Atherton (1985, p. 47) stated that the continued "split between the records management and archival phases of the life-cycle is no longer acceptable" (p. 47) and recommended that records management and archival phases be merged into a single continuum to help maintain contextual continuity throughout the managed life of a record. According to Upward (1996), if the profession "is to avoid a fracture along the lines of paper and electronic media, it has to be able to develop ways of expressing its ideas in models of relevance to all ages of recordkeeping" (Upward 1996, p. 269).

The RCM and the evolution of records continuum thinking and practice provide ways of articulating a mission that brings together records managers and archivists under the umbrella of recordkeeping and focussing on the unifying purposes shared by all recordkeeping professionals. Continuum thinking tries also to move away from focussing on records as physical entities or artefacts to seeing them as logical entities[3],

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[3] Logical entity is a term from systems modelling and refers to a conceptual or abstract description of an entity rather than its physical characteristics.

de-emphasising their material form (although obviously all records have some physical instantiation).

The RCM does not separate records management and archives management into two separate disciplines; instead it proposes that recordkeeping, which includes the concept of records of continuing value (archives), be seen as a continuum of activities through time (see Figure 1.2). To be properly managed for one year or a thousand years, records need their management structures to be put in place at capture so that they may survive. Under the records continuum framework, both records management and archival decisions are taken when the document is created (McKemmish 1997).
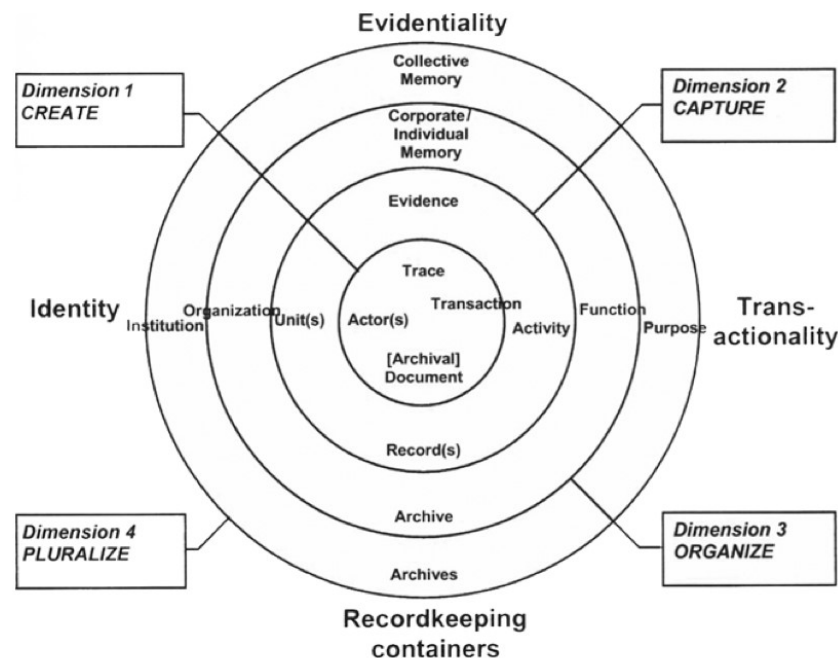
Figure 1.2: The Records Continuum Model (Upward 2000, p. 123)

The RCM divides recordkeeping into four dimensions along four axes. Upward (1996, 1997) defined these dimensions as follows:

- The first dimension (Create) – the actors who carry out the act (decisions, communications, acts), the acts themselves, the documents which record the acts, and the trace, the representation of the acts.
- The second dimension (Capture) – encompasses the personal and corporate recordkeeping systems which capture documents in context in ways which

support their capacity to act as evidence of the social and business activities of the units responsible for the activities.

- The third dimension (Organise) – encompasses the organisation of recordkeeping processes. It is concerned with the manner in which a corporate body or individual defines its recordkeeping regime and in so doing constitutes/forms the archive as memory of its business or social functions.

- The fourth dimension (Pluralise) – concerns the manner in which the archives are brought into an encompassing (ambient) framework in order to provide a collective social, historical and cultural memory of the institutionalised social purposes and roles of individuals and corporate bodies.

Upward (1996, 1997) defined the axes as representing the following:

- The recordkeeping axis deals with the vehicles for the storage of recorded information about human activities. Its co-ordinates are those of the document, the record, the archive and the archives.

- The evidence axis consists of the trace of actions, the evidence which records can provide, and their role in corporate and collective memory.

- The transactional axis presents the act, activities, functions and purposes and reflects an emphasis upon records as records of activities undertaken in the conduct of affairs, and upon the way these activities create links between documents.

- The identity axis represents the actor, the work unit with which the actor is associated (which may be the actor alone), the organisation with which the unit is associated (which may also be the actor or the unit) and the manner in which the identity of these elements are institutionalized by broader social recognition.

The RCM provides a way of conceptualising the essence of records and how they are made, kept and used, and is a framework that allows the breadth of records and recordkeeping to be appreciated as well as a allowing us to zoom in on specific aspects of recordkeeping that contribute to the whole (Cumming 2010). Although its representation in diagrammatic form might be read as linear, it is neither linear nor time-bound; the records continuum operates through time, not in time, and so highlights how records serve multiple purposes and "that they mean different things to different

people in different contexts, both immediately and through time" (Cumming 2010, p. 42).

By incorporating non-linear concepts of time, the RCM further challenges the traditional notions of records by arguing that the creation of records is a continuing process rather than one occurring at singular moment of time. Records can be created (as a record) and created again (either in new contextual groupings or in reinterpretation) without the need for a linear approach to time (Lewellen 2015). The Records Continuum perspective recognises the various actors, environments and temporalities involved in recordkeeping and that records are "always in a process of becoming" (McKemmish 1994 in McKemmish 2001, p. 334).

However, while the RCM explicitly introduces the concepts of actors, business processes and the recordkeeping environment, its interpretation and application in the professional arena has been limited. In attempts to move beyond the records or information objects themselves to a broader view of the people, processes, environments and temporalities within which they are situated, the complexity of the model has largely been ignored. The RCM's main contribution has been to foreground the practical considerations involved in the identification and preservation of digital objects at creation so that the structures can be put in place to ensure they survive as archives in the digital world.

Recordkeeping informatics

This digital age requires an understanding of the information behaviours of information/knowledge workers in today's organisations, as well as the influences and effects of information technologies on the management of information and records (Oliver et al. 2010). So scholars with a wide view of what continuum practices entail have developed the idea that records management should be reconceptualised as recordkeeping informatics (Oliver et al. 2009; Oliver et al. 2010; Oliver et al. 2014; Oliver et al. 2012; Upward et al. 2013).Fourman (2002, p. 1) defines informatics as

> the science of information. It studies the representation, processing, and communication of information in natural and artificial systems. Since computers, individuals and organisations all process information, informatics has computational, cognitive and social aspects.

More specifically, recordkeeping informatics is "an approach to records management that focusses on the processes that produce records rather than the management of them as end products" (Oliver et al. 2014, p. 1) that aims to provide a clear departure from the current and predominant philosophy that the principles applied to digital records should be the same as those in the paper world (Oliver et al. 2010). Recordkeeping informatics considers that there are two building blocks – continuum thinking and recordkeeping metadata – and three facets of analysis: recordkeeping cultures; access; and business processes (Upward et al. 2018).

Oliver (2008) defines information culture as the values and attitudes accorded to information within specific organisational contexts. It includes such things as the willingness to share information, the trust in the information sources, and the awareness of the need to manage certain information as records in the first place (Oliver 2010). The model of analysis of information culture that is referred to within recordkeeping informatics includes three levels:

> Level One: the fundamental values and other features that are significant influences, but difficult to change, e.g. respect for information as information and knowledge, information preferences; language and regional technological infrastructure.

> Level two: Skills, knowledge and experience related to information management which can be acquired or extended in the workplace.

> Level Three: Corporate information technology governance and trust in organisational systems which are behaviours that are more easily able to be changed than those values at Level One of the framework.

> (Oliver 2017b; Oliver & Foscarini 2014)

The information culture toolkit developed from this model was piloted with business units in two Australian universities in 2016 and provided an insight into the diversity of understanding about records and record keeping one can encounter within an organisation, as well as how the traditional language and technical terms used by records managers were often at odds with modern work practices. It also highlighted

how some cultures are inherently more conducive than others to straightforward applications of record keeping practices (Oliver et al. 2018).

Recordkeeping culture is a fledgling area of research. Few case studies have explicitly focussed on the positive and negative effects that information culture has on records management in organisations e.g. Svärd (2014); Wright (2013). In their literature review exploring the current academic discourse on information culture and its relevance for records management, (Sundqvist & Svärd 2016) note that it has primarily been the output of information and information management (how information is used, shared and disseminated) that has been of interest in research studies to date. They suggest that if the concept of information culture is to function adequately as an analytical framework for records management then it needs to be widened to include the input, that is, how information is created, captured and preserved.

When this current study commenced, neither recordkeeping informatics nor the information culture toolkit had been fully articulated and so they were not considered appropriate frameworks for this research. While the conceptual framework of recordkeeping informatics may provide a useful framework for some researchers in the future, it still does not, in this researcher's opinion, shift the balance enough so that the human elements of the process are equal components of the social practice that is recordkeeping.

Record creating processes

Changes in the administrative and organisational landscape due to the proliferation of electronic records and the rise of the Internet during the 1980s have brought attention to, and questioned, the validity of the dividing line between records management and archival practices but also to the objectivity of the record itself and the role of the record creator and keeper and their impact on records. A small body of scholarship developed in dialogue with the post-modern literature outlined above has studied recordkeeping practices in contexts as diverse as science (Ilerbaig 2010; Shankar 2004), banking (Lemieux 2001), radiology (Yakel 2001), nursing (Ngin 1994) and law enforcement (Trace 2002). These studies have "all focussed on the means by which communities of practice build and maintain webs of meaning though record creation and record keeping activities" (Gracy 2004, p. 338) rather than on the object itself. This current study

reinforces the idea that the *record as process* is contextual and situational in organisations.

Yakel (2001) combined ethnographic description, content analysis and conversation analysis in radiological reading rooms to examine how the "loci of accountability" may be found in organisations. She found that accountability is socially constructed in organisations and one must understand "the formal and informal communication and information flow patterns as well as the internal and external constraints and their influence on organisational recordkeeping practices" (Yakel 2001, p. 233).

Shankar (2004, 2007) focussed on the use of paper records and individuals in a laboratory. Her studies mention no firm conclusions on the nature of the record per se, other than bland descriptive notions of genre and order. However, she noted that recordkeeping in science is more than organisational knowledge; it has profound implications for the production of knowledge and the development of professional identity. These findings were echoed by Ilerbaig (2010) in his analysis of the record keeping practices that relate to scientific specimens.

Trace (2002) and the antecedent studies from which her research is drawn (e.g. Van Maanen & Pentland (1994) advance the view, based on empirical evidence from the realm of law enforcement, that records, as products of social processes are fundamentally self-interested and self-conscious. Trace demonstrated that records are not neutral, factual, technical documents alone (i.e. the *record as artefact*), they are designed and/or written to produce an effect, and organisational members devote a part of their labours to the creation of these impressions for an intended audience. In this sense records are tools of rhetoric, and the *record as process* can be viewed not only as fundamentally self interested, but also representative of all the unwritten, structural power relationships present in record keeping processes and discourses in any context.

Record construction as genre

While records are tools of rhetoric, they are also be rhetorically constructed as a 'genre' within their organisational setting. A few scholars (e.g. MacNeil 2012; Rhee 2012; Trace & Dillon 2012) have explored the stream of genre research and scholarship known as rhetorical genre studies and its applicability to enhance understandings within the field of archives and records management. Fiorella Foscarini in particular has

explored it in detail in relation records management in organisational settings (Foscarini 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). In exploring the relevance and possible application of rhetorical genre studies to organisational records Foscarini (2013) has noted that the situated and dialogic approach of rhetorical genre studies can provide valuable insights for records management "which may be seen as having lost touch with the organizational reality".

Genre is a socially and culturally shaped construct, with each community defining its genres. A genre is both the text and the context of the typified social action (Miller 1984). In an organisation this involves a process of 'inscription', that is, the creation of a what could constitute a record, or the "rendering of an event or object in documentary form" to facilitate social action (Smith, 1984 p.65 in Schryer 1993). As 'cultural artefacts'(Miller 1984, 1994) they are sites of social, cultural, and ideological negotiation that "represent the values of certain groups within the speech community and not others" (Schryer 1993, p. 230). If each community defines its genres, and this includes 'workplace communities' (Foscarini 2014), then as Paré (2002) notes, we must ask why they have been formed the way they are, for whom and for what needs.

Catherine Schryer (1993, p. 208) noted the dynamic nature of genres by defining them as "stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action". Genre theorists draw upon structuration theory (Giddens 1984) to explain how genres are created or reproduced through space and time (Miller 1994). The concepts of 'genre sets' (Bazerman 1994), 'genre systems' (Bazerman 1994; Yates & Orlikowski 2002) or 'genre repertoires'(Orlikowski & Yates 1994) have also been developed to explain and demonstrate the interrelationships among genres.

According to Devitt (1991), the genre sets of a profession form

> a complex network of interaction, a structured set of relationships among texts, so that any text is best understood within the context of other texts. No text is single, as texts refer to one another, draw from one another, create the purpose for one another. These texts and their interactions are so integral to the community's work that they essentially constitute and govern the … community, defining and reflecting that community's epistemology and values. (Devitt 1991, pp. 336-7)

Bazerman (1994) expanded on this proposition to argue that the genre set of one profession represents only one side of an interaction; each person in that interaction works within their own genre set and therefore "the system of genres would be the full set of genres that instantiate the participation of all parties" (Bazerman 1994, p. 99).

While rhetorical genre theory was considered an appropriate framework for this research, it was eventually discarded in favour of practice theoretical approach for two main reasons. The first was the issue of whether the term record could be considered specific enough to be a 'genre' in its own right, and indeed this is something even Schryer (1993) herself did not satisfactorily answer. Second, because rhetorical genre theory focusses on discourse, the rhetorical construction of a genre can be viewed as just one of the discursive practices among an organisation's ecology of practices, rather than the most appropriate theoretical framework to use for this research. Instead, this study uses genre as a sensitising or supporting concept, similar to the socio-material genre used by Ivanov (2017).

Record as knowledge

The *record as knowledge* can be viewed as the aggregate of all written and recorded knowledge in an organisational context – the 'organisational record'. This amorphous concept of organisational record relates solely to the content of the records themselves, rather than their artefactual form. There is an ongoing and symbiotic relationship between this *record as knowledge* and the new generation of information and records, the tacit knowledge of organisational members.

More particularly, the *record as knowledge* is the meaning of record that is part of the tacit knowledge of each individual. Words and concepts such as data, information, knowledge, records and document are often "interpreted differently by different people with varied backgrounds" (Yusof & Chell 1999, p. 97). Differences in definition and perception of records can, for example, reflect existing disciplinary schools of thought (Finnell 2011; Yeo 2007; Yusof & Chell 1999) and particular recordkeeping contexts (Yeo 2007); be linked to a particular medium or format (Lemieux 2001); or be impacted by organisational culture, information technology and information culture (Oliver 2010). The prevailing principle-based and positivist definitions of records within the recordkeeping community ignore these aspects of the nature of the record and

decontextualise and idealise it (Foscarini 2013). In particular, they do not consider, as some post-modern writings have begun to explore, that different and equally valid interpretations of record may exist as tacit knowledge not only within different individuals, but also within particular contexts or sites of practice.

In a revisitation of some of the core concepts in recordkeeping, Mortensen (1999, p. 6) was one of the first to challenge the prevailing universal and objective notion of the record[4], noting the "meaning of words and concepts are not … secured by the shared form of things to which we apply the same name, but are a matter of the ways in which we use concepts in practice". Lemieux (2001), based on her empirical exploration of users of Jamaican banking records, agreed with Mortensen and proposed the view that there is no one true conceptualisation of the record; rather, different views arise in different social contexts. She suggests the true question is not "What is a record?" but "What does this group or individual perceive and understand as a record?"

Finnell (2011) further concluded that if one disagrees that there is a universal definition of record then records must always be considered contextual; thus, each organisation must have a different view of records and a correspondingly different management regime. Yet to date, the framework whereby each organisation has its own definition of records and subsequent view of their management is determined by the skill of the individual practitioner in interpreting general principles and applying them in context.

The *record as knowledge* in an organisational setting is also inextricably linked to existing discursive networks of power/knowledge, an understanding of the discursive rules that apply in a given context, and the recognition of the established authority of certain ideas and practices in a given discourse (Olsson 2010). In this sense the *record as knowledge* represents all the unwritten, structural power relationships that are present in a particular discourses in a record keeping context.

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[4] There were other earlier authors e.g. Brothman 1991, but they tended to challenge the view that recordkeeping practices and the recordkeeper are objective rather than the positivist view of the record itself.

Quite apart from an individual construction or a concept, the *record as knowledge* can be viewed as a definition of record going beyond the physical and artefactual form prevalent in Western culture. In her exploration of the record, Anderson (2012) sought to find a definition of record that would incorporate all records, including oral records. In mapping the nexus between the concepts of record, time and evidence, she reframed the concept of record to allow for oral traditions, dance and rituals to be included: "The record is an intentional, stable, semantic structure that moves in time" (p.362) This definition does not require a record to be externalised from people or an event, and it sits in contrast to most Western definitions that require a record to be an artefact captured into a recordkeeping container or system. Indigenous Australian Archival scholars have also offered a pluralist views of records as

> any account, regardless of form, that preserves memory or knowledge of facts of events … A record can be … an individual's memory, an image or a recording. It can be an actual person, a community, or the land itself. (Faulkhead 2009)

Records as practices

Practices are an important element in record keeping, and the value of practice theory to recordkeeping profession as a way of seeing a more nuanced view of recordkeeping and archival practices has been demonstrated (Ivanov 2017). Practices are socially situated and embodied, and a central feature of practice approaches is that practitioners' shared understanding of their practice organises and directs their activities, thus making it possible for them to carry out the practice (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). Practice approaches do not privilege object–human relations over human–human relations, yet they acknowledge that 'things' such as information systems and records are necessary elements of certain practices (Reckwitz 2002).

The recordkeeping profession and its literature, with the exception of a few studies, has characteristically privileged the object over the human elements of practices, rather than investigating in a holistic fashion record keeping as a social practice. A practice theoretical approach, because it does not privilege either the object or the human elements of practices, provides a more complete holistic framework to understand the conditions and features of record keeping and explore and examine all of the elements of the social practice that is record keeping in an organisational setting. It also has the

ability to produce accounts of how different types of information and knowledge are produced and sanctioned as part of the practice of record keeping.

Record keeping as an information practice

In the same way that records are considered a subset of the broader information resources in an organisational setting (Barry 2002), so too can record keeping practices be considered a subset of the broader information practices within organisations. Positioning record keeping practices as an information practice allows us to move beyond the current predominant framing of record keeping practices as a set of skills or competencies associated with the use of particular technologies or tools (such as the EDRMS) and explore a more holistic view of record keeping practice that incorporates the knowledge and skills required, the objects and tools involved and the arrangements and constraints of the social setting or workplace itself. It also allows the study to position record keeping practice within the broader frame of a body of information practice research exploring diverse information practices embedded in workplace or social settings (Savolainen 2007; Talja & Hansen 2006).

Within the broader information disciplines, practice theory has been applied to analyses of communities/networks of practice (Brown & Duguid 1991, 2001; Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998); information use environments (Rosenbaum 1993, 1996), information literacy (Lloyd 2005, 2007, 2010, 2011), photography (Cox 2012, 2013) and other every day information practices (McKenzie 2003; Rosenbaum 2010). In recordkeeping Giddens' (1984) ideas have been drawn on to provide a more dynamic view of the records and the interactions between them and the records creators (Foscarini 2009). The most relevant example in Australia has been the use of structuration theory in the development of the Records Continuum Model (Upward 1996, 1997, 2000, 2005). However, while Giddens' structuration theory is considered an early practice theory (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011), the use of fully fledged, contemporary practice-based approaches in recordkeeping research is a relatively recent phenomenon (e.g. Ivanov (2017).

Annemaree Lloyd (2010, 2011) has explored a definition of information practice that is useful to this study that stems from her research on information literacy in the workplace. Her work has some parallels to this study as she notes that a workplace is a

social setting where the information landscape is messy, complex and distributed through a range of practices that entwine to contribute to the collective performance of work. Workplace knowledge is not only shaped through canonical and content-based sources but also through experiences and the tacit and implied nuances that construct the workplace narrative. The creation of knowledge of the workplace and the performance of work reflects the ongoing collaboration between people that is mediated by the material and social conditions of the practice setting or site.

Lloyd (2011, p. 285)proposes the following definition of an information practice:

> An array of information related activities and skills, constituted justified and organised through the arrangements of a social site, and mediated socially and materially with the aim of producing shared understanding and mutual agreement about ways of knowing and recognising how performance is enacted, enabled and constrained in collective situated action.

This definition has been adopted in this study as it reflects the fact that records in the workplace are the collective possession of the setting and record keeping is a dispersed practice that is in inherent in all other practices; without records, other performances and practices cannot be accomplished or managed. This definition has also allowed this researcher to explore record keeping as an information practice that is complex and collaborative and produced by a range of social activities that interweave together to produce a way of knowing that is particular and localised. (Lloyd 2010, 2011).

Features of practice theoretical approaches

Practice theoretical approaches draw on a combination of philosophical approaches and theoretical traditions, with most inspired by a perspective that regards them as tied to an interest in the 'everyday' and 'life-world' (Reckwitz 2002). This life-world concept has its origins in the phenomenological movement within philosophy, particularly the distinct branches of phenomenology that developed during the late 20th century (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). A practice is understood as something that people do in 'real' or everyday life, with these doings constituting a foundation for institutions and the social order. In this view, what people do every day to get their work done enjoys

full explanatory status, substituting for theories, explanations, norms or ideologies (Reckwitz 2002).

However, there is no single or unified practice-based approach (Schatzki 2001). Instead, practice theory has been characterised by a group of sociologists and philosophers of the late 20th century (e.g. Bourdieu (1977); Schatzki (1997) who either developed fully-fledged theories of practice or "at least found practice to be an important concept in their work. Giddens, Foucault, Garfinkel and … Latour … belong to this group" (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow 2009, p. 1312).

Because of their diversity, practice approaches are often defined by listing common elements, themes or challenges. These are principally "the embodied nature of practice; knowledge as a way of acting and using artefacts, rather than only as verbal or textual representations of world; and the significance of material objects and artefacts for practices" (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow 2009, p. 1312). These and other common elements of practice approaches are discussed briefly below.

A practice is an "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understandings" (Schatzki 2001p. 2). Practices are predominantly seen as recurrent, routinised, collective types of conduct that result in social order because of their repetitive and stable nature (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011). They are socially, rather than individually, constituted (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009), "a 'type' of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales and at different points of time and is carried out by different body/minds" (Reckwitz 2002, p. 250). As a routinized behaviour practices consist of three interconnected elements: forms of bodily and mental activities; 'things' and their use; and background knowledge (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow 2009). They form a block whose existence necessarily depends on the specific interconnectedness of these single elements and cannot be reduced to any one of them (Reckwitz 2002).

Practice approaches desire to overcome the problem of various forms of dualism in many other social theories, for example, subject and object, mind and body, inner and outer, agency and structure (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). Early influential practice theories aimed at establishing practice as the basic domain of the social sciences by overcoming social theory's dualism between 'individualism' and 'societism' (Schatzki

2005a) or what Giddens (1984) called the 'subjective' and the 'objective'. They acknowledged that actors' activities cannot be detached from society, as the rules and resources it furnishes are essential to their action, and society in turn is itself produced by this action (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011). Giddens (1984) called this the duality of structure.

In a practice approach, diverse social practices are carried by agents. Agents are body/minds who consist in the performance of practices and as carriers of a practice (Reckwitz 2002). These human agents' activities are guided and directed by purposiveness (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). Agents actions are also reflexive enough and their social systems flexible enough for them to not mindlessly reproduce a practice. They may also amend as well as reproduce the stock of practices on which they draw (Giddens 1984). Social practices also depend on the skills and initiative of the agent on whom the activity depends, and these are "followed in rough and ready ways, according to the exigencies of the situation" (Whittington 2006, p. 615). In practice theory there is a distinction between the agent and the individual: while every agent carries out a multitude of different social practices, the individual is the unique crossing point of these practices 'in' one mind/body (Reckwitz 2002). The practice, as a nexus of doings and sayings (Schatzki 1996), is understandable not only to the agent/s who carry it out, but also to potential observers.

Another common theme in practice theory is the embodiment of the practice by practitioners. A practice is "a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (Reckwitz 2002, p. 250); when an agent 'carries' (and 'carries out') a practice they take over both the bodily and the mental patterns that constitute that practice. The body is also seen as a connection point between the social and the individual (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009).

Practices are site specific in that they are situated, social, contextual, collaborative and relational (Cox 2012; Gherardi 2009; Mahon et al. 2017; Nicolini 2012; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & Savigny 2001). Similar practices may have different meanings in different contexts due to political, social and technological impacts, and they may only be understood properly by considering and understanding their context, such as that of an

organisational team within a wider institution, or an institution within a wider government or regulatory context (Cox 2012).

A specific social practice also contains specific forms of knowledge: "It is in practice … that knowledge comes to life, stays alive and fades away" (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. p.26). Practitioners' shared understanding of their practice provides direction and a means of organising their activities, a central feature being the shared knowhow that makes it possible to carry out the practice (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). Practice theorists reject the traditional dualism between knowledge that exists 'out there' and knowledge that exists 'in here' (sometimes referred to as explicit and tacit knowledge) (Feldman & Orlikowski 2011); rather, knowing is an ongoing "social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted in every day practice" (Orlikowski 2002, p. p. 252). It is regarded not as something possessed, but as a practical accomplishment (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003). In practice approaches this collective, shared knowledge is more complex than 'knowing that'; it includes ways of understanding, of wanting and of feeling, as well as knowing how. These are linked to each other within the practice and are necessary components of the practice in which the individual participates, not qualities of the individual (Reckwitz 2002). As Gherardi (2009) put it:

> To know is to be capable of participating with the requisite competence in the complex web of relationships among people, material artefacts and activities. Acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to connect successfully with the field of practice (p. 118).

And finally, things/objects/artefacts or non-humans (including machines, computers and tools) are interrelated with the activities that comprise a practice (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). These things are necessary components of many practices and carrying out a practice very often means using them in a certain way. (Reckwitz 2002). When 'things' are necessary elements of practices, human–human relations cannot claim priority over human–non-human relations. The stable relation between agents and things within practices reproduces the social, as does the stable relation between several agents in other practices (Reckwitz 2002). Actor-network theorists, whose ideas have influenced many contemporary practice approaches, also posit that non-humans, such as computers, also have agency similar to that of humans (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009).

Contemporary practice approaches use practice as an interpretive lens and pursue a non-individualist, socio-material epistemology and methodology that approaches both subjects and objects as bearers and generators of knowledge (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011). In following a contemporary practice or socio-material epistemology, the inclusion of objects, such as information systems and digital records, as active agents in organisational and individual practices is important (Knorr Cetina 1997, 2001).

Socio-materiality acknowledges that viewing humans and non-humans as separate entities may suffice for analytical purposes, but in practice they are fully intertwined: "There exists no relation whatsoever between 'the material' and 'the social world' because it is this very division which is a complete artefact" (Latour 2005, p. 75). Ontological distinctions between humans and artefacts are not a given, instead they are constituted as socio-material 'assemblages' (Suchman 2007) or 'entanglements' (Orlikowski 2007). Whereas materiality might be a property of a technology, socio-materiality represents the enactment of a particular set of activities that melds materiality with institutions, norms, discourses and all other phenomena typically defined as "social" (Leonardi 2012, p. 34). Socio-materiality reconfigures the concept of agency as a capacity that is realised through the constitutive entanglement of human and non-human actors and is thus relational, emergent and shifting. Recent studies have found that the socio-material practices that constitute some social media sites are actively part of, and integral to, the relations enacted, the knowledge produced and the accountabilities that are considered significant (Feldman & Orlikowski 2011; Scott & Orlikowski 2009, 2012).

While the idea that records play an active role in practices is not new: Brown & Duguid (2002) proposed that documents as boundary objects play a pivotal role in bringing groups of practitioners together to negotiate and coordinate their practices; socio-materiality extends our concept of records and recordkeeping systems as boundary objects by emphasising that they are not independent technical objects but are constituted in, and emerge from, the performance of social practices. At the same time they configure those practices in particular ways (Doolin & McLeod 2012). It also helps us to understand how practices become integral to disparate groups engaged in cooperative activities "making some practices and knowledge more solid and determinate than others" (Orlikowski 2010, p. 136).

Practice architectures

By treating record keeping as a social practice, this research not only focuses on the information skills with which the practice is operationalised, it also recognises the social architectures through which records and record keeping are afforded or constrained, and which in turn enable the construction of narratives that resonate between members of the workplace setting and are used to align newcomers (Lloyd 2010, 2011).

Originating in the field of education, the *theory of practice architectures* expands on the concept of material arrangements put forward by Schatzki (2002) to specify three kinds of arrangements or architectures that shape and prefigure practices that are either brought to, or exist in, particular sites of practice and "exist beyond each person as an individual or actor" (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008, p. 37). These arrangements exist simultaneously in a site of practice and are the sayings – the *cultural-discursive* arrangements operating in semantic space; the doings – the *material-economic* arrangements operating in physical space-time; and the relatings – the *social political* arrangements forming the social space (Mahon et al. 2017).

These spaces form the mediating conditions necessary for the enactment of a practice and, in turn, practice architectures are mediated by practices. Rather than remaining fixed and stable, practice architectures, like practices, evolve over time with new architectures being introduced, old architectures being modified and reformed, and others may be completely transformed (Mahon et al. 2017).

The *theory of practice architectures* also provides a useful approach to investigating the broader organisation and jurisdictional impacts on practices (Leith 2018). For this study, it offers a lens through which the wider context of the Australian Government's recordkeeping framework, as mandated by the National Archives of Australia, and practices of the diverse range of professionals, including the practices of recordkeeping professionals in particular enable or constrain recordkeeping practices. It is also a useful framework for doing what Nicolini (2009b) calls 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' (Hopwood 2014).

The research questions

Yeo (2007, p. 318) notes "it is almost a truism that perceptions of records are widely different outside the professional community of archivists and records managers". Yet we know relatively little about what records creators think in order to align understandings between professional communities. The recordkeeping profession, with the exception of the few studies outlined above, has privileged the artefact over other elements of practices and failed to holistically investigate record keeping as a social practice. As emphasised earlier, practices involve people, processes, sites, knowledge, as well as objects (systems and records), and it is the creators of records, those outside the professional disciplines of recordkeeping, who are tasked with the capturing of records into systems in their organisational setting.

This review of the literature has also revealed that most of the current definitions and models of record keeping reinforce the view that records are the idealised objective and passive by-products of business activity – an object-centric view of professional practice. The newer ideas have had limited ability to affect this predominant positivist view and so the complex nature of interactions between people and records continue to be largely ignored. This incomplete understanding is underscored by the lack of both user-centric research about records in organisational settings and scholarly research from the records management perspective. The concept of record keeping as a social practice is barely acknowledged.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study explores perceptions of the record held by users who are in organisational roles and disciplines outside those specifically concerned with the professional practice of recordkeeping. The following research questions were developed in order to gain new and rich insights into the ways such users understand records and to begin the mapping of this unexplored aspect of record keeping.

Research Question 1:   How do records creators in the Australian public sector define, construct and perceive records and their properties in an organisational context?

Research Question 2:   Are there particular influences on records creators' perceptions, constructions and definitions that stem from professional or organisational perspectives?

Research Question 3:   If there are definite professional or organisational influences on records creators' perceptions, definitions and constructions of records, which plays the major role?

Conclusion

Record keeping is a social practice that is undertaken by users and creators of records in organisations as part of their everyday work activities. Indeed for the archival and recordkeeping professionals it is their sole or primary practice, but for everyone else it is one practice among the *nexus of practices* (Schatzki 1996) or part of the *ecologies of practices* (Kemmis et al. 2012) in organisations. In addition to the skills involved in operating an EDRMS or other computer applications, record keeping practices require a practical understanding of how records are created and kept, a reflexive understanding of what activities facilitate or contest the construction and reproduction of records, and a shared understanding of the nature of records within a site or context.

From among the theoretical approaches investigated, a contemporary practice theoretical approach using the theory of practice architectures to focus on the *relatings, sayings* and *doings* (Kemmis et al. 2014) of record keeping was found to offer more opportunities to explore record keeping practices and socio-political dynamics within Australian Government agencies. Importantly, practice theoretical approaches, like the discipline of recordkeeping itself, place a focus on the context or the *site* of the practice (Schatzki 2005a). This theoretical approach presents a departure from previous research in the discipline and, given its largely exploratory and explanatory focus, will hopefully provide specific implications and contribute rich insight regarding record keeping practices in organisational settings (Walsham 1995).

The following chapter describes the methodological approach used to address the research questions mentioned earlier. It explores the methodological implications of using a practice theoretical approach for the study; the potential research risks and

mitigation strategies; and the environments or *sites* of the case studies and their method of selection.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological approach taken to the three research questions of the study. First, it outlines the overall research paradigm and the aspects of the practice theoretical approach requiring some methodological consideration. Three potential methodological approaches are then described before going on to outline the research methods applied within the case study approach, including a detailed account of the data collected and analysed. Ethical considerations and considerations involved in insider studies are also presented.

The research questions and paradigm

The researcher considered and confirmed the following research questions in order to gain new and rich insights into the ways that users in organisational settings understand records and to allow the researcher to begin to map out this unexplored aspect of record keeping.

Research Question 1: How do records creators in the Australian public sector define, construct and perceive records and their properties in an organisational context?

Research Question 2: Are there particular influences on records creators' perceptions, constructions and definitions that stem from professional or organisational perspectives?

Research Question 3: If there are definite professional or organisational influences on records creators' perceptions, definitions and constructions of records, which plays the major role?

Given these questions, this study is interpretivist in nature. The interpretivist research paradigm, emphasises the meanings made by people as they interpret their world (Orlikowski & Baroudi 1991) and Kaplan & Maxwell (1994) note that at the core of the interpretivist paradigm is the complexity of human sense making. The interpretivist paradigm sees information as

> something constructed by human beings. It sees users as beings who are constantly constructing, as beings who are free (within system constraints) to create from systems and situations whatever they choose.…It focuses on

understanding information use in particular situations.…It focuses on the user. (Dervin & Nilan 1986, p. 16)

The interpretivist paradigm also enables and encourages the participants in the study to influence the questions and the findings (Williamson et al. 2003).

Considerations of the practice theoretical approach

The use of fully fledged, practice-based approaches in recordkeeping research is a relatively recent phenomenon and this study is the first to use such a framework to look at the social practice of record keeping from the perspective of those outside the recordkeeping disciplines. This study has therefore adopted the premise that record keeping, as an information practice, is:[5]

> an array of *information related activities and skills*, constituted justified and organised through *the arrangements of a social site*, and *mediated socially and materially* with the aim of producing *shared understanding and mutual agreement* about ways of knowing and recognising how performance is enacted, enabled and constrained in collective situated action. (Lloyd 2011, p. 285)

The key considerations then that practice theory and this definition highlight for choosing an appropriate methodology, is that our understanding of record keeping and records will not only be shaped by the context or *site* to which it is tied, but also according to the social, textual and embodied practices that are valued and agreed upon by people who participate in the practices of the context. A practice approach highlights, in a way that many current records management methodologies do not, that while practices may produce a documentary output, they also produce a reflexive understanding of what activities facilitate or contest the construction and reproduction of records and a shared meaning about the nature of records with the context.

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[5] Emphasis added

Any methodology selected must then allow us to explore how practices are mediated, socially and materially, but also allow us to uncover the shared understanding and mutual agreement generated in practice within a given site - the various *socio-political*, *cultural-discursive* and *material-economic* arrangements that prefigure the practice in that site - the *relatings*, *sayings* and *doings* (Kemmis et al. 2014). In addition, since record keeping is but one practice among the 'nexus of practices' (Schatzki 1996) or the 'ecology of practices' (Kemmis et al. 2012) present in every organisational setting, the methodology chosen must also allow us to explore and uncover these relationships.

Nicolini (2009c) notes that one useful methodological strategy for bringing to the surface the effects produced by different nexuses of practice might be to compare different sites where the same practice is carried out. He notes that analysing the same practice in two or more sites shows how very different meanings can be attributed to the same practice and thus produce different effects and consequences.

Potential methodological approaches

With the above aspects of the practice theoretical approach in mind, the researcher investigated and considered three potential qualitative methodological approaches for the study: ethnography; grounded theory; and the case study. The three approaches are described below, together with their potential application to this study, taking into account the requirements of the practice theoretical approach outlined above.

Ethnography

Definition and characteristics

Vidich & Lyman (2000, p. 38) state that ethnography is "devoted to describing ways of life of humankind … a social scientific description of a people and the cultural basis of their peoplehood." It has at its core a focus on the study of cultural groupings – ethnos being a Greek term, denoting a people, a race or cultural group. As a research discipline it has its roots in anthropology (Creswell 2009).

Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) see ethnography as primarily referring to a particular method or set of methods that in their most characteristic form involve the ethnographer overtly or covertly participating in people's daily lives for an extended period of time and collecting whatever data is available to through light on the issues that are the focus

of the research. Traditionally, the primary method used by ethnographers has been participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the social and cultural context being studied. The language, interactions and behaviours of the group within the culture are intensively studied and recorded (Creswell 2013).

As a research process, ethnography is one of the most intensive research methods because it involves extended observations (Creswell 2009; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). Ethnographers can spend upwards of two years gathering data (e.g. Latour & Woolgar (2013) in order to obtain sufficient material. Creswell (2009, 2013) notes that using ethnography is challenging and expresses the view that researchers using this method should have a grounding in cultural anthropology and social-cultural systems as well as the concepts that are typically explored in ethnographic research.

Different forms or styles of ethnography have emerged since the early twentieth century. These include realist ethnography, critical ethnography, feminist ethnography, critical ethnography, visual ethnography, performance ethnography, autoethnography and public ethnography (Creswell 2013). Gracy (2004) even proposes the case for 'archival ethnography'. Since there are many types of ethnography Creswell (2013) notes that when using it as a method one needs to be explicit about which type of ethnography is being used.

The key strengths of the method are its intensity and depth, and its ability to challenge a researcher's assumptions. On the other hand, ethnographic research takes longer than most other research methods in the field work, the analysis and the write up (Creswell 2013). As ethnographic studies are usually conducted in one culture, as a method it does not have much breadth as it generally only leads to an in-depth understanding of one particular context or culture, although there is a branch of ethnography called multi-sited ethnography which aims to overcome this but this method also has challenges of its own (Hannerz 2003; Marcus 1995).

Application to this study

The practice theoretical approach has strong ethnographic antecedents (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow 2009). Ethnography is often extolled by practice theorists as the preferred methodology for practice due to its focus on the performative (*the doings*) via observations. In practice-based research it is crucial to be able to observe

what people do and indeed Nicolini (2012) has gone so far as to state that one cannot study practices properly without the use of observations. He states, "Studying practices through surveys or interviews alone is unacceptable. These methods are, in fact, unsuitable for studying work practices as they are unfaithful to the processual ontology that underpins the ethnography of practice approach" (Nicolini 2012, pp. 217-28).

However, Atkinson & Coffey (2003) and others, for example, Halkier (2017) argue that interviews are an equally valid way of captured the shared cultural understandings that are present in the site. Indeed Irvine-Smith (2017b) notes that for the type of knowledge work that is under examination, participant observation in an office environment may not be an ideal method of finding out what people do. It may often be the case, particularly where participants are seated in front of their computer all day, that understanding what is happening can only be achieved by asking the participant.

However, the constraints provided by Australian Government agencies under examination meant that a full ethnographic approach, often favoured in practice theory, was not possible to apply to this study. Prolonged access to these workplaces where confidential and sensitive information is being exchanged was both impractical and unethical and it is for this reason that ethnography was not considered suitable for this study. Creswell (2009) notes that for any research study, practical concerns must be taken into account and it is for these reasons primarily that ethnography was not considered a suitable methodology for this study. However, the study remained broadly ethnographic in intent in that it sought to understand the insider or emic perspective (Gracy 2004).

Grounded theory

Definition and characteristics

While subsequent works have been produced which modify and elaborate their original research (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the foundational work and premise of grounded theory is contained in Glaser and Strauss's *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss 1967), where they define a grounded theory as

> one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic

data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship to one another. (p. 23)

Grounded theory is based on discovering or building theory from participant data and emanates from and is used in many different contexts, having originally emerged from the field of sociology. It is especially useful when exploring the interaction and actions of people and their engagement in social processes so could be a suitable methodology which to explore social practices (De Villiers 2005, p. 117).

In grounded theory the researcher collects data in the field, typically from interviews, and the process of analysing this data begins almost immediately. When more information is gathered in the field, more analysis is undertaken and so the process continues. Through this process categories of information emerge and the researcher aims to collect and analyse until no more new units or categories of information can be found. This is called 'saturation' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Constant comparative coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) occurs through taking the information gathered in the data collection and comparing it to emerging and existing categories and a conceptual model is developed out of this process. It is continually modified as new data is explored and new concepts are integrated into the emerging theory and the emerging theory is inductively discovered, bounded and confirmed (De Villiers 2005, p. 116).

Strauss & Corbin (1990) suggest that the following seven criteria be used for evaluating the grounded theory research process: the rationale for the selection of the original sample; elaboration of the major categories that emerge; the events, incidents, or actions pointing to the major categories identified; an explanation of the theoretical formulations influenced or guided the data collection; the elaboration regarding the hypotheses and justifications for the establishment of the relationships between categories and the approach to validation; the accounting for discrepancies in the data and the resulting theoretical modifications; and the rationale for the selection of the core or central category.

In grounded theory, researchers need to disassociate themselves from previous theoretical ideas so that the theory can emerge, and Creswell (2013)notes that for this reason the use of grounded theory is most beneficial when a researcher has limited

knowledge of the area of inquiry. Similarly, De Villiers (2005, p. 117) notes that researcher bias and subjectivity in grounded theory may influence the resulting theory. Additional challenges with the method are knowing when categories have reached saturation (Creswell 2013) and Alvesson & Sköldberg (2017) note that grounded theory has an underlying positivist bias that is not complementary to the use of qualitative data.

Application to this study

While some of the techniques used by grounded theory, such as inductive data analysis and the use of in-depth interviews, are appropriate to this study, this study does not seek to propose strictly theoretical propositions. Instead this study seeks to explore perceptions with the object and end result of the research remaining open-ended. The study may illuminate some practical and pragmatic solutions to the practice of record keeping across the Australian Government, rather than a theoretical construct or it may do both.

In addition, this researcher is very experienced in records and information management and has considerable knowledge of the records and information environment within the Australian public sector, having spent just over 30 years in information management roles across the various public sectors in Australia – nearly 25 of those in records and information management roles. The researcher's having this kind of background and experience is, in essence, contradictory to the view that grounded theory is of most benefit when the researcher has limited or little knowledge of the area of inquiry (Creswell 2013). This study has been guided by the researcher's own knowledge of records and information management practices in the public sector, and his practical experience of implementing records and information management programs in government agencies.

So taking into consideration the intention of grounded theory to generate theory, not necessarily practical outcomes, together with the relative strengths and weakness of grounded theory and the desirability of the method for the researcher to approach the subject matter with limited knowledge, the researcher determined that this approach to the research was not the most appropriate to use.

Case-study method

Definition and characteristics

According to Yin (2003), a case study is

> an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident … [the case study] copes with the technically distinctive situations in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin 2003, pp. 13-4)

Case studies are particularly relevant when an understanding of the context and the experiences of the individuals are required (Darke & Shanks 2002). A case study approach also allows for an inductive approach to data analysis, similar to the use of induction in grounded theory, that is, one based on gathering data and developing, concepts, insights and understanding from the patterns discovered within the data and building analysis from that (Williamson, Burstein & McKemmish 2002).

Case studies have been used across a broad range of disciplines and Grünbaum (2007, pp. 82-3) has identified seven generic characteristics can be of the case study regardless of the discipline it is used in: the object of the study is always in some way related to people, in particular to their interpretation or perception of given phenomena; the individuals are studied in their natural environment; a contemporary phenomenon is the focus of the study; the researcher takes a holistic perspective in attempting to understand and explain what happens and why it happens (thus contextual factors are important); case studies are primarily qualitative and the objective can be descriptive, exploratory and/or explanatory; the researcher has no control over crucial events which emerge or evolve from the study; the researcher applies a number of different data sources (triangulation) in order to build understanding and rigour; and rich contextual accounts are produced from the case study.

A case study can be single case or multiple case in design. A single case is used where it is a unique or revelatory case or where a single case meets all the requirements for testing a theory (Yin 2003). Using the multiple case design allows for comparisons and cross case analysis. It allows for the investigation of the same phenomenon in different sites and to provide replication (Yin 2003). The number of cases undertaken is linked to the intent and focus of the research question and there is no ideal number of cases (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent 1998, p. 281). Nevertheless, Eisenhardt (1989) recommends between four and ten cases as being a suitable number for theory building.

Application to this study

The focus on the *site* or context of the practice, is particularly applicable to practice theory and a case study "provides context-dependent knowledge and accounts of practice that are drawn together from the voices, actions, interactions and creations of the carriers practice in a site" (Miles 2015, p. 311). While case studies are sometimes criticised at times for not being generalised to a wider population in the same way as quantitative studies (Yin 2003), it is the case study's focus on particular examples and experiences that is precisely its strength in enabling understandings of accounts of practice (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2006; Thomas 2010). A case study provides an opportunity to become aware of the actions and practices of particular people or groups within the context or *site* of their happening (Reckwitz 2002).

Case studies also help us to understand complex inter-relationships as one of the inherent characteristics of case studies is that they have a restricted focus (Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2001). A key focus of this research is to understand the complex inter-relations between practices within the ecology of practices (Kemmis et al. 2012) at a *site* of practice and to tease out the relationships between practice architectures (Kemmis et al. 2014) that pre-figure the practice of record keeping. A strength of case studies is that they can also facilitate the exploration of the "unexpected and unusual" precisely because of their focus on inter-relationships and the *site* of practice (Hodkinson & Hodkinson).

Unlike ethnography, which is based on the collection of observations, a case study approach allows for multiple sources of data collection and does not specify what these sources should or have to be (Benbasat, Goldstein & Mead 1987). This is an important

consideration; as outlined above, the constraints provided by Australian Government agency office environments mean that observations and a full ethnographic approach, often favoured and advocated for in practice theory, was not possible to apply. However, using multiple sources of data collection, including ethnographic techniques such as in-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman 1998).

Apart from their lack of generalisability in a conventional sense (which might also be considered a strength by those who advocate for case study as a method), Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2001) point out the following limitations of the case study method: there can be too much data for easy analysis; the complexity examined is sometimes difficult to represent simply; case studies do not lend themselves to numerical representation (although some aspects of some findings may do); and they are strongest when researcher expertise and intuition are maximised but this raises doubts about "objectivity". Because of this last limitation in particular they note that a key determinant of the quality of a piece of case study research "is the quality of the insights and thinking brought to bear by the particular researcher" (Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2001, p. 10). The researcher's own personal background and expertise in both the Australian Government setting and recordkeeping should in part offset this limitation of the case study method.

Case study research has been used to consider organisational record keeping practices, although generally case studies of record keeping are single case studies e.g. Hase & Galt (2011); Loussouarn (2006); Svärd (2014). Yin (2014) notes that undertaking research involving multiple cases allows the researcher to see if there is a replication of the phenomenon or commonalities between the cases that can provide the researcher with more evidence to support a hypothesis (Yin 2014). Walsham (1995) notes that comparative cases are able to provide theoretical propositions. Since this research is concerned with practices across the Australian Government, and the researcher wished to *zoom in* and *zoom out* on practices (Nicolini 2009b, 2009c) within one agency but also explore themes across a whole jurisdiction, a multi-case or multi-*site* approach is needed and a comparative case or *comparative site* study method has been selected.

This combination of a practice theoretical approach and a comparative case study methodology presents a departure from previous user based research in the discipline and one which, given its largely exploratory and explanatory focus, has the potential to draw specific implications and contribute rich insight (Walsham 1995) regarding social record keeping practices in organisational settings.

Research methods applied to the study

Selection of cases

Recordkeeping in the Australian Government[6] takes place in a context of legislation, whole of government policy, contemporary practices and community expectations. Thus it is seen that sound public administration relies on recording or documenting the business of government (Management Advisory Committee 2007). Primary among these legislative requirements is the *Archives Act 1983* (the Archives Act) which governs access to, preservation and destruction of information created and received when undertaking Australian Government business. Other requirements such as freedom of information, privacy and information security also apply across government in varying degrees according to the types of agencies.

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) administers the Archives Act and has policy responsibility for recordkeeping in the Australian Government. One of its primary functions is to establish standards and provide guidance and assistance to agencies in order for them to be able to meet their recordkeeping responsibilities under the Archives Act. The *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act), divides Australian Government agencies into three different categories. These are Non-corporate Commonwealth entities; Commonwealth Corporate entities; and Commonwealth Corporations of which there are 18. The Administrative Orders align

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[6] The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of states and territories. The government refers to itself as the Australian Government, but it can also be referred to as the Commonwealth Government or the Federal Government. In Acts of the Australian Parliament it is generally referred to as the Commonwealth or the Crown. (Parliament of Australia).

these with Ministers and respective portfolios and their names, main features, portfolios are outlined in Appendix A.

Non-corporate Commonwealth entities form the largest group of agencies. These entities are not separate legal entities in their own right (bodies corporate) and are technically considered part of the overarching legal entity that is the Commonwealth of Australia (hence the term non-corporate). These agencies include Departments of State and other agencies constituted via Administrative Orders rather than their own Acts of Parliament (although there are some exceptions). Generally, staff in these agencies are employed by the Commonwealth of Australia under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Corporate Commonwealth entities are bodies corporate in their own right and will usually have an Act of Parliament that constitutes them (called enabling legislation). Usually these agencies also have some level of statutory and legal independence from the Commonwealth and may even have their own governing boards. Agencies in this category may also have their own terms and conditions of employment that are different from the mainstream public service and are separate legal entities from the Commonwealth of Australia.

The smallest group of agencies are Commonwealth companies. These are actual companies regulated by the *Corporations Act 2001* of which the Australian Government, as represented by the relevant Minister, is the sole shareholder. Employees of these companies may also have their own terms and conditions of employment and again these are separate legal entities from the Commonwealth of Australia.

In order to conduct a comparative case study, it was necessary to select organisations that were representative of the range of Australian Government agencies overall, had similar obligations and requirements in relation to the management of government records, came from different portfolios, but had sufficient breadth of professions within their frontline and corporate support staff, for example, policy advisors, information technology professionals, legal practitioners, accounts, human resources professionals in order to facilitate comparison with other cases.

Further, it was desirable that in this digital age the agencies selected had established records management programs that included digital recordkeeping, or who had the

intention to move that way, as the NAA issued in July 2011 the Australian Government's *Digital Transition Policy*. This policy provided direction for Australian Government agencies to transition to completely digital records management for efficiency purposes. At the time of data collection all agencies would be moving to implement these requirements or the requirements of its successor policy *Digital Continuity 2020* which came into effect in 2015 and concludes in December 2020.

Initially in selecting cases it was considered ideal to have one case study from each category of agency and two from the Non-Corporate Commonwealth entities – one Department of State and one other kind of non-corporate agency. However, this was not possible as the researcher, even with a facilitated introduction by the National Archives of Australia to all the Commonwealth company recordkeeping contacts, was unable to attract a case study agency from that category agency. Frequent restructures in the Australian Government brought on by various Cabinet reshuffles at the time of data collection (called Machinery of Government change in public service parlance), also meant that a Department of State was unable to participate in the study.

Instead four case study agencies from different and diverse portfolios that were unaffected by Machinery of Government change over the period of data collected were selected – two of these were Corporate Commonwealth entities and two were Non-corporate Commonwealth entities. The number and breadth of cases selected are consistent with established theoretical sampling techniques (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Selecting *sites* or cases with diverse functions, digital recordkeeping programs and a broad array of different professions within the agency, allowed the researcher to explore how an array of different digital record keeping practices are mediated, socially and materially across the Australian Government. The *sites* selected also allowed the researcher to uncover the variation in shared understanding and mutual agreement generated in practice within a given *site*. In addition, since record keeping is but one practice among many in an organisational setting, the *sites* chosen allowed the researcher to explore and uncover the relationships between the 'nexus of practices' (Schatzki 1996) present in each organisational setting.

It should also be noted that the researcher is an employee of an Australian Government agency and his agency was excluded from the agencies that took part. Clayton (1995) notes that is rarely appropriate to conduct case study research of one's own organisation because of potential problems with reliability and objectivity and so there was no intention on the part of the researcher to consider his own employer as a case study so as to maintain a sufficiently objective approach.

Oliver (2004) notes that it is not only reliability and objectivity that would be an issue. It would be difficult to elicit the same types of responses from participants in the researcher's own agency as responses would be based on prior experience and shared knowledge, not to mention the fact that the researcher would be seen as being invested in, and the owner of, the particular information systems and process that they were being asked about. This would have hindered data collection as some interviewees in the case study agencies did disclose opinions to the researcher about the practices of his peers in their own agency. This candour during data collection would not have necessarily presented itself had the researcher used his own agency as a case study.

However the researcher's own insider knowledge and extensive, in-depth experience in the Australian Government and the public sector more generally was of assistance in gaining access to case studies to conduct the research and in analysing the findings (Oliver 2004). Without this insider perspective it is also doubtful whether any of the agencies who participated would have agreed so readily as there are significant concerns and sensitivities around the confidentiality and security of particular kinds of Australian Government information (Parsons et al. 2014) and this was evidenced by the fact that two of the case study agencies required the researcher to sign a Deed of Confidentiality prior to undertaking the research. A good understanding of agency functions was also essential for analysis and appreciation of information management issues in the Australian Government, given that a full ethnographic approach was not possible. This understanding was considered to be an advantage for this study (Oliver 2004).

Data collection methods

Prior to approaching the sites themselves, it was appropriate to identify the necessary data collection methods and data sources that would facilitate the capture of the sayings, doings and relatings at the core of the practice theoretical approach while remaining

consistent with the case study method. The case study method allows for a variety of data collection methods, and in fact multiple data sources increase the validity of results via triangulation (Yin 2014).

Creswell (2009, 2013) notes that in qualitative research there are four basic types of data collection and two of these – interviews and documentary analysis were chosen. The main method of data collection was via a semi-structured interview. The interview guide was prepared after Oliver (2004) and is at Appendix B.

In addition to the interview data, other documentary sources of analysis, such as policy documents and other staff guidance were used as a point of comparison in relation to the practice of record keeping in an organisational setting i.e. does the actual practice conform with the organisational framework as set out by the records and information management specialists. Other background information on the functions and operations of the agency such as annual reports and websites were also used to gain understanding and insights to that particular site and context. In many cases the sites selected were the principal office of the agency concerned, but all of the agencies selected had numerous offices across Australia and some cases in overseas jurisdictions as well.

At each potential site, the records and information manager(s) in each of the four case study sites assisted the researcher in recruiting the relevant agency to be involved and introducing the research project to them. This included providing an introduction about the project to the relevant senior executive in each agency and, where necessary, negotiating the conditions upon which access would be granted to the agency and its staff. To facilitate this introduction a brief personal biography of the researcher, his interest in the research, status in the Australian Government, and security clearance status were provided to give a degree of comfort to the participant agencies in relation to his ability to respect and handle sensitive information should it arise during the research process.

The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C), the Agency Participant Consent Form (Appendix D) were provided to the senior executives in each agency and the consent form was signed on behalf of the agency. In addition, the Participant Information sheet and the Individual Participant Consent form (Appendix E) were also given to each research participant and signed and returned to the researcher prior to each interview.

Research Ethics approval was given by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS Research Ethics Approval number 2013000688].

Two agencies imposed additional requirements over and above the requirements in the University of Technology Sydney documentation outlined above. In both cases a Non-Disclosure Deed was required to be executed by the researcher prior to commencing interviews and information provided to participants at the beginning of each interview was modified accordingly, so informed consent could be given; for example, one agency requested a complete copy of each de-identified interview transcript and participants in that agency needed to be aware of this prior to consenting to the interview as it would be easy for someone in their own agency to identify them simply by what role they held and what they had said.

Data collection process

Interviews were collected from the four agencies between January 2015 and October 2016. Generally, the interviews at each site were collected simultaneously over a two-to-three-day period, although this did vary on some occasions depending on the availability of participants. The interviews were conducted at a time and place most convenient to the participant's time and schedule and on the site of practice i.e. the agency premises. Approximately half of the interviews were held in meeting or rooms at the participant's place of work, whereas the remainder were conducted in the participant's own office, not a meeting room. One interview was conducted via videoconference using the relevant agency's videoconferencing facilities.

Thirty semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour in length were completed and either seven or eight interviews per agency were conducted (although one interview only lasted for approximately 15 minutes due to last-minute changes in that person's schedule). Most interviews were one-on-one but in three agencies two participants were interviewed at the same time, taking the total number of participants across all four agencies to 33. One interviewed pair worked in the same team, and the other two pairs were records and information management professionals in the relevant agency.

Interviews with the records and information management specialists were primarily conducted as background material and to provide the researcher with some context regarding the records management program in the agency and some familiarity with the

relevant site-specific practices and systems prior to engaging with other staff within the agency concerned. In all but one agency the interview with the records and information management staff occurred first.

In line with best practice interview techniques (Turner 2010). a pilot or test interview was conducted with a legal professional in the researcher's own agency to gauge whether the interview guide was structured correctly and supported natural and free flowing conversation. Minor refinements to the interview guide were made after this interview before commencing data collection.

The semi-structured interviews

At the commencement of each interview the researcher gave a brief outline of the research, answered any questions, and if the consent form had not been previously signed, it was signed before the interview commenced. One interview was conducted via videoconference and this instance the consent form was scanned and emailed after the interview, but the previously provided consent form was physically signed in front of the researcher over the video link.

While all interviews took place at the agency premises, in almost half the instances interviews took place in the participant's own environment rather than a meeting room at the agency. This allowed for some observation of the practices from an environmental perspective, for example, the use of iPads or tablets in addition to the personal computer on the participant's desk, or the piles of paper files that might indicate a still largely paper-based working style even though technology was also prevalent.

The interview guide (Appendix B) was just that, a guide, although generally the first few questions were asked in the same in order to create rapport and trust and explore the nature of the work that the participant in the agency completed. In this sense the first components of the interview used parts of the "Interview To The Double" technique (Nicolini 2009a) and what Irvine-Smith (2017b) calls the "Interview with a Third". These techniques helped to draw out the *doings* – the everyday tasks they performed that were associated with the practice of record keeping. Participants were asked not only to describe what they did, but also to reflect on the types of documents they used every day and which of those they would consider records. Since this study is concerned mainly with 'the practice within the practice' – the record keeping component

associated with their job – it was not necessary to use a full-blown interview to the double and understand every nuance of a participant's role in order to fully explicate information about their record keeping practices. A high-level overview was sufficient context.

In order to keep dialogue flowing, prompts were prepared, but as is the case with all semi-structured interviews, the researcher went where the conversation naturally led, as in many instances the points wishing to be explored were covered as part of the general conversation of their practices in general. Trying to keep the dialogue as normal as possible is consistent with best-practice, semi-structured interview techniques (Seidman 1998; Weiss 1994)

Interviewees were encouraged to provide their own views, not those of the agency or the official records management program and, where possible, not use the name of their agency in their answers. Instead they were encouraged to use vaguer terms like "here" or "in this department" or "at this agency" to preserve the overall confidentiality of the interviews. In the main, this technique worked and did not greatly affect the flow of conversation and natural rhythm of the interview. This reduced not only the editing required of the transcripts to de-identify them but also ensured that when interviews were transcribed by an external transcription service, the agency's identity could not be compromised.

In the final question an object was introduced into the interview. Projective techniques like this are often used in educational and early-childhood research to elicit responses and reactions from interviewees (LeCompte, Preissle & Tesch 1993). Participants were given a sheet of paper that contained the definitions of records in the Archives Act and the International Standard on Records Management. They were provided with this only after their own opinions and thoughts on defining records had been given so as not to colour those responses. Participants' reactions to these definitions were recorded verbally but the researcher also took close note of their body language and facial expressions when reading the definitions. For the most part this was the first time any of the participants had engaged with legal and best practice recordkeeping definitions of records and so this initial reaction was considered important.

Interview documentation

All interviews were recorded to allow for full and accurate transcription and to allow the researcher to be 'present' while interviewing and concentrate on the words and actions of the participants during the interview (Walsham 2006). Notes were taking by the researcher during the interview and these were later written up as memos to aid with data analysis.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and all but two interviews were transcribed by a transcription service. The researcher, after transcribing two interviews in full himself, decided to outsource the transcription process and instead listened to the interviews with the provided transcripts and corrected and de-identified these as he listened to the interviews. This usually required the researcher to listen to each interview twice and then a final proof was done on the third listen through. A complete list of all interview transcripts is at Appendix F.

As required by UTS Human Research Ethics Committee protocols, all electronic records and paper records were de-identified and a key known only to the researcher was used in order for the researcher to retain participants' contact details and enable follow-up as required. Participant details and other documentation were stored completely separately so as not to enable easy identification of participants or the agencies involved.

Data analysis

Data collected was analysed using an inductive approach to data analysis, similar to the use of induction in grounded theory, that is, it was based on gathering data and developing, concepts, insights and understanding from the patterns discovered within the data and building analysis from that (Williamson, Burstein & McKemmish 2002). As outlined above, the researcher's own personal subject matter expertise and experience in both the Australian Government setting and in recordkeeping was invaluable in interpreting the data to arrive at quality insights (Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2001).

The thematic analysis of interview transcripts was supplemented by the notes taken by the researcher during the interviews. These notes and other observations were turned into memos and stored in the NVivo software. Documents provided by the participant

agencies were also scanned and stored in the NVivo software so they could be coded used for triangulation.

Coding and recoding

Data analysis commenced after the first set of interview transcripts were completed and each interview had been listened to approximately three times. A first set of high-level codes were devised and assigned after reading through the interview transcripts. These codes 'emerged' from the data and were not devised beforehand. These initial codes were then refined on the second reading and subcategories for each major code assigned on the third reading of the transcripts. The codes were deliberately kept quite broad and subcategories were kept to a minimum. These codes were applied manually to the transcripts at first, prior to the transcripts being uploaded to NVivo and then these were reapplied. This repetition enabled consistency in coding.

The codes developed during the analysis of the transcripts for Agency 1 were then applied to the subsequent case study transcripts, with some revisions as more cases were added. This at times involved re-coding transcripts from previous agencies in NVivo as more codes were added. However, no new codes were added after three agencies were completed. Upon completion of the third agency the consistency of the findings across agencies emerged strongly as did their practice link and so at this stage a higher level category for the practice architecture the finding related to – the *sayings, relatings* or *doings* – was also applied. Visualisations and reports of the relevant practice architecture and its associated themes and subsets, via the use of the NVivo software, were then able to be produced across the case study agencies. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the steps undertaken in the analysis of the data sources collected. They follow the approach outlined by Miles & Huberman (1984).

Table 3.1 Summary of data analysis steps

Data source	Stage 1 analysis	Stage 2 analysis	Stage 3 analysis
Interview transcripts	Initial thematic analysis of 3 *sites* using emergent coding of the overall activities, practices and sayings of participants	Thematic analysis using final set of codes identified in Stage 1 for all 4 *sites* and recoding of earlier interviews as required	Thematic analysis using the lens of practice architectures – the *doings*, *sayings* and *relatings*
Researcher interview notes	Thematic analysis based on themes emerging from interview transcripts	Further iterations of analysis arising from the final set of codes and recoding of interview transcripts	Thematic analysis using the lens of practice architectures – the *doings*, *sayings* and *relatings*
Agency documentation		Thematic analysis using the final themes identified from the Stage 2 analysis of interview transcripts	Thematic analysis using the lens of practice architectures – the *doings*, *sayings* and *relatings*

Each agency was provided feedback on the outcomes of the interviews to assist with validity and also to assist the agencies in improving their own records management programs. For one agency it was a condition of their involvement that a formal report was provided.

While findings from each site were written up as individual summaries, the findings are not presented in strict case-study style. Instead, during the cross-case analysis it became obvious that the consistency of themes across cases was very strong. Instead the findings are grouped and reported by the *socio-political (relatings)*, *cultural-discursive*

(sayings) or *material-economic (doings)* arrangements they represent. However, having said that, the *sayings* in relation to records for each agency are very different and are reported separately, so in this sense a vignette of each agency is provided.

Software

The software package NVivo was used by the researcher. Using NVivo, the researcher was able to divide the interview data into sites, professions and themes and then classify the sections of data according to the thematic codes representing those themes. In addition to storing and managing the data, the software held other documents created by the researcher such as observations from interviews and memos created as part of the analysis process.

Using NVivo enabled the researcher to manage a large volume of data relatively easily. It also enabled the visualisation of the date and codes and the production of links between codes across cases. However, in using software for this purpose the researcher was also mindful not to get carried away with the technology at the expense of the data analysis. As Wolcott (2009) notes, computers can often draw researchers away from the task of thinking about their research and into a data-entering ritual that is often tangential to the research problem itself.

Ethical considerations

In light of the methodology outlined above there were a number of ethical considerations involved in a research project such as this and as previously outlined Human Research Ethics Consent was granted by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [HREC Approval No. 2013000688].

It was anticipated that the researcher's own role and profile within the recordkeeping industry may have affected participants' involvement. However, this was not found to be the case, indeed perhaps the opposite was true. The researcher's reputation assisted him in not only getting access to agencies, but also in providing a degree of comfort and trust to agency senior executives and participants themselves. As a fellow Australian public servant, the researcher possessed a security clearance and understood the public service protocols when it came toas they related to the management of sensitive information.

It was also anticipated that exploration in this area may also mean that the vulnerabilities of practitioners, organisational processes and of organisations themselves may be exposed. But rather than see this is a weakness all of the agencies involved looked at their participation in the research study as an opportunity to improve their records management program by having an impartial observer collate feedback and provide the agency with some insights about how things may be improved. Indeed, Walsham (2006) notes that this strategy is often a successful way to gain access to potential research sites as there is something in it for both parties.

Previous research in such a small industry (Colwell 2006, 2007) and the researcher's work in government agencies had also alerted him to the fact that de-identification of the participants of interviews and participant organisations would be necessary to respect privacy and the confidentiality of personal and/or commercial information involved. Clear parameters and information were provided to the agencies and the participants with regard to the research and what was to happen to the information gathered. Relevant consents were obtained from all participants and in two cases additional confidentiality agreements were signed by the researcher with the Australian Government agency concerned. This also presented some deviation from the standard interview protocol for one agency as they required a copy of all transcripts be provided to them for review. Interviewees in that agency were informed that this would happen prior to providing consent so that they could withdraw their participation if they felt uncomfortable with that. No participants withdrew from the study for this reason.

Insider studies

Researchers bring their own perceptions, experiences, attitudes and beliefs to the research process and these may influence both the research process and outcomes (Creswell 2009; Walsham 2006). Indeed, this study has been driven by the researcher's own knowledge of records and information management practices in the public sector and his practical experience of implementing records and information management programs in government agencies.

The researcher, as an employee of an Australian Government agency for over 15 years, is an 'insider' (Unluer 2012). An 'insider-researcher' chooses to study a group to which they belong (Breen 2007). Bonner & Tolhurst (2002) identify three key advantages of

being an insider researcher: having a greater understanding of the culture being studied; not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally; and having an established intimacy that promotes both the telling and the judging of truth. Also insider-researchers generally have knowledge that it might take an outsider a long time to acquire, including how to best approach people within that setting (Smyth & Holian (2008) in Unluer 2012).

But while there are advantages there are also a number of disadvantages to being an insider, for example, loss of objectivity due to greater familiarity and bias can occur through unconsciously making wrong assumptions based on prior knowledge (Hewitt-Taylor 2002). Other issues include role duality and the ability to gain greater access to sensitive information through being an insider (Unluer 2012).

With these issues in mind, and noting that this researcher also brings an insider's perspective to the study in relation to his own professional and personal views on records and information, as per Gracy (2004), he familiarised himself with *Learning from Strangers* by Robert Weiss (1994) in order to address the four major ways bias can occur.

Sampling

Biased sampling occurs when we take respondents as a representative sample of a more inclusive group (Weiss, 1994). As outlined above and below, this study makes no claim that the agencies selected are a representative sample of all Australian Government agencies, but the agencies selected to participate represented two of the three different kinds of Australian Government agencies. These agencies also came from four very different portfolios in an attempt to represent the diversity and breadth of the functions performed across the Australian Government.

Weiss (1994) also notes that when, as is often the case, researchers must make do with a convenience sample, they should try to ensure that the sample selected contains adequate range of the important dimensions – in this case the important dimension was the range of sites and the range of professions outside the recordkeeping professions that participated. While participants for the study were approached by the recordkeeping professionals within the agencies themselves, this was done in accordance with a list of professions supplied by the researcher to try and ensure not only a cross-section of

views were obtained from different professions, but also enable comparison across cases.

However, it was noted that the participants' willingness to be involved and their relationships with the recordkeeping professionals within their agency may have meant they were more predisposed to recordkeeping than the broader population of Australian public sector employees. But again, this study does purport to be representative of all Australian public sector employees.

Interviewing

Weiss (1994, p. 212) warns that "biased interviewing occurs when we encourage respondents to provide material supportive of our thesis." In the design phase of this study, the interview guide was constructed using broad topics and prompt questions rather than actual specific questions that were mandatory. This was done in order to be open to the direction the discussion took during the interview as while there were some answers and opinions being sought, there was never any pre-determined outcome being sought.

During the interviews questions were also made open-ended and non-directive; and it was emphasised to participants that it was their own experiences and opinions that the researcher was interested in, rather than the 'official' institutional view or line. The researcher believes that these strategies encouraged responses that were representative of the respondents' own thoughts and feelings – indeed it was not uncommon to have a response begin with "Well don't tell [the name of agency records manager] but …" .

Interpretation and reporting

According to Weiss (1994, p.213):

> We can easily make an argument come out our way by treating comments that support our view as gospel and subjecting to sceptical scrutiny those that don't, by reporting material we like and disdaining the rest, and in general by behaving like a lawyer with a brief to advance.

This researcher has sought to present a balanced and impartial description of the views of the participants and does not believe that he has imposed his own views into the

reporting of the data. He was unfamiliar with the particular practices and processes in each environment, even if he did have an understanding of the overall technologies in use and the processes of government recordkeeping. Although coming from an insider perspective, the researcher was not really an insider in the organisations that were under study and so issues of unconscious assumptions about their practices were less likely to present themselves.

In addition, while this study had research questions, it sought to uncover and explore the phenomenon under consideration rather than actively prove or disprove a particular hypothesis. Like Gracy (2004), this researcher believes that giving an incomplete picture of what was found would have undermined the very arguments being made by the study.

Intellectual honesty

Weiss (1994, p, 213) comments that "people who do research should have only one concern in their work, and that is to capture, with scrupulous honesty, the way things are"; and as Gracy (2004) notes, "this point strikes to the very heart of researcher bias" (p. 356).

The researcher's own career has been as an information management professional in the Australian and New South Wales public sectors and he has worked with a variety of professions across those agencies in implementing agency records management programs. While the researcher certainly felt an affinity with the issues that many of the professionals across the case study agencies expressed, he does not think that this skewed his representation of these individuals' points of view. Rather the breadth of the study, in terms of number of participants and variety of institutions studied, as well as the consistency of the themes overall, gave the study a more balanced perspective than if it had simply looked at one single agency. Indeed, during the data gathering and data analysis phases of this study, the researcher found that some of the views of participants and the findings of the study completely challenged views held within the discipline of recordkeeping itself and with his own personal conceptions of record based on that professional background. In this sense the researcher believes he has managed to maintain the spirit of intellectual honesty and report the various *doings*, *sayings* and *relatings* of the social practices within the agencies as relayed by the participants.

Conclusion

This Chapter described the methodology and methods employed for the study. The conceptual underpinnings of the practice approach leading to the selection of the case study method as well as the techniques or methods used to analyse and collect the research data were described. It concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations and possible researcher bias inherent to the methodology and methods selected.

Chapters Four, Five and Six follow and present the findings of the study. These are thematically grouped in terms of the *practice architectures* that shape and prefigure practices that are either brought to or exist in particular sites of practice and "exist beyond each person as an individual or actor" (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008, p. 37). Three arrangements exist simultaneously in a site of practice: the sayings – the *cultural-discursive* arrangements operating in semantic space; the doings – the *material-economic* arrangements operating in physical space-time; and the relatings – the *social political* arrangements forming the *social space* (Mahon et al. 2017). The next Chapter considers the *sayings*.

Chapter 4 – The sayings

Across the Australian Government, record keeping is only one practice among many that are mandated or required across all agencies. A raft of legislation and policies requires agencies to comply with and execute all manner of practices, from information security to the purchasing of goods and services. This ecology of social practices that different disciplines, agencies and agents take part in covers many intra- and extra-organisational spheres of endeavour (Kemmis et al. 2012).

Within each of these practices are the *sayings*, *relatings* and *doings* characteristic of a practice (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014; Mahon et al. 2017). For the purposes of structure and presentation in this thesis, this study's findings are grouped in the following order: in this chapter, the *sayings* present institutional, public sector and professional sayings; in Chapter 5, the *relatings* present the relationship with other concepts and the jurisdictional context; and in Chapter 6, the *doings* present the actual doings and also how, at times, the sayings and doings conflict. The findings are presented along a theoretical thread or structure, rather than on a site-by-site basis, but in reality, many of the findings are interlinked and cannot be easily separated from one another – just as all elements of a practice are also interlinked.

As stated in Chapter 3, interviews with the recordkeeping professionals were conducted primarily to understand the backgrounds, policies and systems for recordkeeping within each agency site so that information disclosed in interviews by other participants could be correctly interpreted according to that agency's unique context. While the views of recordkeeping professionals are not the focus of this study, these professionals were already very familiar with the definitions of records and the various legal and policy frameworks and they expressed particular views in relation to them. The findings presented in the following Chapters are mainly based on descriptions given by participants who were not members of the recordkeeping professions.

Through the lens of practice theory, the discourse practices that enable the formation of genres within each workplace setting are part of the *sayings* present in all organisations. These cultural-discursive arrangements in relation to record keeping take place at institutional discipline levels, as well as more generally across the public sector. The

contextual and discourse analytic approach to studying the record as social action, as advocated by rhetorical genre studies (Foscarini 2013), has been influential in the development and presentation of the findings presented here.

Site-specific sayings

While recordkeeping professionals are "bound" by definitions of records that are either legislated or else widely adopted within the recordkeeping profession, records creators and users are not bound by these constraints. Before being exposed to such definitions, participants were asked a number of questions about records and also for their own definition of the term. They were asked questions about the reasons for keeping records (also discussed under the 'relatings' in Chapter 5); the tasks they performed in their roles and their records use (discussed under the 'doings' in Chapter 6); and about the items they managed or worked with on a day-to-day basis and which of those they would consider records. They were then asked how they would define the term record.

A key theme that emerged from this study is that there was no common definition of the term record among the participants. While certain themes were prevalent among them, sometimes there were conflicting and very different definitions of the concept – even within the same public sector group or setting. However, themes were identifiable when reviewing definitions from among members of the same site or agency. These will now be discussed.

In examining themes from the various affordances and definitions of records identified by the participants across all four agencies it became clear that 'institutional genres' (Paré 2002) are present. This is a key finding of the study. The institutional genres are the institutional sayings that evolve and revolve around various affordances of records that are emphasised within the culture of the agency and which the agency either considers important or that relate to the way it conducts its business.

There were quite distinct and consistent responses when the participants "put themselves in the shoes" of being an officer of their agency and spoke as its representative. In other words, the cultural-discursive voices of the agencies were quite pronounced. Even newer staff within the agencies interviewed spoke of the way that "things were important around here", even though they may not had been in their

agency very long. Some of the key values of records were deeply embedded in the culture of the agencies and, in general, the longer-serving staff epitomised these values by the way they spoke about what records meant in their context.

While the language was remarkably consistent among interviewees in each agency, the different outcomes for records varied according to each agency's context. As Figure 4.1 indicates, each agency in the study emphasised different site-specific sayings (affordances or outcomes) for records and recordkeeping depending on their context. These were accountability & transparency, business information, evidence, efficiency, maintaining a chain of events, organisational memory, precedent, risk management, decision making, and cultural information.
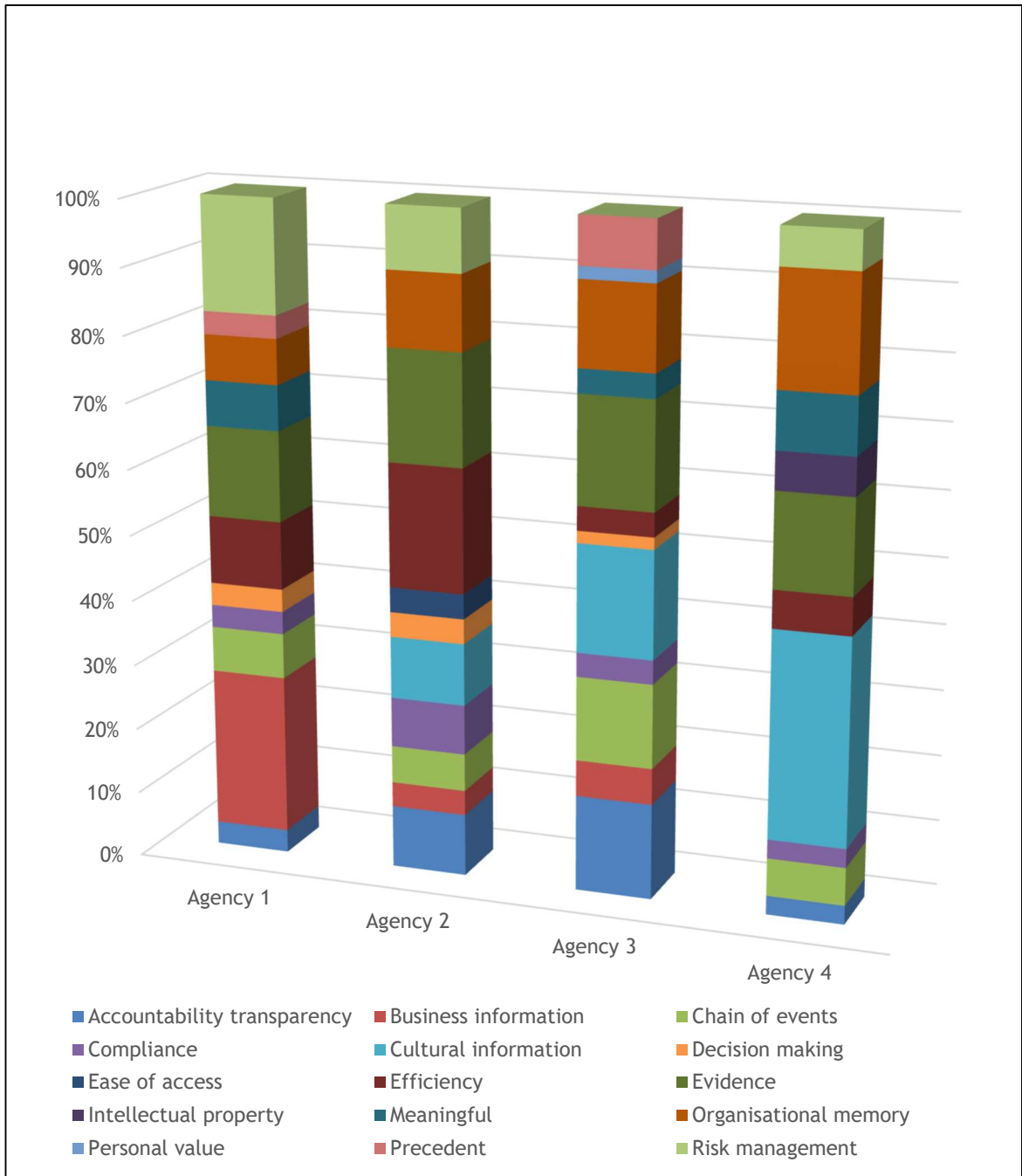
Figure 4.1: Themes in site-specific sayings

Before proceeding to outline individual agencies' sayings in more detail, it is worth noting that each agency in the case study chose a different approach to defining and communicating the concept of record. Only one of the agencies (Agency 4) that participated had a current records management policy that defined records. Another agency (Agency 3) had a records management policy but it was considered so out of date and irrelevant by the agency concerned that it was not provided for analysis. Agency 1 and Agency 2 had decided that they did not need a records management

policy at all, instead opting to include all the relevant advice and guidance in their information management policy. However, even then, only Agency 2 defined the term records in their information management policy.

Out of the two agency policies (one records management and one information management) that did define records, both were different and neither chose to use the definition in the *Archives Act 1983* (Archives Act). Agency 2 referenced the definition in the International Standard on Records Management and supplemented this by reference to the categories of records[7] used in the Management Advisory Committee Report on Recordkeeping in the Australian Government (the MAC Report). Agency 4 used a definition adapted from the Archives Act and the International Standard definitions that at that time appeared on the glossary of terms on the website of the National Archives of Australia (NAA) (Agency 4 - Information professional 2016). This definition is:

> A record is all information created, sent and received in the course of carrying out the business of your agency. Records have many formats, including paper and electronic. Records provide proof of what happened, when it happened and who made decisions. Not all records are of equal importance or need to be kept. Adapted from: *Archives Act 1983*, Part I, Section 3; Standards Australia, AS-ISO 15489, Part 1, Clause 3.15. (Agency 4 - Information professional 2016)

These approaches support the findings that will be outlined in Chapter 5, the Relatings Chapter, that the Archives Act definition of record is inadequate to describe records in practical terms and the International Standard definition is more comprehensible to those outside the profession, even if it is still at times considered broad and/or subjective.

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[7] Category 1 records are permanent records (archival/never to be destroyed); Category 2 records are long term temporary records (those with set legal retention periods and longer term value to the agency); and Category 3 records are short-term records (drafts, working papers etc.) (Management Advisory Committee 2007).

The following sections outline Agencies 1, 2, 3, and 4. They include relevant excerpts from the interviewed representatives of the participating agencies.

Agency 1

Agency 1's organisational function is based around interactions with people and businesses and, as such, is more commercial in orientation. Agency 1 does not emphasise the concept of record at all in its policy documents, but rather the concept of 'business information', which is inclusive of paper-based records, electronic documents and records, emails and databases. There is a strong emphasis on current and useful business and commercial information rather than records of long-term cultural or archival value.

Agency 1 chose not to define 'record' in their information management policy because of their particular organisational viewpoint and cultural stance in relation to records, as this comment from the agency information manager outlines:

> *I don't believe that people see our information and equate it to how records are managed, because they don't really manage records as such. We believe that our information is a record of everything that we do, and we have high risk information and we have low risk information'*

<div align="right">Information management professional – Agency 1</div>

Definitions given in interviews with Agency 1 staff also reflect this orientation and show that the policy has effectively been aligned with the culture of the agency itself; the agency has not tried to impose pre-existing records management viewpoints on its staff.

The following comments indicate how, in keeping with these organisational cultural norms, staff in Agency 1 tended to perceive a record as something that represented an interaction with a customer, a risk management exercise, or some business information that provided a value-add:

> *It's almost a bit like a risk assessment. There is an assessment done of what this information is and then therefore what the potential implications are that*

warrants – well increases the value of the information – and warrants it to be captured and put in structured format.

<div align="right">HR professional – Agency 1</div>

Any interaction I think that we have with the business particularly is an official record of a conversation with the business, whether you've provided any advice or they've asked you for something, or they've provided you information.

<div align="right">Business advisor – Agency 1</div>

It's something I've created, or my colleagues have created – that is a record. We've got lots of other information ... that's nice to keep in many cases unless it's something we immediately need to use… but that's not our record.

<div align="right">Business manager – Agency 1</div>

I consider a record in social media... If there's an interaction – and not all of our social media gets interaction. We're the Australian government, we're seen as beige, and we're not Nike. It's my job to try to make us be a little less beige and a little bit more Nike. We don't always succeed.

<div align="right">Digital marketing professional – Agency 1</div>

While most Agency 1 users understood that some records would become archival at some point, this was not relevant to them in their work, nor was it emphasised as part of the culture of the agency. Efficient disposal processes of non-current information were mentioned a few times, but in quite distinct contrast to the other more established agencies in the study, Agency 1 officers did not mention that records served any long-term cultural value to the nation. All answers clearly related to business purposes, risk management and evidence. In the broader sense accountability and transparency for government agencies and of the government to the people was highlighted but not that the records of the agency had long-term cultural value. This was also noticeable in the interview with the agency information professionals, who recognised that while they had a professional duty of care to ensure those records were kept and transferred to the NAA, Agency 1 itself was concerned more with current information that had business value than with the long-term nature of archives.

While the term 'interactions' was mentioned in passing by participants in all agencies, there was a noticeable use of the language of interactions across the board in Agency 1 when it described what a record represented. This agency was the most advanced of the four in terms of its digital recordkeeping program and the length of time this had been in place. It was also one of two agencies that used social media for engagement rather than simply as a one-way channel to push notifications.

While the use of multiple social media channels also highlighted interactions rather than transactions in this agency context, the use of 'interaction' was not restricted to the social media team; it was consistently used across the domains interviewed.

> *I think as I've said many times, anything that is an interaction with the business, contains business information, intelligence, and insight about their operations, should be considered as a record that we need to safeguard and preserve.*

> Business advisor – Agency 1

Only the legal practitioner, who was new to *Agency 1*, referred to records as transactional. The long-term staff all referred to interactions. It was their view of how this agency did business; they had interactions not transactions. The implication from this use of language was that business for them was a far more collaborative way of working and engaging – a two-way exchange, rather than a simple one-way transaction. In this sense, one of the participants likened the culture of the agency to being more like a professional service or consulting firm than a government agency. A transaction was seen in many ways as low value and not worth recording, whereas an interaction was valuable and so worthy of recording.

> *There is a level of categorisation that applies to a record which might tell me the structure of it, the nature of it, the key metadata or whatever. There is something that adding value to what otherwise might be a document which all we know is it's a piece of paper about "x", whereas the record might give us key facts that inform beyond the title of the record.*

> HR professional – Agency 1

Agency 2

Agency 2 conducts its core functions in the finance sector and describes itself as a conservative organisation. Citing the strength of its records management approach as executive support, this agency has aligned the records management program with the organisation's values and positioned it as a risk minimisation and compliance strategy. The agency's corporate archives are also seen as valuable and reputation enhancing because it is proud of its history and its contribution to the nation.

Agency 2 did define records in its information management policy, but, reflecting the comments by staff in Chapter 5, the findings on *relatings*, it did not use the definition in the Archives Act. Instead it chose to use the definition contained in the International Standard on Records Management and then further clarified this by reference to the categories of records set out in the report of the Management Advisory Committee of the Australian Public Service Commission into recordkeeping in the Australian Public Service (the MAC report). In other words, it chose to include clarifying guidance from other voices in the Australian Government that advocate a risk-based approach to recordkeeping. The MAC Report was compiled by representatives from a wide variety of Australian Government agencies, including the NAA, but was instrumental in changing the view of the archival authority in the Australian Government to a more risk-based approach to recordkeeping, given the limited resources and the volume of information each agency deals with.

> *The policy defines the concept of records. It also defines what record – category one, two, and three records, so that's in terms of whether it's permanent, temporary or whatever.*
>
> Information management professional – Agency 2

The adoption of this approach in combination with the definitions from the interviews with staff in Agency 2 reflects this particular cultural/organisational orientation. Staff tended to perceive a record as something that represented and enabled accountability and transparency, risk management or business efficiency, or that served as evidence as well a longer-term cultural or historical record for the agency.

There's a really sort of rich view of it from a historical research perspective and the ability to construct stories about the past ... But more so, there's this aspect of business continuity and business service where the records should really be the items that enable us to work as efficiently as possible and their capture should be worked into everyday business practices.

Business project manager – Agency 2

It's any evidence of business activity taking place.

Human resources professional – Agency 2

This agency has a lot of historical associations to the industry and its role in the development of Australia ... because of that historical linkage and significance for the agency it's extremely important to keep such records.

Digital commerce professional – Agency 2

So it would be information that the agency has received or analyses – so created or created from other information that may or may not be available to the public that is either going to be useful for just future context and historical purposes or it's going to be supporting, providing support to how a decision was made or evidence that an arrangement was entered into ... it's just information that will help future staff do their job more efficiently.

Manager – Agency 2

Agency 3

Agency 3 conducts its core functions in the legal field, and a strength of its records management approach, as described by a number of the participants interviewed, is the new end-to-end digital recordkeeping process that it has implemented to support the records of its core business areas. These were seen as very effective, and the agency staff were proud of this implementation and achievement, which virtually digitised all of the mainstream business of the agency. Like Agency 2, the corporate archives were also seen as valuable and reputation enhancing, as the agency is also very proud of its history and its contribution to the social fabric of the nation.

Perhaps more than many other agencies, but perhaps not, our records are very distinct. We have the records which are all to do with our core function and essentially anything that is to do with those is an important record and needs to be retained within the confines of the usefulness overtime. Or you have, on the other hand, like every other agency, a vast array of administrative records and they're managed in very different ways. There is far more discipline around the functional records because essentially these are our biggest records, and they can have a significant public interest and a historical interest, so it's very important that they be dealt with in a particular way.

Legal manager – Agency 3

The good culture of recordkeeping in Agency 3 was also partly attributed to its core function and the disciplinary focus that the legal profession itself brings to records management. It was observed by another professional within the agency that legal professionals are good at and have a discipline around recordkeeping that is not present in many other professions.

I think the legal side of the business does very well in that space… and more generally how the legally-trained folk within the agency of which there's a very large proportion also have that discipline driven into them through university and their professional careers. So, the idea that something comes up, "Okay, I need to create file. I need to start putting these things onto the file," is sort of second nature to them.

Information technology professional – Agency 3

Given the nature of Agency 3 and the large number of legal professionals within it, it is not surprising that 'evidence' emerged as key theme in its definitions of records.

It is some form of evidence of whatever it is that you're actually doing. You'll go through a different process to assess, whether it is actually valuable or not for that purpose. So it is always going to be subject-specific but everything will have a value for some particular purpose.

Legal manager - Agency 3

Let's say a record is either electronic or a written evidence of a series of events and that series events could be evidence made or recorded.

Finance professional – Agency 3

However, organisational memory and the need to ensure the survival of the story of what was done, and why, was also a theme.

Sometimes, I identify things to put in a record that succinctly described that situation. No decision is being made, no business transaction has taken place… I tend to take that view that sometimes a record is a story of that particular thing and because I think you're trying to be helpful to whoever is reading this in the future about why all these things were done. I don't think that's in any government standard but that's the approach I've taken from all my experience in working in government.

Communications professional – Agency 3

I mean I guess there are a range of issues why record keeping is important. One that comes to mind is if things actually went wrong further down the track, if something came up, if someone queried, something that had been done, for example, and what you wanted was to refer back to previous communication records to say "This is what was agreed," it can be incredibly useful for that purpose. But I think also the organisational management continuity particularly with staff turnover, you don't want one staff member to have all the information that they then take with them when they leave.

Legal professional – Agency 3

Agency 4

Agency 4 has a core function within the arts arena and so could be considered more of a cultural institution. It is the largest agency in the study and has a disbursed workforce and divergent and distributed responsibilities. It has a central Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) but this has minimal adoption across the agency and so is used primarily in key corporate functions. Agency 4's mainstream business areas use their own business systems and shared drives rather than the

EDRMS. Again, the corporate archives are seen as valuable and reputation enhancing as the agency is proud of its history and its contribution to the nation.

Agency 4 did define 'record' in its records management policy, but as outlined earlier used an adapted the definition that combined elements from both the Archives Act and the International Standard on Records Management. Agency 4 put a very strong emphasis on historical and cultural information, organisational history and evidence. As this agency was one of the oldest and more of a cultural institution than others in the study, it was not surprising that its value to the cultural life of the nation was emphasised more than others.

> *But then for me, record will be more of a historical aspect - what are we capturing and why is it important? Why do we need a record of that? The question is kind of what are we keeping and why.*

> Social media producer - Agency 4

Especially within Agency 4 there was an interesting discussion around content vs record. Business users within the agency used the term 'content' to describe some outputs of the functions of the agency, and 'records' to describe others. Content was considered as a piece of intellectual property – an artistic or creative work. This view of content skewed how they then defined record, even though there was acknowledged crossover between the two.

> *What defines of this content is its format but more primarily is that it is directly facing an audience, if you like, either it's the final output or the various direct inputs to that….whereas these other records are, if not ancillary, they are the background to that. …. When we talk about content here we a very much thinking of a piece of work and its various inputs or online.*

> Strategic planning professional – Agency 4

One of the agency information management staff used the following analogy to describe the difference between content and record.

> *I came from oil and gas and the work involved in building oil rigs to pull oil out of the ground involved a huge amount of information… and the end product that*

information went into producing was oil. But nobody in their right mind would take that oil and say, "Here's a piece of evidence that the activity of oil mining happened." For us, we could take a view that the content is our oil and just because it happens to be information in some form doesn't mean it should be confused with record keeping.

Records management training specialist – Agency 4

Public sector sayings

In addition to the notion that there are *site*-specific sayings in relation to the term record, a key finding of this study is that there was no common definition of the term record among the participants, and no single accepted conceptualisation of the term record exists across the participating agencies. While certain themes were prevalent among participants, there was no consistency in how records were defined and perceived, and there were sometimes conflicting and very different definitions of the concept within the same group or setting, and sometimes even the same participant.

When participants were asked to describe the kinds of daily tasks and what kinds of documents and tools they used on a daily basis and which of those they would consider records, responses varied considerably according to the type of work conducted by the participants. However, it was not uncommon for them to distinguish between working papers, drafts and other reference material and the final record itself. The formal, finished or final version of a work was considered the record.

I suppose I've got a bit of an old-school version of record which is that it tends to be the sort of the documents that you set behind glass, so it's the signed version of the contract but maybe not the various drafts of it before it gets to that point.

Information technology professional – Agency 3

In other cases, they simply answered that nearly everything they used was a record in some way shape or form.

I really think of it as something, which captures the information associated with business activity.

Senior manager - Agency 2

Effectively anything that provides the key information, the final information and the supporting evidence of that activity.

Strategic planning profession - Agency 4

The most common themes identified across all case study agencies, but not all participants, were that records capture a chain of events or a story and are evidence of decision making. Records also enable efficiency, compliance, accountability and transparency. The most frequent responses were that records form part of the nation's cultural heritage (although this was not represented across all *sites)*; they are evidence and they provide organisational memory.

A few participants identified that they had different or even conflicting views about records, depending the age of the record, its context or significance, and so it was not always easy to define the concept simply.

I personally have a conflicting view or that there's different perceptions that I hold on the same thing. There's a really sort of rich view from a historical research perspective and the ability to construct stories about the past so there's sort of a really significant research aspect to it. But more so, there's this aspect of business continuity and business service where the records should really be the items that enable us to work as efficiently as possible.

Business project manager – Agency 2

Just thinking in historical and significant sense again, that's a record that should be kind of flagged in a different way, like a significant record, like there's so much that we produce and there are records of that. But what are the records that really matter that we need to kind of really make sure we keep?

Social media producer – Agency 4

One participant even went so far to say that she had no reason to even define the term in their own mind on a day-to-day basis, even though she did provide the following definition in the interview:

> *A record is a mark of an event or whatever, not an asset but an artefact that records an event or it is for if you want to note something particular - but I have no course in my day-to-day life to define record.*

> Manager – Agency 4

It is interesting to note that this same manager in Agency 4 contradicted her own definition and included her memory as part of the record. This indicates that she does not think of records as solely artefactual. The broader record includes her own memory of things done or approvals given as part of the business of the corporation.

> *When someone says, "Did you to approve doing such and such?" and I'd say, "Yes," I would take the memory as a record. It's not necessarily enough in a particular circumstance but it certainly has been, to my mind, a record.*

> Manager – Agency 4

Other participants did not talk of own personal memory as records, but they did describe records in terms of corporate or organisational memory. Organisational memory, efficiency, evidence, a chain of events, compliance and accountability and transparency were threads common to the definitions across all participants.

> *A record would be that transparency about decision-making that's required by legislation. ... the official documents you are required to keep as a record. Then there's some about the decision making. So to me, it's capturing a lot of the decision making about why particular paths were chosen and that doesn't fall under that official capacity, it falls under that reasons why we should or shouldn't do something. That's pretty important. So, if and when an issue comes to be revisited, someone knows what the things were, at that previous point in time, that were taken into account.*

> Communications professional – Agency 3

Another key theme to emerge was that participants often described records in terms of achieving some kind of kind of outcome or end – a social action – rather than simply a passive artefact or reactive evidence of an event.

> *I guess a record to me would be something that is produced as part of my daily activities. So, it's something that aptly describes my thought process to a degree and has been compiled to a degree that is human readable sometime in the future. So, my description of a record would be something that I've clearly produced to consult with other people, to explain an idea or to position something.*

Business project manager – Agency 2

A digital age

This researcher has observed that it has often been stated by recordkeeping practitioners that their management and/or their staff don't understand that records are electronic, or that some kinds of electronic formats are also records. The principle-based definitions within the field of records management, for example, the definition within the International Standard on Records Management ISO 15489-2016 (International Organization for Standardization 2016), have remained format neutral in order to be able to encompass not only new and emerging forms of digital media as they are developed, but also the wide range of existing record keeping formats.

All the agencies in this study were at various stages of their digital compliance with the *Digital Continuity 2020 Policy* of the Australian Government. Agencies 1 and 2 had digital recordkeeping programs that had been in place for some time and already had significant adoption across the agency. Agency 3 had only recently banned the creation of paper files for administrative files even though it had completely digitised its core business processes. Agency 4 operated mostly in the digital realm in business systems and on shared drives but had not fully adopted the authorised EDRMS throughout the agency. As a result, Agency 4 was preparing to implement a more comprehensive and user-friendly digital information management strategy based on a roll-out of Office 365.

In attempting to gain an understanding of how Australian Government officials define records, participants were asked about their practices in relation to hardcopy and digital

records and how often they might use these, as well as their views on whether electronic or digital records were indeed records. They were also asked whether there were some formats that were less likely to be considered records, and why this might be.

In this context, participants unanimously viewed all kinds of electronic media as records, regardless of the state of the maturity of their official digital recordkeeping program. While the staff of each agency had a different conception of the boundaries of what is considered a 'record' in a digital age, what is interesting is that none of them excluded various forms of digital records from their thinking entirely. These users appear to have moved beyond totally associating 'record' with the hardcopy world and now include at least the more established digital technologies when they think of the word. One participant put it this way:

> *Content determines the value of what is to be kept or not, but the format, I treat all equally.*

Marketing professional – Agency 1

Some users did express seemingly conflicting opinions that while they viewed everything as records, the term itself is still associated with the physicality of past records, or a limited range of electronic records, rather than a wider range of more contemporary born digital material. 'Information' was viewed as being a more encompassing term that would resonate with people in a digital age, because 'record' still conjured up images of a letter on letterhead, when in actual fact an email saying the same thing would be equally as valid as evidence of approval.

> *I just think that the history of the use of the word "record" just connotes more physical. And even if you relate it to other popular usage like in relation to music, it's still vinyl. It's still the physical. So I just think so much about record, the starting point in people's mindset is thinking about something that is end of life in the cycle of information and is probably physical or if it's not physical, an electronic Word document, for example, or limited range of file types. So, I actually think "information" is the term I always prefer to use.*

Senior manager – Agency 2

In contrast, the more 'established' digital technologies, even those that were received from external parties such as business systems, were accepted as records by participants across all agencies.

> *The clear evidence of that is the massive amounts of money that all the law firms across the world have spent in developing software they can use to go into their clients or other people's or other lawyers involved in litigation to search out information that they're looking for regardless of the format, it might be within databases, whether it's Word documents, video or audio recordings in broadcasting and communications issues, and so on.*

Legal manager – Agency 3

However, there was some small divergence of opinion when it came to online social media or chat applications like Microsoft Communicator. While participants did readily acknowledge the value of the more established digital technologies, most also acknowledged that these ephemeral digital forms of social media communication were indeed records. A few considered that social media was unreliable at times because it is not as authoritative as some of its paper or digital equivalents, and in the particular case of Twitter, one participant called into question the notion that a tweet could be viewed as a valid record of information.

> *Some of the contemporary social media tools that have records attached to them are not perceived to be as authoritative as a signed letter or even if it's an electronic letter or an email…A tweet is just out there amongst thousands of tweets and those records are of lower value than something you can touch and feel and looks to have more intellectual robustness to it.*

Human resources professional – Agency 1

While some respondents noted that social media formats might affect people's perceptions, although not necessarily their own, others drew on the Archives Act definition and mentioned how the context of a Twitter post might determine its significance as a contemporary record.

I can easily see a tweet being of great significance. So, yes, it's 120 characters but it doesn't delay the significance and all the stuff that's been issued by the Real Donald Trump Twitter account at the moment is going to poured over by Political Science students for decades to come. A tweet from my humble Twitter account is perhaps not quite so important but that goes to the records definition that it ties it to a person. I think there's a value of judgement that can be applied to the person, to then value whether their records associated with them are important or not.

<div align="right">Information technology professional – Agency 3</div>

Indeed, it was also pointed out the social media was no longer a new medium that the various branches of the Australian Government have been in this space for a while and their engagement with the public is now commonplace. It is no longer Government 2.0 but Government 3.0 and social media is a rich and evocative historical record – a kind of open-access collective memory.

I think increasingly, it's changing, if you think of a kind of collective memory that people are actually looking back on and seeing moments which are shared. A fact that always comes to my mind is something I read from Facebook couple of years ago, which is – at that point one in three minutes on a mobile phone in Australia was being spent on the Facebook app. So people are seeing there's kind of gifts and moments of things that are – moments of history – I mean things like when Obama was in for the second time. I think, there was a photo of him and Michelle hugging. It was like four more years – the caption. And people can actually imagine that. They can see it in their heads when you test them on it. That tweet or that Facebook post, I think it's important that that is kind of kept in some way, so that it can be shared later on when people are looking back in an event.

<div align="right">Social media producer – Agency 4</div>

Staff in the four agencies also said that it was not necessarily the format of the record that affected perceptions; rather, it was the sphere of interaction most associated with it that affected how people viewed a record. They suggested that those things that are

associated with mobile and social interactions were less likely to be associated with the work realm and, by extension, formal record keeping.

> *People look at things on their phone a lot more casually.*

> Business advisor – Agency 1

> *If I associate a particular sphere of interaction with my personal life then I am likely to treat it in that way ... Like a text message. You don't really associate that with a record in your mind because it's a really informal social conversation, same with social media.*

> Business project manager – Agency 2

Some staff also speculated that the issue was generational. Younger and older participants alike suggested that some of the more senior participants had personal preferences for working in particular ways. However, there was no real evidence from this study to suggest that such preferences conflicted with the intellectual identification of what would constitute a record. In fact, one participant, a self-confessed paper worker who occasionally used his tablet for meetings, noted:

> *I could access any other document that was on the file ... that file, in its entirety, is electronic. So that is probably more of a reflection of my own personal preferences. I certainly could've done everything electronically if I wanted to, but I chose not to for speed and convenience. ... Again, I think overtime that will change and my legal assistant who's a young lawyer, looks at me aghast when I say "Will you print that off please." So that's a generational thing.*

> Legal manager – Agency 3

Even though some staff did not regard social media as 'a reliable record', they did concede that a post from their own agency would be considered as such. Their trust in 'internal' records was extremely high so long as an internal person provided the information to them. This reliability or trust did not depend on the format of the record, that is, whether it was paper or electronic, or whether it came from a shared drive (considered non-compliant in a recordkeeping sense), a formal electronic document and records management system, or even another core business system. It was totally reliant

on whether or not the record was internally generated and therefore of known provenance.

> *Internally I would say paper vs digital or database or core business system, equally reliable … it's all about the behaviours of the organisation … I don't think one is less than the other.*

<div align="right">Human resources professional – Agency 1</div>

> *It's a professional organisation… There is certain level of confidence that I take with my colleagues.*

<div align="right">Digital marketing professional – Agency 1</div>

Professional sayings

This study also found that among the discipline representatives who were interviewed there were distinct ways of talking about records within the distinct culturally discursive arrangements of each organisation. These were quite consistent across the common disciplines found across all *sites*.

When being interviewed, all the professionals contextualised their talk of records against the backdrop of the organisational culture in which they worked. They also spoke of the values of the organisation when it came to recordkeeping. However, there were some distinct cultural discursive arrangements in relation to their professions that influenced how they spoke of records within this broader organisational culture. These included the use of specific terms to refer to particular sets of records that might be part of their function, such as personnel files, project management documents, or accounts payable documentation.

A disciplinary discourse of this type was most obvious among the information technology (IT) professionals, with the terms record and archive having quite distinct technical meanings within that discipline. One IT professional clarified the use of the term record within the IT professions and how it differed to the mainstream use of the term:

I look at it from two perspectives. One is a business record. And so, from a business perspective, if I need to have a look at the record of our agency's involvement with a particular company there might be a couple of different sources for that information. From an IT perspective, a record could just be a single row in table, that's been stored and that might not capture all information that's all across an agency like ours ... So, there are actually two perspectives that we need to try and account for in our agency.

Information technology professional – Agency 1

Another IT professional explicitly acknowledged this difference but stated that he would prefer not to be drawn into a philosophical discussion on the ways the various professions use the term. He preferred instead to emphasise that deciding on the set of records that needed to be kept was more about ensuring that the most important things were kept, rather than, as is sometimes emphasised in recordkeeping, everything should be kept. This was especially evident in relation to project documentation.

Well, let's not go there. Let's just restrict this to the sorts of stuff that I do as opposed to the stuff that my guys do because they may have different views. For me the record or the set of records should be sufficient to paint a picture of what it was that was being done at the time but it doesn't necessarily have to have the full fidelity of everything that was done at the time.

Information technology professional – Agency 3

When talking of the deviation between the use of the terms record and archive between the two different disciplines, one IT professional said that he did not find it confusing at all, as many of the same business efficiency principles were present in both the IT and recordkeeping disciplines. To support this perspective, he cited the example of code repositories being similar in function and purpose to an Electronic Document Management System. In his view there was simply less emphasis within the IT discipline on the information itself having value in the longer term, including cultural or historic value. It was all about effective and efficient business processes.

I guess there is a deviation between how those terms are used. But in IT, they're the same premises as those that assist from a business efficiency perspective…

but I don't think that really causes confusion. I think what I was alluding to more is that there's no real emphasis on the concept of the value of information from a research or social impact perspective.

Business project manager – Agency 2

In the legal field there were also distinct differences and emphases based on their disciplinary education. Several legal professionals mentioned defining records or documents in the context of the applicable law and that this was considered part of their disciplinary practice and education. In order to provide the relevant advice, one had to have the right definitions in the right context.

A record - something that's transactional. <laughs> A document could be anything. Actually, it depends on what the relevant act says <laughs>.

Legal professional – Agency 1

When you ask me what's the definition of a record, typically my response would be, let me look at the Archives Act and I'll tell you because it's not in my nature to say, well I think a record is this. I will go and look it up, and I'll say, "Right, that's what a record is." Then I will have regard to that definition in the context in which it's been used in that act.

Legal professional – Agency 4

Additionally, a number of legal practitioners brought up the issue of meaning. They questioned whether a record could be considered a record if it had no meaning.

I would question keeping something as a record, if it's not saying anything meaningful, and maybe it's caught by – whether it's actually containing any information.

Legal professional – Agency 3

Human resources (HR) professionals also had similar standpoints that they associated with records in terms of transactions and interactions. While all had strong knowledge of the various legislative frameworks for their profession, they acknowledged that in the HR field education on records was never explicit, but was implicit in the processes they

were learning about. However, all three HR professionals interviewed identified a distinction in terms of low-value, insignificant transactional work and more high-value interactions that required records being made of them.

> *Sometimes it's a matter of the consequences of interactions. If someone wants to check about an individual's entitlements – "I just wanna check what's the annual entitlement to personal leave?" and you say "x days according to the enterprise agreement if you're a full time employee". Now, that's something that occurred as part of the business of HR, however, it's not recorded anywhere and we're unlikely to make a full note of that either. But if a manager calls you to say, "I've got an issue with an employee who actually hasn't come into work for the last four days and they don't want to come in," that suddenly becomes a record.*

<div align="right">Human resources professional - Agency 3</div>

While this distinction was explicitly stated by this professional group in regard to defining records and how they talked about their work, it is a theme that has been identified by the researcher as a *doing* across all agencies and all professional groups. This question of 'significance' was implicit in the *doings* and is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

The notion of transaction being examined here is, however, not at odds with those from the finance departments of the participating agencies, where transactions are the life blood of workflows, especially when it comes to accounts payable work. They used the term 'transaction', as in a financial transaction, frequently to describe their work and the records that are required to support it. One of the finance professionals who had significant auditing experience also noted that their use of the word 'evidence' reflected the fact that auditing standards require that they provide sufficient and appropriate evidence:

It's probably referred to as records, invoices statement reports, transaction flow, more in those terms rather than evidence. But the concept's the same. It is establishing all of the evidence that this transaction needed to happen and has actually happened and was approved in the right way.

<div align="right">Finance professional – Agency 2</div>

There was also a clear vocational implication in regard to record keeping and social justice and the impact records can have on individual lives. One of the participants, who was participating in a social justice program in Agency 3, had a professional background as a social worker. She noted that as part of her education and practice there was also a very strong focus on records and their impact, but in a way that no other participant identified.

A lot of the times the records are some of the only records really of periods of people's lives… the only records of their lives were folders that we kept in the office because they move from families a lot and they don't have the photographs that we get as kids that grow up in normal households. So, I guess in that sense, records had a much more personal value in my previous roles, same for accountability and transparency. It would have a lot of meaning for one individual or the individual families or communities that we were working with, what is exactly recorded around what we did in this community, how it affected people and that sort of thing. So, it's a different spin in a way.

<div align="right">Program administrator – Agency 3</div>

Conclusion

This chapter, through a practice theoretical lens, has explored the 'sayings' – those culturally discursive arrangements that enable or constrain characteristics of practices – in an organisation. These findings have provided insight into interpretations of the intertwining of the sayings of the general public sector and its professions and organisations, and the multiple values and meanings that can be attributed to records within an agency setting.

The key findings of this chapter are that there was no common definition of the term record among the participants. While certain themes were prevalent among them, there was no consistency and sometimes conflicting and very different definitions of the concept. However, there were identifiable themes when reviewing definitions from among members of the same site or agency or the same profession. The *site*-specific sayings quite clearly emphasised different affordances and uses of records that the agency considers important or that relate to the way it conducts its business. There were also some common themes across the professions present at each *site*.

The next chapter presents findings about the *relatings*, those socio-political arrangements that take place in organisations as part of practices. The ways of relating to one another and the world in the social space – the relationships with other people and things characteristic of a practice (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014)

Chapter 5 – The relatings

This chapter uses a practice theoretical lens to explore the findings of the study that can be considered *relatings*, the socio-political arrangements that take place in organisations as part of its practices. These are the ways of relating to one another and the world in the social space – the relationships with other people and things characteristic of a practice (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014)

The *relatings* presented here are the relationships of individuals in an organisation to its legal and policy framework; the relationships between the society, government and institutional records; the relationships between participants' perceptions of the record and the jurisdictional and best-practice recordkeeping definitions; and the relationships between the concepts of document, archive, record and information as seen by participants.

Relating to the legal and policy framework for recordkeeping

The recordkeeping requirements that Australian Government agencies need to meet derive from legislation, policy and standards. Primary among these is the *Archives Act 1983* (the Archives Act), which governs access to, preservation and destruction of information created and received when undertaking Australian Government business. The international standard on records management AS/ISO 15489 is a code of best practice under the Archives Act.

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) administers the Archives Act and has policy responsibility for recordkeeping in the Australian Government. It plays a key role in establishing standards and providing guidance and assistance to agencies in managing their records management responsibilities. The NAA is also the lead agency for *Digital Continuity 2020 Policy*, the successor to the *Digital Transition Policy* that was launched in July 2011 and provided the initial impetus and direction for all Australian Government agencies to transition to digital records management for efficiency purposes (National Archives of Australia 2016). A raft of other requirements that affect the management of information, such as freedom of information, privacy, and

information security also apply to agencies across the Australian Government, although some policies may only apply to specific categories of agencies.

To establish the participants' general background knowledge of the issues relating to recordkeeping they were asked a series of questions relating to their knowledge of agency and whole-of-government policies and legislation relating to the management of information and records. They were also asked how long they had worked in the public sector overall (regardless of which jurisdiction) and in what roles and agencies, and how much specific experience they had in the Australian Government in particular, as there are quite similar regimes for recordkeeping in all states and territories of Australia.

Not surprisingly, given the focus of the study and the interview questions, the most frequently identified piece of legislation by participants was the Archives Act. While participants knew that it covered their agency and was a compliance requirement, the majority were not familiar with its content; or if they were, they could not recall particular terminology associated with the discipline of recordkeeping or even, in some cases, the correct name of the legislation itself.

> *We're required to comply with the National Archives Act, That's probably the big one. And we had – I can't remember what they were called, but we've had certain notices or obligations under that Act where they specify exactly what we're required to keep and for what purposes.*

> Finance professional – Agency 2

Participants were able to identify, in addition to the Archives Act, a range of other requirements from both policy and legislation. To varying degrees, participants in all case study agencies demonstrated an awareness of what could be considered the major laws and policies across the Australian Government. These included the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act): the *Freedom of Information Act 1983* (FOI Act); and the *Protective Security Policy Framework* and its accompanying *Information Security Manual* (ISM).

Those participants who had worked longer in the public sector and those who had worked for Departments of State (as opposed to portfolio agencies or independent authorities which tend to be further removed from the machinery of the Australian Government), as well as the legal professionals, generally had a better understanding of

the policy and legislative framework of the Australian Government and the breadth of requirements that it entailed. Some of the participants were also able to cite examples from previous agencies in which they had worked as a way of illustrating differences in implementations within agencies, as this reference to the *Digital Continuity Policy 2020* illustrates.

> *The move to the electronic filing system, and I can't remember what the policy is. We are supposed to move from paper to electronic files … in my previous agency there was a big push for that.*

<div align="right">Legal professional – Agency 1</div>

While participants in all case study agencies demonstrated an awareness of the major laws and policies in relation to the management of information, they also demonstrated a more specific understanding of the governing policy or legislation in relation to their specific function with the agency or of the agency itself. This was particularly noticeable when participants had worked on developing organisational policy to reflect changes in legislation for implementation within their agency or had organisational responsibility for the oversight of legislation such as the Privacy Act, the FOI Act or the ISM.

Relative to their own professional expertise and their own functions, the range of policies and laws that was cited by participants was quite diverse and at times an extensive list. The legislation and policy that were identified included an agency's own enabling legislation[8]; requirements in relation to financial records in the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*; and the Code of Conduct for

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[8] For a Commonwealth entity, the Act or legislative instrument that establishes the entity and sets out its powers, functions and responsibilities (Department of Finance).

the Australian Public Service, which is applied to all public sector employees that are employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*[9].

> *The Archives Act is number one … the Public Service Act governs the engagement, the employment and termination of public service employees … the Fair Work Act as well and any of the human rights related, discrimination legislation. … also, the Work Health and Safety Act and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. … the Long Service Leave Act and the Superannuation Act <laughs>. Is that enough? … and privacy. How could I forget … Privacy and what else? Freedom of information Act and also for us, the Public Interest Disclosures Act. … Don't ask me to list anymore.*

> Human resources professional – Agency 3

Within the recordkeeping framework set out by the Archives Act, all the case study agencies also implemented specific information or records management policies and/or procedures to guide staff on their responsibilities (although only Agency 1, Agency 2 and Agency 4 had a current policy). Awareness of these specific agency requirements in relation to recordkeeping could be best summarised as 'high level'.

> *I'm aware that we have one <laughs>. I think most staff would be aware because we have to do these horrendous e-learning modules … So, yes there is an information management policy. Yes, I have read it. Yes, I have done my e-learning and I respect it all … but, the principle of our information management practice is if it's important make a record.*

> International marketing specialist - Agency 1

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[9] Only two of the case study agencies employed their staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*, the other two agencies (being corporate Commonwealth entities) employed their staff under their own enabling legislation.

Yes, that was completed through induction. So, if you're asking me off the top of my head I probably won't remember it all but there is a classification policy and then there's processes to TRIM[10] documentation ...

Digital commerce professional - Agency 2

I'm loosely aware of there being compliance around recordkeeping. I know that we are meant to keep [a particular group of records] for a certain amount of time ... I know that these get stored and we have a local archive going back probably for the last seven years or so ... what happens after that, I'm not a hundred percent sure what the legislation says it has to be or what the internal policies are.

Social media producer - Agency 4

There was more specific knowledge in relation to the operation of the relative document management, electronic records management, or the agency systems themselves. Where the participants used these kinds of systems every day, they were mostly familiar with how they operated and could use them to varying degrees of effectiveness. This included the implementation of other policy and legislation, such information security that were incorporated into the practices of participants.

So, we've got an ICT policy as well. Every time you press "CTRL+ALT+DEL" on your computer, you're accepting it. People might not realise it, but they are.

Digital marketing professional – Agency 1

So, our agency is required to classify all of the information and I think there are four different levels. And so we need to classify at the time we produce a document and TRIM actually helps us to put footers on so that it's very clear.

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[10] TRIM is an electronic records management system deployed across many Australian Government agencies. TRIM was developed by Tower Software, who were based in Canberra, so many of the requirements driving its initial development were the recordkeeping requirements of the Australian Government. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TOWER_Software

And it also helps us in terms of security arrangements for classification on who can access what.

<div align="right">Finance professional - Agency 2</div>

While not all the participants in this study fully understood all the details of the organisational recordkeeping policy or use specific recordkeeping terminology in the same way as those in the recordkeeping profession might, participants across all case study agencies displayed an understanding of the notion of the 'life cycle' in relation to records, that is, that most records would eventually be destroyed after a certain period of time and some might become 'archives'. This concept was understood at a high level, although the particular criteria for archival records or retention periods were understood by very few. However, many participants made a clear distinction between the concept of record and archive (discussed further below) and some had also come into contact with agency processes for the authorised and accountable destruction of records.

I am aware of ... how we retain records and the duration of time we retain them and the format which we retain them and the classification structures we use to define information and how that flows on to how we say classify email through the organisation. And I'm aware that we go through a process of the destruction of files and I'm given file lists and asked to confirm whether we can destroy them or keep them for whatever reason.

<div align="right">Human resources professional – Agency 1</div>

And then there would be things in there were certain retention periods are applied so they're not necessarily an archive but if they've got a long retention period, something in the system is going to make sure that they're not destroyed.

<div align="right">Manager – Agency 2</div>

Relating to information, document and archive

At various points during the interviews, participants would use certain terms almost interchangeably. The most frequent of these terms were 'information', 'record' and 'document', with the term 'archive' or 'archives' being used less frequently, even though three of the case study agencies (Agencies 2, 3 & 4) had their own internal

archival collections. This is not surprising since the focus of the interviews was on participants' daily work practices in relation to records and information. Accessing historical information did not come up in the interviews frequently, even though questions were asked about these practices.

When participants used 'record', 'document' and 'information' almost interchangeably at various points during the interview they were asked to clarify how they defined these terms to understand how these different concepts were viewed in relation to each other. In general, the participants discussed the interrelated terms by comparing them, rather than by providing succinct definitions for each term. They compared and contrasted the terms by reference to their own practices and provided illustrative examples.

A clear theme that emerged was that participants viewed 'information' as a broader, almost all-encompassing term. Any kind of information was grouped under that term, whether it be internal, external, a document or record. One participant even identified conversations as information. There was no explicit statement by participants that the information they had to inform them in some way. If the object or conversation provided them with some kind of information, useful or not, it was classed as information.

> *Well, information can be in almost any form so it could be from an external resource that you've read or it could be information you've received. That can cover everything, so anything is information. So, having a chat is information I suppose. A phone call or what you've read on the paper, what you've heard on the news or analysis that you've done yourself, so you created it yourself. ... But then information is all of that plus the other stuff that's more, sort of, physical or tangible.*

<div align="right">Finance professional – Agency 2</div>

While information was viewed as a broader, less specific term, participants noted that a record nonetheless consisted of information. Information was viewed as an integral and constituent part of all records, and by implication records were seen as conveying meaning from the information they carry. This was further supported in relation to comparisons made between the terms 'document' and 'record'. Some participants saw

these terms as almost synonymous, provided the document had some purpose and meaning. This implied that documents do not necessarily have to mean or convey something, but records by their very nature have structure and meaning and convey information.

> *Documents and records are synonymous almost provided that the document has some significance ... that it's a document that has be formed for a particular purpose rather than scribbles*

<div align="right">Information manager - Agency 2</div>

> *All documents can be a record of something ... I'm trying to think of an example of a document that I wouldn't classify as a record and all I can think of is something maybe a blank piece of paper with just a word on it that has no meaning. I mean for me, I guess as long as it has meaning and as long as it's capturing some kind of data, I would consider that to be a record.*

<div align="right">Legal professional – Agency 3</div>

The participants were all office-based workers and so dealt primarily with documentary records such as emails and Microsoft Office documents such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. They also used databases and other online applications to support their work. As a result of working with documents routinely, comparison between the terms record and document was frequently discussed by participants in terms of one being the final version of the other: a document was a work in progress and there could be several drafts of that document but the record was the final version of a document.

> *I guess when it moves from a document to a record is once it's done. A document is something that's going back and forth and once it's okay, that's when I'd be like, "Okay, you're no longer a document."*

<div align="right">Program administrator – Agency 3</div>

Supporting this this predominant view, and perhaps as a result of it, there was also a perspective that documents could also be temporary in nature; it was not necessary for them to be kept in the same way as records. Records were imbued with a sense of value, formality and permanency that was not accorded to documents.

Document, in my opinion, not necessarily to be kept – I mean the document can be anything – something that should or shouldn't be thrown away. For the record, maybe there's more value to be kept for future reference.

Marketing professional - Agency 1

For me, record will be more of a historical aspect ... what are we capturing and why is it important? Why do we need a record of that? What –? And the question of kind of what are we keeping and why…what are the ones that really kind of matter maybe as far actually being used again, which is a quite deep question.

Social media producer – Agency 4

Records were also considered "official" in a way information or documents were not. Calling them records required that they be registered and hence available to the rest of the organisation as the organisational record, rather than documents that might be personal to the participants or drafts of no value. Therefore, in this sense documents were considered a 'lower form' than records, which were registered, classified, and had more extensive and prescribed metadata that made them able to be interrogated in some way.

A document is something that's still a work in progress. It's not final. I would say a record is more the official final version ... a record is it has to be officially recorded somewhere. I could have lots of information and documents on USB or whatever, but unless it's officially recorded somewhere, nobody would know.

Digital commerce professional - Agency 2

It was also recognised that a document itself, while being only one form of record, could, depending on the circumstances and the context, be both a document and a record.

A document is not necessarily a record ... but the same document could be a record depending on where it is and what it's being used for. Say, for example …the public service code of conduct. If there was a discussion, a counselling session with an employee where they were made aware that certain behaviours were problematic and deemed to be in potentially breech of the code of conduct

and a summary of the meeting was documented and the code of conduct

attached to it, that to me is then a record

Human recourses professional – Agency 3

The term 'document' also elicited some confusion from the participants. There was an acknowledgement by a number of participants that in a primarily digital workplace the word document could simply be interpreted as being a Microsoft Word document. In this sense 'record' was seen as being a broader and potentially less confusing term.

I think it's hard for the general staff member in any organisation to think of an electronic document as anything pretty much different to Word, like a Microsoft product. So – but, you know, I think of a document as a specific type of record and a record as something that can be encompassing of anything in a structured or an unstructured data set, basically. And I think of it as quite broad.

Senior manager - Agency 2

However, there was also the recognition that 'document', in a legal sense, covered a large range of things and that nearly anything could be legally interpreted as a document. The only thing that distinguished a document from record was the legal requirement for it to be retained.

In relation to 'record' and 'archive', participants generally associated the term archive with older or non-current records. The length of time participants associated with a record becoming an archive varied greatly, depending on whether the participant associated the term with an item being put or transferred into an archival collection and having some form of historical value beyond its current use or whether they were just simply non-current records that were 'archived'.

Well, archives, that sounds like something that's in a box in a big dungeon somewhere <laughs> – well I would imagine the records are the things we are using today. The archives are things that we no longer need to use on a daily basis, so they are moved away. But I don't really need to know – I mean I don't put stuff in archives. I put stuff in the bin <laughs>, a large bin or I just put it on the computer system for somebody else and I consider that to be an archive.

<p align="right">International marketing specialist - Agency 1</p>

I would say archive is something that you can refer to that's not current. So, for example, what we do online is anything in the current calendar year is current. Anything older than the current calendar year would be in archives. So, from a record-keeping point of view, anything that's really for reference purposes

<p align="right">Digital commerce professional – Agency 2</p>

In relation to 'record', 'document' and 'archive', participants also made the distinction between the verb and the noun. A few participants clearly associated their concept of record and archive with the act of recording or archiving something or putting something down for on the record. Similarly, one spoke of documenting events or things and used documentary in the sense of 'a documentary' of real or reconstructed events in the world, as opposed to using a term like 'documentary evidence', which might be used in the legal or recordkeeping professions.

There was also acknowledgement that the terms 'archive' and 'the record' could represent the plural as well as the singular, and so when referring to these there was some clarification needed. An archive could be an archival collection, and the record as an abstract concept, or as a physical file, could contain a number of other records.

When talking about a physical record, we can have a file which would contain multiple documents in there and those documents would be the record, if you like, of particular interaction. So there's more of a metaphoric or abstract concept of keeping a record of events that took place, but the physical thing actually gets referred to as a record as well. And it may contain documents.

<p align="right">Information technology professional – Agency 1</p>

While most participants did distinguish between such interrelated terms, there was an acknowledgement by some that it was a matter of semantics and that distinctions of this kind were not part of their practices at all.

> *I wouldn't even know where to start with that.*

<div align="right">

Business manager - Agency 4

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> *I mean it's semantics, isn't it? I guess, to me the best working definition of social media is content generated and shared on a digital medium. And content is a record. You know what I mean?*

<div align="right">

Digital marketing specialist – Agency 1

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Relating to the role of records in different contexts

The Records Continuum model (Upward 1996, 1997, 2005) identifies the different axes and dimensions of recordkeeping, and recognises that records serve multiple purposes and "that they mean different things to different people in different contexts, both immediately and through time" (Cumming 2010, p. 42). In the same way that the Records Continuum recognises these relationships, participants were able to articulate completely different relationships with records, and indeed their purposes for referring to them or even keeping them, depending on which perspective they took. Participants were asked questions about the role of records and their own rationales for keeping them from the perspectives of the Australian Government, broader society, their own particular agency, and as individual actors who are professionals and public sector employees engaged with recordkeeping within Australian Government agencies.

A central theme in terms of the role of records in the context of the Australian Government, and indeed the rationale for the recordkeeping framework in the first place, related to accountability and transparency. Records provide a vehicle for the accountability of the Australian Government to the Parliament and the people, and the alignment of the Archives Act with the public sector values and the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct or, for those not employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*, their relevant agency Code of Conduct. In particular, the requirements for accounting

for taxpayer dollars and providing appropriate evidence of due process when audited, especially when large sums of expenditure were involved, were highlighted by a number of participants across all case study agencies.

> *More broadly I would say that it does enable society to investigate and to inquire into particular public organisations. If we spend large amounts of taxpayer's money, they would like to know that it's been spent wisely and correctly and the only way that you can really show them, that they'll approve it, would be to have a record of some sort.*

<div align="right">Finance professional - Agency 3</div>

Other themes in relation to the rationale for good recordkeeping in Australian Government related to the improved transfer of information between and across government that standard systems could bring, providing assurance to citizens that the their sensitive and personal information was managed correctly, and providing historical information about the activities of the Australian Government as a cultural resource for the public, whether it be for research or other purposes.

> *I think the value is more to the public so, if the government is in fact serving the public then ... the information's been made available in order to re-interpret events, given the light, and basically assess how the decision making of government has worked in the past and hopefully use it to project how it might be done better in the future.*

<div align="right">Business project manager - Agency 2</div>

There was also an acknowledgement that the Australian Government's practices have been changing in relation to the release of information and that this in turn is changing the nature of the relationship between the public and government records. The days of Australian Government records not being freely available for public access until they are 20 or 30 years old are changing. Archival authorities and government agencies may no longer be the gatekeepers of access to certain kinds of current records that may be of use to, and used by, the public now either for research or innovation.

The proactive release of many government records in the form of datasets is now being encouraged by the Australian Government. These are now being made freely and immediately available for potential use to deliver public good, drive new information practices, and engender innovation. Public and government agencies alike are experiencing and exploring these completely different relationships with government records.

> *Another really important aspect of information management for government is the fact that we're all producing data and you can have data held within different departments in like health and immigration, etcetera and so providing that ability to use that data in a variety of different ways is quite important. So, it's not the silo of health information, the silo of immigration information. The real value comes from actually being able to combine those sources of information and come up with new things.*

<div align="right">Information manager - Agency 4</div>

Different reasons emerged when participants discussed the role of records from an agency perspective. Although it was acknowledged that accountability and transparency were key reasons, records provide evidence of an agencies' actions, for example FOI requests and inquiries from the Australian National Audit Office or Ministers.

Keeping historical records of an agency's decision making was also seen as important, particularly in regard to risk management, legal protection, good business practice, knowledge transfer, learning from the past, supporting decision making, efficiency, corporate memory, and providing a cultural resource for the nation.

> *The primary objective is knowledge transfer in my books, but it's also evidence – proof of why a decision was made, how a decision was made, and that it was made under the correct circumstances of that time… It's just normal business process or an innovative idea that might not be driven by legislation or anyone pushing you down a path. It might just be good research and analysis that will be used… If you just did your research and then didn't file it somewhere then no one else would be the wiser about that work that you've done.*

<div align="right">Manger - Agency 2</div>

Maintaining an organisational memory, creates efficiencies to be able to find important documents of previous activities or decision making. Look, I was going back to what I said before to be kind to the people, that'll come after you, so they too can make informed decisions and be effective and efficient in the work that they do.

Communications professional - Agency 3

Some participants also cited the fact that agencies had no choice – keeping records is a compliance requirement – although they acknowledged that the ultimate reason behind this requirement was the accountability of the Australian Government to citizens. The agencies also emphasised different aspects of the rationale and role of their records. These *sayings* of each case study agency were explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

From a professional perspective, individual participants put a strong emphasis on learning what works and what doesn't work, as well as their personal obligations under the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct. They also highlighted that as managers and professionals they would not be able to form assessments of staff performance if they could not keep good records of their activities. It was also highlighted that there was a degree of self-interest in keeping good records, just in case things went wrong.

Managing risk to cover yourself really <laughs>. Typical public service thinking. Put it in writing to cover yourself 'cause if something happens; he said/she said – at least you've got it.

Legal professional – Agency 1

Participants also emphasised that recordkeeping on a personal scale was completely different to that done at agency and whole-of-Government levels.

Well, I think they're different depending on which of those contexts you choose. Perhaps business and societal is different. But mostly, to the definitions point, a lot of it is around business or transactions or to confirm business or transactions, to confirm reciprocal understanding if it's between a number of parties, to confirm history, and of course as we know history can often be

questionable. From a personal point of view, I think it's a very different

creature. It's a personal transaction. It's personal interaction.

<div align="right">Business manager - Agency 4</div>

Relating to the archival and recordkeeping professions' definitions

As outlined above, while nearly all participants made the distinction between the concepts of record, document and information, the definitions that participants ascribed to these concepts did not necessarily accord with the statutory or professional definitions. The participants in all case study agencies were not members of the archival and recordkeeping professions, and so were not bound by the constraints of what a record 'should be'.

After clarifying the relationships between the terms, the participants were asked for their own definitions, which are outlined within the 'Sayings' chapter (Chapter 4). Once the participants had provided their own views on what records were and how the different concepts of record and document related to one another, they were shown and asked their opinions about the following three definitions: the definition of record within the Archives Act; the definition of document from the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* (Acts Interpretation Act); and the definition of record from the International Standard on Records Management AS/ISO 15489.

The Archives Act defines a record as

> a document, or an object, in any form (including any electronic form) that is, or has been, kept by reason of (a) any information or matter that it contains or that can be obtained from it; or (b) its connection with any event, person, circumstance or thing (*Archives Act (Cth)* 1983, p. 5).

The definition of a Commonwealth record[11], relies on the definition of record within the Archives Act. The definition of Commonwealth record was not used for the purposes of gaining opinion from participants as it was seen to add no value in terms of illuminating what a record is, should or could be, other than being a record in the possession of a Commonwealth entity.

The Archives Act's definition of record refers to the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* for the definition of document, which is defined as

> any record of information, and includes: (a) anything on which there is writing; and (b) anything on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them; and (c) anything from which sounds, images or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; and (d) a map, plan, drawing or photograph (*Acts Interpretation Act (Cth)* 1901, p. 6).

In most cases there was a difference between users' perceptions or definitions and those of the recordkeeping professions and the legal definition in the Archives Act, in some cases markedly so. A major theme that arose quite early in this study was that the definitions do not necessarily relate to the practices of public service employees and are not really helpful in guiding recordkeeping practices in the case study agencies.

When asked how they related to the definitions set with the legislative framework for recordkeeping in the Australian Government, participants generally said that the definition was legalistic and confusing, particularly if English was not a person's first language. This last point was particularly relevant for some of the case study agencies that had overseas offices and staff.

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[11] Commonwealth record is: (a) a record that is the property of the Commonwealth or of a Commonwealth institution; or (b) a record that is to be deemed to be a Commonwealth record by virtue of a regulation under subsection (6) or by virtue of section 22; but does not include a record that is exempt material or is a register or guide maintained in accordance with Part VIII (*Archives Act (Cth)* 1983)

Can I read it again? <Laughs> Is that what most people say? I get the first bit, "an object in any form that is or has been kept by reason of…" and that's where it kinda loses me. <Long pause> I get B. I must say, A, looks a little bit confusing. Yeah, I'm struggling with A. If I was reading a legal agreement, I'll probably asked for clarification of A. <laughs>

Manager – Agency 2

I mean for the average public servant, I don't think it's very meaningful.

International marketing advisor – Agency 1

A common reaction to the definition of record was that it could encompass anything, and so from that perspective it did not accord with participants' own constructions of the term record, nor was it helpful from the perspective of them using it to identify what a record actual was on a day-to-day basis. They would be looking for more specific and practical guidance in their everyday practices.

Let's just think of an all-encompassing definition and write that down … it basically interprets to me as everything is a record. So, yeah, I guess we'd be saving everything. Our productivity might go down a little bit with all our record saving. But yeah it is very broad.

Human resources professional – Agency 2

From a day-to-day sort of practical implementation of information management, record-keeping practices, that definition sounds a little bit too legalistic and it probably doesn't mean a lot to individuals who are going to use this … it sounds very broad reaching. I guess pretty much anything.

Information technology professional – Agency 1

Participants commented on the fact that the definition did not clearly relate to their organisational context, and records needed to be related to business rather than simply to any given event or person. As it was, there was already information overload and too much information being stored; if anything, they should be saving fewer, but more meaningful information, rather than everything that crossed their desk. In particular, one

participant focused on the significance within the definition itself as the factor that made the definition impracticable.

> *It defines that the record is something that is kept because it has some importance or significance. What it doesn't do is, say what is significant? Which persons, things or events, could be considered significant or insignificant. It doesn't give any guidance. ... What is significant?*

<div align="right">Information technology professional – Agency 3</div>

Several participants put forward the view that the word 'electronic' was very outdated and that 'digital' would be a much more encompassing term to use in modern workplaces. The wording in the Archives Act reflects the paper world and the age of the legislation, as if the electronic part was an afterthought. Even so, there was some acknowledgement that while it may not be useful on a practical level, the definition itself was still useful from a whole-of-government perspective because it was so broad. No definition could attempt to reflect in any meaningful way the diversity of records within the Australian Government, so the definition is useful from a legislative and archival standpoint in that it could be applied to almost anything.

> *In the sense that it can be used very broadly, so it can be applied to anything. It is useful from that perspective I guess. ... I think some of that divergence in the practice of Information Management practice itself is being reflected in the Act because it's very difficult to capture a statement that would then satisfy all of the different agencies' needs.*

<div align="right">Business project manager - Agency 2</div>

As stated previously, the definition of records in the Archives Act relies on the definition of document[12] in the Acts Interpretation Act. Participants found that this

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[12] "any record of information, and includes: (a) anything on which there is writing; and (b) anything on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to

definition accorded more with their own personal constructions of what a document is, and that the four categories in the definition made it easier to understand. Although, because it refers to "anything from which sounds, images or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else" and does not state explicitly that this includes electronic documents on a computer, it did take some participants a while to comprehend this. Some participants also observed that there were some characteristics of the definition they would not normally associate with documents.

> *As a lay person, I associate a document with something that has writing, markings, figures, symbols, etc. ... But personally, I never associate a document with sounds.*

<div align="right">Senior manager - Agency 2</div>

One participant observed that using the term "any record of information" meant that the definition was so wide in terms of legal processes of document exchange and records management such as blockchain that anything could be a document, and so everything would be a record, even very new and as yet unexplored technologies.

> *A wide definition, yes. ... we've got social media, and we've got a whole range of things that when you said any record of information that, it's fluid and there are other things now like blockchain.*

<div align="right">Communications professional – Agency 3</div>

While the legal professionals had less trouble with interpreting the legal definitions, they had issues with the circularity of the definitions in the two Acts. The definition of record in the Archives Act relies on the definition of document in the Acts Interpretation Act.

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interpret them; and (c) anything from which sounds, images or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; and (d) a map, plan, drawing or photograph"

God, they're awful definitions ... the definition of document talks about a record of information and it's using a record of information as a verb rather than as a noun. So it's using the word record or record in two different contexts. So I just think it makes it a little bit circular.

<div align="right">Legal professional – Agency 4</div>

In particular, some of the legal professionals interviewed, all of whom provided internal advice on the application of legislation within their respective agencies, had quite a different relationship with the definitions set out in the law than the other participants. Their relationship with the legal definitions was viewed in terms of their own legal process rather than its practical application in a recordkeeping sense. One legal practitioner explained it as follows:

I come at it from the perspective of a lawyer and it's a bit like the Mad Hatter. You use definitions in the context of that legislation, for that legislation, or anything that builds on that legislation ... It's a useful definition if you're dealing with something to do with that legislation ... but they are useful in that broader sense as well, but that's not the sense in which I see them ... whether that particular definition exactly as it is, in its current breadth, is entirely useful, that's a different question alright.

<div align="right">Legal manager – Agency 3</div>

The definition of record in the Australian and International Standard (ISO 15489-2016) is "information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business" (International Organization for Standardization 2016, p. 3). This definition was in most cases seen as being more helpful or aligning with participants' opinions of how they viewed a record in an organisational setting.

I would say that definitely makes more sense. One, it's because it's in one sentence. Two, it describes purpose and reason.

<div align="right">Digital commerce professional – Agency 2</div>

One participant observed that standards in general were usually easier to interpret and read than the law.

> *You can see that this is easier to interpret, but that's the difference between a law and a sort of statement isn't it? The standards. My experience again putting my compliance hat on is that the standards are always a bit more clear and easy to digest than the law is.*

<div align="right">Finance professional – Agency 2</div>

Some participants noted that the Standards Australia definition focuses on the compliance and legal aspects of recordkeeping to the detriment of the more historical, cultural and other aspects of recordkeeping, such as business efficiency. They implied it is limited to being a compliance obligation. Others found this narrower scope of the definition useful in terms of being able to eliminate things that might not be records, and so from this perspective it was more practical. Having the umbrella term 'information', rather than the narrow terms of 'document' and 'object' that are used in the Archives Act, was also seen as a positive step.

> *The only thing that's distracting or unfriendly is this "in pursuance of legal obligations" because it makes recordkeeping sound like a compliance obligation. But the actual definition of a record is more comprehensive just by virtue of having the umbrella term, if you like, of "information."*

<div align="right">Senior manager – Agency 2</div>

Conversely, this focus on evidence and legal obligations in the international standard definition made one extend his concept of records beyond his own immediate use of them to the broader public's needs for the records of the agency. Most participants, though, liked the focus on the organisational context that was missing from the definition in the Archives Act.

The logic of the definition in the International Standard was clear to most participants, although it did initially not make much sense from a grammatical or logic point of view to one of them, thereby reinforcing the point that perhaps concepts and understandings

about records that are clear to those within the recordkeeping profession are not necessarily clear to the records creators within originating agencies.

> *That is a really ugly sentence. Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person. I don't understand it. … So, information created, received and maintained as information – I don't understand the course. Grammatically, it makes no sense.*

> Legal practitioner – Agency 4

Further, while participants still considered it better than the definition in the Archives Act, some still found the definition in the International Standard confusing, limiting or so principle-based and subjective that it was not helpful from a practical perspective.

> *I find that to be a little bit better. I mean, again, then you're still talking about the subjective and you're sort of like struggling. I mean as if I'm in a room, in the dark talking about what might constitute information. Do you know what I mean?*

> Digital marketing professional – Agency 1

Relating to the leadership of the agency

A key theme that also emerged in the social space was that the goodwill and support of the executive leadership in relation to record keeping was key to its success. In the sites where the executive leadership of the agency provided these qualities for record keeping, it was considered more successful than in sites where they were not present. In agencies where executive support was forthcoming and record keeping was aligned to the values and purpose of the organisation by the leadership, staff generally followed organisational policy with good will and trying to do the right thing as close as possible to the events that occurred and record keeping was aligned to the values and purpose of the organisation by the leadership.

> *I think we've had some very good examples of leadership by the executive. So, there've been lots of examples where the senior management of the agency want*

to align good record keeping in a sense with the values of the organisation. So it's been something that has accelerated as a practice over the last five years, I would say, where I think the scale of operational change, the profile of the organisation's activities and some external challenges it's encountered have made it all the more important to go "Yup. We better know where that record is and we better have complete faith in its integrity. And we need it because we don't want to have any operational risk or reputational risk because we can't get our hands on and produce the things that we need to actually operate effectively or answer questions that we're being faced with."

Senior manager – Agency 2

The encouragement of a record keeping mindset and the rewarding of correct behaviours in relation to record keeping was also considered to be key. This was particularly evident in Agency 3, where the dominant professional culture of the legal professionals permeated across the agency.

I think the legal side of the business does very well in that space…and more generally the legally-trained folk within the agency, of which there's a very large proportion, have that discipline driven into them through university and their professional careers. So that idea that when something comes up, "Okay, I need to create file. I need to start putting these things onto the file," is sort of second nature to them.

Information technology professional – Agency 3

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the *relatings* through a practice theoretical lens. *Relatings* refers to those socio-political arrangements that enable or constrain characteristics of a practice in an organisation. The key findings of the chapter were that the across the public sector agencies there was a degree of understanding about both the wider role of records in government and society and the jurisdictional regime for record keeping, particularly where it affected the roles they perform. This 'records literacy' across agencies is an important and novel finding.

Importantly, this chapter also highlights the relationship between users' perceptions or definitions of records – how they related the term record to other similar concepts, including the archival and recordkeeping professions' definitions. These findings demonstrate that a 'shared practical understanding' of the term record may not exist and that the legal definition of record in the Archives Act may be almost unintelligible or at the very least unhelpful to public sector employees across the sites in the study.

The next chapter presents the findings in relation to the *doings* – the material-economic arrangements that affect how practices are executed within an organisational setting. Record keeping *doings* at a professional and organisational level are explored, as are the constraints and enablers of the activity of record keeping. The next chapter also highlights both the *doings* and *sayings* that are in conflict and the concept of 'significance' in the doing of recordkeeping.

Chapter 6 – The Doings

The previous chapter, the *relatings*, provided the broader context of the socio-political sphere. This included the relationships of individuals in the organisation to the jurisdictional policy context, the relationship between individual perceptions of the record and the jurisdictional and best practice recordkeeping definitions, as well as the relationships between the concepts of document, archive, record and information as seen by participants. In this chapter the *doings* in relation to records are outlined at both the broader public service and professional levels.

While the *sayings* presented a picture of quite different and distinct cultural-discursive arrangements within different institutions and within different disciplines, the *doings* the material and economic arrangements, like the *relating*s, were quite similar across the four case study agencies or *sites*. While the *doings* differed along professional lines, consistent themes around the *doings* of record keeping – the material-economic arrangements in the medium of activity and work and physical space/time – became apparent across the entire cohort of participants. In many respects these consistent findings in relation to actual practices of record keeping, based on the researcher's own understanding and experience as well as the literature, were not novel or unexpected. It is this researcher's view that the consistent socio-technical constraints across all agencies largely account for these similarities, that is, all participants were office-based workers who used similar (if not the same) technologies all of which had been deployed in similar ways, regardless of the *site*, with similar processes required to be executed to meet the whole of Australian Government recordkeeping objectives.

However, it is worth noting that while many of the findings were not unexpected, findings in relation to the 'significance' of records, and the practices which highlighted where the *doings* and *sayings* conflicted, present new and novel insights into the everyday practices of record keepers in the Australian Government.

The nexus of *doings*

All the participants in the study were office-based workers and the case study agencies were selected on the basis that there was some kind of digital recordkeeping program in place to support them in their work. As part of gaining an understanding of the participants' recordkeeping practices and how they identified which of the things they worked with were records and which were not, participants were ask to describe their role and the types of tasks they would do on a day-to-day basis. They were also asked what types of technologies they used to accomplish these tasks.

The participants involved in the study came from a range of different professions and their roles varied greatly. Within each agency the roles of certain participants were unique to that agency's function. Although even within the agency specific roles, there were some similarities in tasks in relation to those who held management roles. These included the generic answering of emails, preparing reports and budgets, providing advice as well as days filled with meetings.

> *Putting together the budget each year and doing reconciliation, completing reconciliations. Risk management is always at the forefront. A lot of risks, so there'd be a fair bit of responding to other compliance departments in meeting requests. So for audit, risk IT requirements and finance, you get a lot of "Can you check this document or these registers are completely up to date," and/or completing test plans for business continuity and things like that. And I would spend a lot of time talking to people, talking to other managers, with a view to assisting them and talking to my staff as a manager, more on a personal basis to make sure that they're achieving their goals and performing to the agency's standards.*

> Manager – Agency 2

> *Lots of meetings <laughs>. That's my KPI, how many meetings I can go to. What we do is – the most common task is providing guidance and consultancy, internally.*

> Business advisor – Agency 1

However, the similarities across all sites went beyond those in management roles. The consistent socio-technical environment across all sites created a similarity in many practices and also created common constraints regardless of the participants' profession. All participants used email and other office applications such as Microsoft Word as well as databases unique to their function. However, in all agencies, it was only the documents from office applications and emails that were required to be manually transferred by the participants to the corporate Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS). This set of practices created many similarities in the *doings* of record primarily because the technologies were deployed in similar ways across all sites.

Professional doings

While there similarities overall, there were some differences between professions. Some common practices in the everyday *doings* were obvious among participants of the same professions. Many of the participants were chosen for the study because they worked in corporate support roles and so they performed similar tasks within and across the case study agencies, even though there might have been differences in the content and the context of the work. This finding mirrors those findings in relation to the professional *sayings* discussed in Chapter 4.

Common themes across those with a legal background were the execution of tasks associated with the provision of legal advice, which included not only the implicit practices for record keeping within the legal profession discussed in Chapter 4, but explicit tasks associated with the provision of legal advice to the rest of the organisation.

> *I'm basically in-house counsel so we provide advice to anyone, really, in the agency; it could be the CEO, it could be senior managers, could be staff. We advise on a whole range of legal issues and problems in areas; so that can be contracts, freedom of information, and sometimes the Archives Act.*

> Legal professional – Agency 1

It's a broad variety, I suppose, of things. Pretty well everything has a legal connection. The primary role is being an in-house counsel providing advice on mainly administrative issues that are performed in the agency from time to time. Looking after any of the external legal things such as freedom of information, privacy, public interest disclosure, whistle-blower legislation, complaints, any investigation of anything that needs to be done at a more senior level.

Legal Manager – Agency 3

Common tasks associated with those in the finance profession included processing invoices as part of accounts payable processes and managing the general ledger and other accounts processes. Their daily tasks and associated record keeping were strongly associated with accountability as accounting for the expenditure of public money was seen as the main overarching objective of this function.

So, my team is a group of 10 people and we run the general ledger for the agency. We run all of the payments processes. We manage the asset register and we are involved in administration of project costing.

Finance professional – Agency 2

My current role is basically to look after the finances of the agency, to provide advice to senior management and the agency head on any financial matters, any finance matters that come down from the central government and that sort of thing, and also to act as the manager of the finance section of the agency… I sign off on the end of year financial statements.

Finance professional – Agency 3

A common theme across those participants with human resources background were tasks associated with the provision of internal learning and development and managing the lifecycle of an employee in the organisation.

The types of tasks that I am doing currently – it's the lifecycle of bringing people into the organisation, so sourcing candidates, assessing their suitability, and then bringing them into the organisation. I do talent management and assessment, so it's about pipelines for the organisation -what are the critical

roles we need today, who do we need in five years' time? … So typically I'm doing a lot of phone conversations, I'm doing partnering with the business, a lot of it is a desk-based, email focussed existence like a lot of bureaucracy.

Human resources professional – Agency 1

Mostly training, scheduling and training activities, liaising with the different stakeholders. We run the Graduate Program and the Traineeship Program as well. So we do all the activities around that.

Human resources professional – Agency 2

Those with an information technology background spent time developing, sourcing, testing and implementing technological solutions for their agencies

What do I do? So there are two halves to the equation, I suppose. There's sort of day-to-day service delivery, so ensuring the lights are on in an IT sense, ensuring that customer queries are being resolved. Obviously, I've got a team of staff that do that but I'm the point of escalation if those things aren't going well. … so this sort of what we call BAU … and the other half of the equation is the project piece of work. So that's predominantly around prioritisation, budgeting, ensuring that the project teams are making the right sorts of architectural decisions that lead us open for new opportunities rather than taking us down the cul-de-sacs. But as my kids point out to me, it basically boils down to a lot of meetings and a lot of emails.

Information technology professional – Agency 3

Because the management and implementation of technology was a strong focus in the information technology arena, another common theme across those participants with an information technology background was the use of project management methodologies and the accompanying documentary forms that were generated as part of those, such as project planning documentation, status reports, contracts and tenders as well as project closure reports.

In terms of producing, it would be largely documents coming out of those particular frameworks. So, I would be producing project plans, schedules. I

leverage a lot of white boarding so a lot of my documents are actually just pictures of white boards. Lots of informal sort of scheduling that we refer to as Crayon diagrams which is effectively a planning technique of blocking out particular activities. Yeah, in terms of things like spreadsheets, project plans.

<div align="right">Business project manager – Agency 2</div>

Hardcopy and digital doings

Participants were asked to identify what records they used on a day-to-day basis, whether they used paper or electronic records and whether or not they accessed historical records. They were also asked a number of questions about information they might use for research purposes, how often they might recall non-current records that were hardcopy paper files that were stored offsite.

Participants in the study across all sites rarely used hardcopy files in their day-to-day work. They worked digitally and relied on retrieving digital forms of information whether that was documents in shared drives, emails or data in various business systems.

We tend to operate almost 100 percent digitally. But there is I guess, a place for paper in my role. So, an example would be that the consent form that I signed off for you, obviously I've signed the paper copy, but we scan them in and it's electronic straightaway. And the paper copy just gets shredded 'cause we've actually now got record of that saved. From my perspective, I try and get everything electronic.

<div align="right">Information technology professional - Agency 1</div>

To give you a sort of context I made one physical file in the last 10 years ... I try to avoid it ... the agency is very digital in terms of its record capture which I think is really positive.

<div align="right">Business project manager – Agency 2</div>

In the same way, they preferred to use the digital records that were easily and quickly accessible to them rather than waiting for hardcopy or older information to be retrieved from offsite storage facilities. Generally, if the digital information was complete enough for their needs, participants would not revert to recalling archival or paper-based information as this took unnecessary time. Efficiency or speed was generally the overriding factor in this decision.

> *It will come down to how much I need it to make a decision. So if I feel that I'm in the position that I can make this decision either way, irrespective of the past, then I will just make it. But if you do have some context and at least then you can explain to the person after that why you, maybe, ignored the past or why you made a decision based on the past. If you can't access that information you have to go with your own skills because you may not have – there may not have been a past reason. Something might have just evolved.*

> Manger – Agency 2

> *There will be documentation produced around systems internally. But we also use a lot of online documentation, too. But in terms of say, going back through you know like archival style records that's something that I can't recall –*

> Information technology professional – Agency 1

There was also a view expressed that old hardcopy information is in some ways inaccessible as it is not as easily findable to those without the proper knowledge or access to records systems and that perhaps storing masses of hardcopy information in offsite repositories for so long was a waste of the Government's resources given its inability to be searched in the same that digital information can be.

> *We've got a lot of historical records and intelligence that has been archived and it's offsite. I don't think anyone is ever going to find what's in those files. So I don't know why the government is spending so much money in storing those documents ....*

> Business advisor – Agency 1.

Social media doings

Some similarities in the specific doings also related to particular systems and formats arose but this was most evident in relation to the use of social media across the sites. While one agency did not really use social media, three others did, with two of those using it quite extensively as they engaged collaboratively with the public on these platforms. The third agency used it conservatively and only as a push mechanism to notify its followers when it had published things on its website.

Some of the social media channels in use by the agencies used a combination of open and closed groups, while other channels are open to all. It was observed that while some issues can be resolved quickly online and the answers form part of that site, other answers require further research and a more considered response and so are taken offline and out of their original context. Agencies had in places processes for determining how they may deal with these issues.

> *In 140 characters we'll put it out factually and if there's a question then there's a decision gets made based on the matrix of, "Do we respond?" and then "Shall we take it offline or do we respond on the platform so that everyone can see?"*

> Digital marketing professional – Agency 1

This practice means that a series of interactions may begin online in one medium and then be resolved in another, so an online interaction may have a clear definable starting point but no clear end, which presents challenges for ensuring that a full record is kept of interactions with members of public when they may be spread across disparate systems and platforms. The interactive, evolving and experienced-based nature of the web is blurring the lines between what was once a simple and straightforward business transaction (using email, letter or even business to business transactions) and 'interactions' which use Web 2.0 and other technologies.

There are also challenges for managing records in this area in that they are effectively stored in an online or third-party system outside the firewall. So, keeping the agency's own record of this activity can be problematic and involve the use of specialist tools as the third-party provider cannot be relied upon to maintain the agency record.

From our website, you can go to Twitter, you can go to LinkedIn, whatever the key platform is of interest. And we have that in all of that entirety captured. And we would separately have the pre-published version of each thing to be published. So we would have the tweet and image associated with the tweet, with part of evidence of approval, and captured and put in the EDRMS and then in its published form online, captured as part of a capture of the website.

<div align="right">Senior manager – Agency 2</div>

Enabling and constraining recordkeeping

Some enablers and constraints for recordkeeping were touched upon in the previous Chapter, the *relatings*, in terms of those social behaviours and the leadership stance of those within the sites towards recordkeeping and how this affected its implementation. However, the majority of the enablers and constraints identified by the study were those in the physical space and those material-economic arrangements that affect how record keeping is conducted in the case study *sites*.

The enablers and constraints to the *doings* of recordkeeping are like two sides of the same coin and were fairly consistent across all of the participant agencies regardless of their level of recordkeeping maturity. While all of case study agencies had managed to implement a central Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) it was not the only repository for document-based records. There were a number of places in each agency that document-based records could reside in addition to the business systems that employees of those agencies used.

While participants talked about their everyday work practices as part of the hour-long interviews, in general they did not talk about constraints or enablers to the recordkeeping part of their work unless prompted. At the end of their interviews participants were asked a number of questions about whether recordkeeping was embedded into their work processes, how they thought their agency supported and encouraged good recordkeeping; how easy they found it to access information and the role of records in information-sharing. They were then specifically asked to identify what worked well in terms of records management in their agency, and if they could improve one thing – what would it be?

The enablers and constraints have been grouped into a number of themes outlined below. These are those related to: doing digital and the digital realm itself; creating and capturing information; retrieving and accessing information; and the records management systems themselves.

Doing digital

Overall, participants viewed going digital and the process of digital transition for recordkeeping primarily as a positive move with some agencies completely digitising old manual paper-based processes, such as accounts payable. They had encouraged their suppliers and others they deal with to no longer provide paper invoices to them and provide them only in their digital form. For the remaining few or ad hoc receipt of paper invoices they had implemented scanning of the paper and converting it to digital form. Scanning and then destroying the paper original in accordance with the guidance provided by the National Archives of Australia was common practice across the *sites*.

> *I would say 95% would be digital these days. And even if we get hard copy documents, we tend to digitise them and we don't retain the originals.*

> Manager – Agency 2

The agencies that participated were also taking steps to enable digital authorisation of all sorts of daily activities such as the signing of timesheets and other processes that might have once required something to be printed and signed.

> *So rather than getting people to print things, often bringing them in for me to sign, we're sufficing with digital signatures. The system has workflow built into it full authorisations of things and … I get an email advising me of that which supplements the fact that it's sitting in a cue in the system. It works in the theory that you might not always be logged into the system. You log in, you can get approved it, or decline it, or whatever you want to do with it. So, we're moving that way.*

> Information technology professional – Agency 3

There was also recognition that working digitally enabled collaboration and information sharing across the enterprise quickly and efficiently and in a way that the previous

paper-based world did not. This was especially true of those agencies who had many offices across Australian and even globally.

> *I find that as a distributed agency with lots of different offices it's a lot easier to share information through sharing documents electronically. I can't imagine if you were a department where everything was paper-based and someone asked for something, they had to scan it and email, or God forbid, post it to you.*

<div align="right">Business advisor – Agency 1</div>

There was also a recognition that working digitally was quite different to way one used to keep records in the paper world. A shift in thinking and practice was required in order to make the most of the technologies and opportunities in the digital world.

> *Not like when it was paper, you'd wait 'til the whole project was finished and then put a big clamp into records and then deal with it. Now it becomes more of a living document as it goes. Obviously, some people are going to be better than others at getting it in there quicker, but in our organisation it is encouraged to get it in there as soon as possible.*

<div align="right">Manager – Agency 2</div>

Across the case study *sites*, there were some clear examples of good record keeping where the use of the various technologies had been utilised to their fullest extent and work practices had been made easier by putting in some effort to revamp practices for the digital age. By being disciplined in their own practices, participants had aligned their own business work practices with the recordkeeping process themselves and used the functions of the technology, like version control, for their benefit.

One participant also noted that it was a mistake to think that the solution lay in the technology alone and that looking at the practice as a whole was required in order take best advantage of the opportunities in the digital environment. By spending some time to think about how they worked and how the processes worked together they got significant benefits from that little piece of process re-engineering. Where agencies had built seamless digital recordkeeping into the process it worked well.

It's about setting up your tools to make that easier and a lot of staff struggle with actually setting up their own infrastructure. So, they always blame the technology as not being "Oh I can't find it" or "I can't do it." But it's because they haven't invested the time upfront to set up the infrastructure and I was always like that. Until I set up the infrastructure, I found it a real burden, but now I've got all the infrastructure because I've done training and stuff. I've got all the infrastructure set up; so the minute I need to save something or find something, it's at my fingertips. So it's actually really, really convenient.

Business advisor – Agency 1

Creating and capturing

Participants noted that the more structured activities lent themselves to embedding the recordkeeping in the process more easily than those that were less structured. Participants who participated in rather routine and repetitive structured processes were more likely to state that the recordkeeping was routine, especially if they had done the process before and were aware that at certain points records would be needed. Ad-hoc processes or those that are more complex and less routine are less easy to have set of routine rules around and so might not be captured well from the get go – they might be more easily captured once a process has concluded.

Record keeping is probably a mixture of routine and non-routine. The routine most certainly is the recording of the financial transactions. That's routine. If somebody enters something into our financial management system, they automatically save them as a supporting document. Probably the non-routine would be emails. So when you're reading, sometimes you have to think and say, "Well, is this something I can just discard or is this something that I really mean to keep because it's a record of something that's important?"

Finance professional – Agency 3

However, by far the most problematic issue when it came to capturing records was email. Email was seen as the worst and most difficult issue to deal with, primarily because of its sheer volume and the manual effort required to manually push this to the various repositories deployed across the *sites* by the agencies concerned.

Retrieving and accessing

The disparate nature of various electronic systems deployed across the sites of practice and the non-integration of these was mentioned by a number of participants as a constraining factor, as well as the duplication of information across these systems and the silos of information that these perpetuated. An enterprise search and integration of systems were seen as enablers in this instance although there was some caution in relation to enterprise search tools and search within various systems in general, particularly where there might be duplication among the various silos of information. In this sense greater access and retrievability may not necessarily produce greater reliability as one might not be sure which is the final version and the authoritative record.

> *When the search thing works, it's fantastic. I'm looking for something and I just put in a word, and I get this presentation that saved me hours and hours of work. So it's fantastic when that happens, and I wish we could put a chip in everyone's head and say, "That's how it needs to be done." And from next Monday onwards, things are gonna work like that.*

<div align="right">

Business advisor – Agency 1

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> *I look forward to a day when enterprise search is just across every application that we have and it is a good search*

<div align="right">

Communications professional – Agency 3

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> *One of my challenges is finding something on the system – finding it is a challenge in the first place and finding the relevant, for example, version of whatever is another thing because when you do a search it throws up all sorts of things, you know, it gives all sorts of search results*

<div align="right">

Legal professional – Agency 1

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Security was also seen in some instances as a constraint to the accessing of information for both informational and decision-making purposes. Each of the agencies had different security models when it came to their information systems, with some more constrained by the operation of the Protective Security Policy Framework and its accompanying

guidance such as the Information Security Manual, than others. Where possible, agencies had applied an open model of security and access to enable access rather than restrict it, although in some cases the organisational culture itself did not support this type of model and preferred to have restricted access and silos of information.

> *We have too much that can't be found because the content owners have assigned unhelpfully narrow access. So, where they should've been opened by default and closed as required, they started out being closed by default and then opening selectively. And so that inherent desire to protect information has had a whole lot of legacy challenges. And so there'll be a perception that the system isn't good at searching as opposed to "No. You've never been allowed the access that" ... our legacy challenge is actually getting the appropriately broad access in the background.*

> Senior manager – Agency 2

Consistency in process was identified also as a key enabler or blocker to the retrieval and access and there were a number of issues that arose around this theme. Across all sites the inconsistent use of naming conventions and other processes was a key issue.

> *I think, first of all, to be able to retrieve records, we should name them properly. And even though there is a – some sort of naming convention in the agency I don't think that it's followed very well. So people complain a lot that we store everything in the system where we can never find it. So the search functionality doesn't work, but our information manager is always talking about that if you do the right meta-tagging, and do this, and you give it the right things, and so, because people aren't following it, they can't find it. .... So, I would say that we are now getting good at storing information. But I don't they're getting better at storing it properly.*

> Business advisor – Agency 1

Saving too much of the wrong information or the low value information was also identified as an issue in this regard. With one participant highlighting that focus should be on saving the right things not everything in order to make the meaningful and useful information more accessible

The CRM is fantastic because it can give us so much insight into our dealings with businesses. But again, the problem occurs is when you're trying to retrieve, it's rubbish in, rubbish out. So it's the quality of information you put in is what you're gonna get out.

<div align="right">Business advisor – Agency 1</div>

One of the things identified as a positive in relation to consistency of process was that being in small teams in which the procedures were well known and consistently adopted by one individual or a few individuals aided both the accessibility and retrievability of the right records.

That we have a small team. I think, in the HR team, there's a good discipline about the system and the files. I think what we have on our shared drive is a little less disciplined but it hasn't mattered because we're a small team and each person looks after their own area, and they can pretty much guide someone else if someone else has to cover for them where they put everything. But that's not ideal in my experience because I would like a system where anyone coming in should be able to pick it up and know what you've done and how to do it from here onwards.

<div align="right">Human resources professional – Agency 3</div>

In our team, there's basically just two of us, my manager and myself. We've got a couple of secondees as well they're just short term. At the moment it works because there are only two of us and if he can't find anything, I'll just find it, I think I know roughly where it is. <laughs> It's not great, I know.

<div align="right">Legal professional – Agency 1</div>

And finally, a key issue that hindered accessibility was not having everything in the agency centrally located in the EDRMS or appropriate metadata in a common structure.

If we had a comprehensive, corporation-wide document management system which had metadata attached to every electronic document, it would make records management easier … I mean I was stunned when I came here and I come from law firms where every single document has masses amounts of

metadata, every document has its own unique identifying number and here, we just create shared drives. We call them miscellaneous. And we shove documents in them and there is no way that you're going to find important things unless you created a structure in your shared drive that is meaningful. ... So we could implement better systems across the corporation.

<div align="right">Legal professional – Agency 4</div>

Records management systems

Overall there was a recognition that the EDRMS used by the various agencies (these were different across all four agencies) provided a platform for a whole of enterprise repository, but in many instances there were some aspects of the systems themselves that were incongruous with the digital work of today. However, overwhelmingly the actual availability of a single repository for corporate records and the availability of such a facility for ensuring the continuity of corporate memory was seen as a positive thing.

I'd say simply keeping records has worked. Both of us come from the NGO sector where I have worked for organisations, where going more than a year or two years back, there is absolutely nothing. There are no records which is immensely frustrating as you can imagine. ... I think this team and the agency has done a very good job of keeping records of everything.

<div align="right">Legal professional – Agency 3</div>

However, there was a recognition that, in addition to things such as inconsistency in process and lack of accessibility, it was the software systems themselves and their perceived lack of user-friendliness that came in for the largest criticisms.

The software is probably the biggest hindrance to – actually most organisations that I've worked in the hindrance is the records management tool.

<div align="right">Communications professional – Agency 3</div>

Some of these were to do with the software and its configuration in the agency itself, rather than the fault of the software, and others were to do with the non-user orientation

of the systems that were built from a recordkeeping perspective rather than a user perspective. As outlined previously, these configurations were also the cause of the similarity of the practices in many cases, as the socio-technical constraints imposed by these systems required manual effort on behalf of the user to "push" documents and emails to these systems.

By far the largest issue for most participants was email. In three of the sites the capture of email was not integrated from their email client directly with the records management systems. This required a greater degree of manual intervention by agency staff to capture the email records into the recordkeeping system (and in one *site* participants even needed to print the email to PDF format first before it could be saved into the agency EDRMS). One participant acknowledged that an EDRMS system he had used at a former agency was difficult to use, but while it may have had its flaws in terms of usability it made some aspects of the process around email easier than his current situation.

> *I mean, I've come from an organisation where we had an EDRMS and that training was probably the worst four hours of my life, but at the same time it was handy…. I could just click a button in Outlook and it saved the email automatically to a predestined location. And it was simple.*

<div align="right">Digital marketing professional – Agency 1</div>

In talking about the frustrations in relation to email management one participant noted that current systems are not just smart enough yet to assist us properly and especially with the volume of email that participants dealt with on a day-to-day basis. She noted that with the rise of the use of artificial intelligence technologies those days may not be far away and the whole process of email capture could be machine enabled and automatic.

> *We haven't bridged that gap yet of seamless capture from email to records management just yet. That sort of smartness where the system will go, "Here's the title, here's the author, here's the date, I've read through this document and here're your keywords".*

<div align="right">Communications professional – Agency 3</div>

Other participants that noted that regardless of the format involved, recordkeeping overall is not as easy as it should be, and if the systems or configurations they had in their agencies were more user-oriented, that in itself would be an incentive for people to be better record keepers.

> *The way it can be done could be a whole lot more friendly. If that happens then I think, and not just me, a whole lot of other people, will be much more inclined to be better record keepers.*

> Senior manager – Agency 3

Lack of use of the infrastructure consistently or inability to use it to its full potential was also cited as an issue that, if addressed, would make the corporate recordkeeping system more useful.

> *I just think we don't engage with the potential of the infrastructure we've got to maximise and get the power out of the information. So, the example is everyone is putting stuff in, but is it being captured or structured in a way which facilitates quick interrogation and access to what you want? And I think that would be where I would say the functionality is all there but organisationally we don't have the behaviours or the capability to exploit it to its full potential.*

> Human resources professional – Agency 1

There were also clear indications that along with the implementation of the records management system appropriate education and support needed to be provided and a good helpdesk and service from the relevant internal team was also key in enabling the ease of implementing the practices organisationally. This also included having appropriate guidance on document naming and other practices that supported good recordkeeping. Although there was some recognition by participants that if the function was not well supported or funded within the agency this was difficult to achieve even with the best of intentions.

> *I've used this EDRMS before at other agencies, but at that agency, it was optional and the uptake was pretty low. So, here, it's become a central system for people to use with a lot of training and education and support services. And I*

think without that, the uptake wouldn't be as high as it is at the moment. I think there's a great emphasis in education – aimed at a cultural shift. So, what I mean by that is that, with this agency, everyone knows it's important and it needs to be done, and it's accepted as opposed to unmonitored and optional.

Digital commerce professional – Agency 2

The question of 'significance'

As outlined in the *sayings* and the *relatings*, there was a recognition by participants that not everything was a record. The definition in the *Archives Act 1983* (the Archives Act) was seen as outdated, too broad and all-encompassing to be practical on a day to day basis and even the definition in the International Standard on records management, while a little better and simpler to understand, was still considered to be a bit too subjective, limiting or compliance-based. The participants did not find these definitions useful to assist them on a day-to-day basis to determine what a record is and then in turn what out of the mountain of information they dealt with on a day to day basis needed to be kept. That process was carried out by them as part of their work activities as part of their work.

> *Any APS employee signs off on how they will deal with information but I think it's not consistently applied and there is a lot of individual judgement about what is a corporate piece of information and what is a transactional piece of information that once you have transacted it does it need to be kept or retained in some way.*

Human resources professional – Agency 1

Participants across all sites, as outlined in the *relatings*, clearly also differentiated between the concepts of document and record. However, analysis of their actual *doings* shows that there is a clear distinction between what they might intellectually state or know is a record or document and what they then actually do in practice. A number of the participants identified that there is quite a distinction between the documentation

generated as part of the business of government and what actually makes it onto 'the record'. This process focused around the question of the record's significance.

Participants as part of their work practices talked about instances where they would not and could not put everything on the corporate record. Commonly participants understood that things that were not 'final' or the end product, such as drafts and working papers, were not considered important records and did not need to be captured unless they themselves were significant in some way (e.g. a draft that was annotated by a senior executive and completely changed the direction and development of a document). This accords with the established principle of a 'Normal Administrative Practice' (NAP)' under the Archives Act.[13]

However, the participants' practices went well beyond the realms of what would be considered in recordkeeping terms the province of NAP. As part of their activities, participants across all case study agencies were saving on to the record only significant records. While the Archives Act definition may not resonate with the participants, a key notion around the concept of record within that definition is that of significance. It could therefore almost be stated that in their way, by making judgements about significance, the participants were, without realising it, carrying out compliant record keeping. How significance was judged was described in in the following way by one participant:

> *That's 20 years of public service. You get a feeling of the weight and impact and when you understand what's required to be made a record and the consequence of what you're working on as well, so there're some thresholds that you probably internalise. Sometimes one of those is – is this thing that I'm setting up, will someone wonder at some stage how it all came about and why those decisions were made? So you have that legislative requirement that we work under, you have that organisational requirements to what our records*

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[13] Normal administrative practice (NAP) is outlined in section 24 of the Archives Act and three of the case study agencies provided formal guidance on the implementation of the NAP within their agency, with 2 having a formal separate NAP policy and guidance.

management policy is, and then you have that kindness to people in the future when they're trying to backtrack and figure out how this came about.

<div align="right">Communications professional – Agency 3</div>

Participants across the sites when talking about their *doings*, noted that in line with their internal thresholds they were quite selective about what was chosen to go on the record. That is not to say that they were intentionally omitting records from the official record, because the documents themselves existed and could be found, but if it they were required to be moved from one location to another and a conscious decision needed to be made about formal capture then there was generally a selective process undertaken by them as the one responsible for capturing these items into the recordkeeping system and this usually centred on the significance of the item concerned.

I think the importance most certainly would be something that comes to you at forefront because you really do need to know what sort of evidence you may have to retain or you may have to produce at the latest stage. And so if you are dealing with something that is minor, you may not have to keep an elaborate record, but if you do make a major decision, you most certainly be in your interest or interest of your organisation to have a proper record of all the thought process or the decision-making processes that went through when you made a decision. And in my context, it's mainly to do with a payment of the money obviously.

<div align="right">Finance professional – Agency 3</div>

Well, I suppose I would just use a self-assessment, look at the content, the nature of the information and whether it warrants to be recorded or do I just go to the delete button. And I suppose some of the questions are like, do we need it for future reference? Will this impact other people, other parts of the business? And do we need to keep it for the next five years?

<div align="right">Digital commerce professional – Agency 2</div>

This theme also presented itself in that some participants talked about making sure that the overall fidelity, rather than the full fidelity of the record, was there. This practice of ensuring the main items were captured rather than every single record, was the done by most of the participants and presented itself in relation to not just the email, but also other processes that might generate large volumes of documentation, such as projects. The retrospective need to understand what a project had delivered did not rely on keeping all project documentation, just the key outputs of that process.

> *For me the record or the set of records should be sufficient to paint a picture of what it was that was being done at the time but it doesn't necessarily have to have the full fidelity of everything that was done at the time. So from looking at a project, it would be as to say that the initial statement of works/contract, any contract variations, and then the final deliverables required under the contract. If I'm looking at a services contract and we've got, and we've got a heap of them as you would appreciate, it would be the initial contract, the monthly or quarterly performance review meeting minute/reports that are required under the contract and that's really it because we'd get to the end of the contract. We either renew or we don't.*

> Information technology professional – Agency 3

This process of selecting or determining the significance of the record was particularly evident when business processes were not highly structured and routine. If the work activity being undertaken was ad-hoc, infrequent or unstructured then this process relied more on the individual judgements of the participants. A structured and routine process, such as the accounts payable process, lent itself more easily to incorporating record keeping routinely – if not every day then on a regular weekly or fortnightly basis. Ad-hoc processes are less able to be structured this way, and so rely far more on the intervention of those performing the activity at hand. The process was also used to manage information overload in that sense also and were seen as practices that were more efficient by potentially also eliminating the need to capture other records by creating a summary record of the event.

> *You could write an email for a particular purpose, but with a few tweaks it could make a really good addition to your record so it's just knowing that if I'm*

already writing this, if I just add a few more bits of information about that decision made by who on this date, it constructs something that with an to telling a story, means you then don't need to go back and save five other separate emails

<div align="right">Communications professional – Agency 3</div>

This area was not the only area of practice in the digital world where the doings and sayings conflicted. The study also identified some areas that related to ways in which the digital world and hardcopy doings presented some conflicts for participants.

Digital vs hardcopy doings

While in the *sayings* chapter (Chapter 4) there was strong recognition that all forms of electronic media are indeed records, there was in some cases a conflict when it actually came to what the participants actually did. When it came to the doing of recordkeeping some themes emerged about the conflict between working with paper and electronic forms and the constraints and benefits of each.

In general, it could be said that some participants noticed that the older generation preferred to do things in paper, even if they eventually only kept the electronic version. There were also strong personal preferences for doing some things in paper, such as research, among the participants. Although a number of participants did refer to the fact that it was easier for them to flip through large documents or documentation in its paper rather than its digital form.

It's background experience, personal preference, that having the massive things set out on the floor and the desk and as I'm working through them, is it's conceptually easy to have the physical copy there to actually pick it up and organise it with that.

<div align="right">Strategic planning professional – Agency 4</div>

This was perhaps because they had always done it this way or had learnt their professional skills when electronic documents were not quite so common or legally acceptable as they are now. This was particularly prevalent among the legal practitioners, many of whom had completed their training prior to the introduction of many of the electronic legal systems and resources around today.

> *There were some documents which I thought were key to that meeting which I wanted to refer to quickly and easily during the course of the meeting if I needed to, and so I printed those and I took them into the meeting with me, but I also took my tablet in so I could access any other document that was on the file, and during the course of the meeting I needed to do both. But that file, in its entirety, was electronic. So that is probably more of a reflection of my own personal preferences. I certainly could've done everything electronically if I wanted to, but I chose not to for speed and convenience…. I think overtime that will change and my legal assistant who's a young lawyer, looks at me aghast when I said, "Will you print that off please." So that's a generational thing.*

> Legal manager – Agency 3

Others used paper as a mechanism for overcoming the failings of the electronic world, in particular the number of disparate systems or locations that information could be stored in. Creating a paper file allowed them to create a chronological record in one place that might otherwise be stored across repositories. In this sense, this reversion to a paper process overcame the barriers or constraints in that particular agency of working in a digital world and having to store information in disparate systems and therefore not easily bringing it to one central place.

> *I don't create paper files, although I did the other day as I got a case that I've got to keep records on so there's a need to keep everything in one spot. The problem with some of our system is that to actually get the whole picture you need to deal with people personally and there might be several sources of input or information, such as databases, the intranet and correspondence in email. So in this particular case, I created a paper-based file because it was something*

that the agency really needs to keep good records on and we need to have the records around.

<p style="text-align:right;">International marketing specialist – Agency 1</p>

It was also noted that at times certain types of communication have unwritten protocols associated with it them that might still require the use of a letterhead and signature or the formality of a memorandum, rather than an email communication. In one agency there was still a strong tendency to write more formal notes for certain things rather than sending an email.

I think there's a bit of a tendency to think that e-mails are not really records as much as they could be. There's a bit of a practice around here to write formal notes. So I think that the same information but written in a nice, fancy way in a note is much more likely to be interpreted as a record and something worth keeping than basically the same information written in a more informal way but in an e-mail.

<p style="text-align:right;">Human resources professional – Agency 2</p>

Another participant noted that when agency heads communicate with their counterparts in other parts of the Australian Public Service an email is not considered formal enough even though it might have the same legal validity. It is still a practice to write and send a letter with a 'wet signature', even though in many cases that letter might be sent as a scanned attachment to an email rather than actually posted.

The CEO sends lots of things out via email to other heads of organisations, though within the public service, there's still that need for it to be a letter with a wet signature.

<p style="text-align:right;">Communications professional - Agency 3</p>

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the *doings*, those material-economic arrangements that enable or constrain the performance of practices in an organisation. The key findings of the chapter are that the across the public sector agencies is that the sites in the study operate

in a predominantly digital way and there is consistency of doings across mediums and professions within the Australian public sector. Key enablers and constraints of record keeping practice, including the records management systems themselves, are also identified.

This chapter also highlights how *doings* and *sayings* conflict at times and that in order to get around some of the limitations of the digital world or to adhere to long established protocols, hardcopy record creation and keeping practices prevail. Importantly, the chapter also highlights the concept of significance in relation to the practice of record keeping. This important and novel finding demonstrates how records creators in organisations make determinations that curate the organisational record and that the determination of what is considered significant for longer term preservation is not the sole province of the professional recordkeeper as it might once have been in a paper age.

The next chapter discusses the findings of this study in relation to the previous literature on records and recordkeeping in organisational settings and the findings from previous ethnographic and case studies of organisational recordkeeping practices. It also presents the implications of these findings for theory and practice and discusses the benefits of using the practice theoretical approach as a framework for the study of recordkeeping.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

The findings of the study outlined in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are reviewed in this chapter in the context of previous research into records and recordkeeping that was outlined Chapter 2, the literature review.

First, the contribution of the study to the recordkeeping body of knowledge via the use of the practice theoretical approach is discussed. The importance of this paradigmatic[14] shift in viewing records and record keeping as social practices and the way in which this approach allows a more nuanced and holistic view of the practice of recordkeeping is highlighted and illustrated.

Next, the knowledge generated and shared in the practice of record keeping by those outside the archival and recordkeeping professions is explored, including how records are perceived and defined and what knowledge is required by public sector employees to participate in the practice of record keeping across the Australian Government. Finally, the implications of these findings for recordkeeping theory and practice are presented.

The practice theoretical approach

This study contributes to the discussion in recordkeeping theory and practice by using a practice theoretical approach to explore the perceptions of records and record keeping within Australian Government agencies that are held by those outside the archival and recordkeeping professions. By extending the use of a practice theoretical approach to explore recordkeeping within and across organisational settings, innovative and novel insights have been gained about record keeping practices in organisations. A practice theoretical approach represents a paradigmatic shift away from the 'records mind' that sees records management in organisational settings as the management of mere artefacts

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[14] A paradigm, according to Thomas Kuhn (1962), is the shared view of a research community to which all members are loyal, and within which new data is eagerly fitted. A shift in the paradigm represents a major rupture with past thought.

(Upward et al. 2018) and towards a view that positions records and record keeping as social practices.

Using a practice theoretical approach to examine record keeping in organisations allows us to view record keeping as a social information practice, rather than the management of artefacts. According to Lloyd (2011), a practice is

> an array of information related activities and skills, constituted justified and organised through the arrangements of a social site, and mediated socially and materially with the aim of producing shared understanding and mutual agreement about ways of knowing and recognising how performance is enacted, enabled and constrained in collective situated action (Lloyd 2011, p. 285).

The value of practice theory to the recordkeeping profession as a way of seeing a more nuanced view of recordkeeping and archival practitioners' own practices has been demonstrated (Ivanov 2017). The utilisation of a contemporary practice theoretical approach brings new and innovative insights to the broader organisational practice of record keeping in four key ways:

- Practices consist of equally interconnected elements
- Practices are social
- Practices are socio-material
- Practices have ecologies and architectures

These will now be discussed.

Practices consist of equally interconnected elements

Social practices consist of several interconnected elements: forms of bodily and mental activities, 'things' and their use, and a background knowledge (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow 2009). They form a block whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements (Reckwitz 2002). The practice as a nexus of doings and sayings (Schatzki 1996) or as a bundle of *doings*, *sayings* and *relatings* (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008) is not only understandable to the agent/s who carry it out, but also to potential observers. It is "a routinized way in which bodies are moved,

objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (Reckwitz 2002, p. 250).

It is key to practice theory that when 'things' are necessary elements of certain practices, human–human relations cannot claim any priority over human–non-human relations. The stable relation between agents and things within certain practices reproduces the social, as does the stable relation between several agents in other practices (Reckwitz 2002). This sits in contrast to theoretical frameworks and models of recordkeeping, particularly the life-cycle model, which clearly privileges the thing (i.e. the record) over the human elements of the practices.

As the predominant model of recordkeeping for most of the 20th century, the records life-cycle model is entirely object focussed, and the development of a discipline around this model can account for its current lack of a user-centric focus. Even the Records Continuum Model (Upward 1996, 1997), while it acknowledges agents, organisations and objects as elements of recordkeeping practice, has favoured a more artefactual view. The Records Continuum Model's interpretation and application has mainly been limited to the recognition that records, in order to be properly managed in this digital age, need structures for their management to be put in place at capture and then utilised during their time as active records so that they may survive as records of continuing value (or archives) (McKemmish 1997)..

This limited interpretation and application of the Records Continuum model has been further exacerbated by the emphasis within the model on information as an authoritative resource. The concept of information as an authoritative resource stems from Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984), and emphasises the role of records in maintaining social structures across time and space and consequently de-emphasises to some degree the role of records in current use, which is seen as the province of information as an allocative resource. This emphasis on the preservation of records beyond the immediate context to their role in maintaining social structures positions continuum thinking and practice more at the societal, rather than the street (or site) level. It has also assisted in reducing the archival and recordkeeping professions' attention to the human agencies involved in recordkeeping.

The primacy of the concept of authoritative information also permeates the fledgling concept of recordkeeping informatics (Oliver et al. 2009; Oliver et al. 2010; Oliver et al. 2014; Oliver et al. 2012; Upward et al. 2013, 2018). The authors of this concept note there is a still dominant 'records mind' within the recordkeeping discipline which turns recordkeepers into meaningless janitors because they concentrate their attention on the management of records as end products .Instead of this mindset, they promote the 'recordkeeping mind' that "puts the process ahead of the thing" (Upward et al. 2018, p. 57). Recordkeeping informatics, therefore, is "an approach to records management that focusses on the processes that produce records rather than the management of them as end products" (Oliver et al. 2014, p. 1). As such it removes the shifts the attention from the records or information objects to the environment within which they are situated.

However, while recordkeeping informatics provides a methodical framework for authoritative information resource management (Upward et al. 2018), it does not help us to understand how the individual, social and artefactual aspects of recordkeeping practices are equally important and related parts of the whole in a digital world. By removing all emphasis on the artefact itself, the authors of the concept of recordkeeping informatics have also removed any focus on the human–human and human–object relationships that constitute a practice. Focussing on the separate constructs of organisational culture and business process analysis as proxies for these relationships does not reveal the full extent of social practices in an organisational setting and how these are interconnected.

In addition, as outlined the literature review (chapter 2), there is limited research into record keeping in originating agencies (Foscarini 2010).Where practices of record keeping in organisational settings have been explored, studies have generally concentrated on isolated elements of a social practice, for example, information culture, records creation and use practices, or technology use (e.g. Borglund & Oberg 2008; Foscarini 2009; Wright 2013). Only a few notable exceptions, those ethnographic studies of record keeping discussed in the literature review, have approached records and record keeping holistically in organisational settings by taking into account both the *sayings* and the *doings* (e.g. Ilerbaig (2010); Shankar (2004); Trace (2002); Yakel (2001). The majority of these ethnographic studies have been single cases in a particular type of professional setting e.g. nursing, scientific labs, law enforcement and

not comparative *site* or case studies like this study in an office environment. The exception is the study by Trace (2002), which as a comparative case study examines themes across a number of different law enforcement settings. As a result, like this study, it is able to offer insights about the nature and process of record creation that extend beyond the *sites* of practice examined in that cross-case analysis.

While these ethnographic studies have demonstrated some attempt to move the disciplines away from the object-centred models of the past and consider a more balanced approach to record keeping by focussing on the human elements of the process, this researcher contends that a practice theoretical approach provides a framework to explore record keeping in holistic fashion that acknowledges that all elements of practices are equal parts of an interconnected whole and that neither the environment (*site*), the record creator, nor the record (object) should take precedence. This represents a paradigmatic shift for professions who have always considered the record to be of primary importance.

Practices are social

Nicolini (2012) encourages us not to use the phrase "social practice" (Nicolini 2012, p. 94) as he believes this phrase is a tautology. However, it is the placement of the social in practices that distinguishes practice theory from other cultural theories that conceptually site the social in mental qualities, discourses or interactions (Reckwitz 2002). Practices are socially, rather than individually, constituted (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009); they are "a 'type' of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales and at different points of time and is carried out by different body/minds" (Reckwitz 2002, p. 250).

The social is central to Lloyd's (2010) concept of information practice, as the experience of information can only occur in relation to other people and it can only be fully explored by examining the interactions of a setting's members (Lloyd 2010). Record keeping like other information practices is a social practice.

Further, analysis of the ways that information practices are embedded in social groups encompasses a wider investigation of information activities than can be accommodated by looking at individual behaviours (Irvine-Smith 2017a). Looking at the social can show not only how information is gathered, sought and selectively shared, but also the

ways in which it is hidden, forgotten, withheld, or even not noticed (Dourish & Anderson 2006).

A practice theoretical approach allows us to see that records and record keeping practices, like other information practices, are shaped not only by the context or site to which they are tied, but also according to the social, textual and embodied practices that are valued and agreed upon by people who participate in the practices of the context. These in turn enable or constrain the construction of a narrative that resonates between members of that workplace or site and which in turn is used to align newcomers. Record keeping is a collaborative practice produced by a range of social activities that interweave and generate a way of knowing and acting that is particular and localised. (Lloyd 2011)

Practices are socio-material

A contemporary practice view, such as the one pursued in this study, acknowledges that all organisational practices are bound with materiality and are integral to it, not incidental or intermittent (Orlikowski 2007). Viewing humans and non-humans as separate entities may suffice for analytical purposes but in practice they are fully intertwined – "There exists no relation whatsoever between 'the material' and 'the social world' because it is this very division which is a complete artefact" (Latour 2005, p. 75). However, it is not generally acknowledged within the recordkeeping disciplines that information technologies play an active role in mediating the discourses and interactions that are part of meaning creation and can change perceptions of records and recordkeeping through socio-material 'assemblages' (Suchman 2007) or 'entanglements'(Orlikowski 2007). Generally, the role of information technology in records management within organisational settings, like many other business processes, is only considered when a particular technology event occurs, such as the impact of the implementation of an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) or other business systems (Foscarini 2010).

Viewing practices socio-materially allows us to see that these systems and technologies, together with human agents, constitute socio-material entanglements (Orlikowski 2007) that not only mediate the relations enacted and the accountabilities considered significant, but also the knowledge produced (Feldman & Orlikowski 2011; Scott &

Orlikowski 2009, 2012). This perspective is reflected in the findings of this study, with none of the participants excluding various forms of digital records from their thinking entirely when it came to describing what they considered a record, thus suggesting that records creators in our digital world have moved beyond totally associating the term record with the hardcopy world. By using these technologies to create records, the participants of the practice know and understand that records are digital. This finding sits in contrast to the findings of Lemieux (2001), who in her study of Jamaican banking records, noted that some users were unable to associate the term record with anything beyond the hardcopy world. However, it is also paradoxically consistent with Lemieux's finding in that the knowledge produced is mediated by the practices of users.

Practices have ecologies and architectures

Practices might be understood as living things connected to each another in *ecologies of practices* in the same way that different species co-exist in an ecosystem (Kemmis et al. 2012). Practices are mutually interdependent, each influencing and being influenced by others. The ecologies of practices that constitute contemporary public sector organisations and functions are vast, existing both on the large scale of historical time (e.g. in the evolution of the Australian public sector) and on the smaller scale of the day-to-day and moment-to-moment interactions of the working lives of governments, their agencies, and the communities they serve (Kemmis et al. 2012).

The recordkeeping professional is generally accustomed to thinking more in terms of the relationships between the functions or processes of organisations than about the relationships between the practices themselves. The concept of an ecology of practices provides a theoretical framework for exploring the relationships between practices in more detail and for understanding what it means that record keeping is a dispersed practice that is in an interdependent relationship with all other practices such that without it all other performances and practices within an organisational setting cannot be accomplished or managed.

From the practitioner perspective, *ecologies of practices* are situated in the particular circumstances and conditions of particular *sites* (Kemmis et al. 2012). Schatzki (2003, 2005b, 2006) calls these *site ontologies*. Practitioners in practices are co-inhabitants of sites along with other people and objects, and they are in interdependent relationships

with these others, not only in terms of maintaining their own identities but also in and through their practices. Practices external to a particular practice site can also influence local, situated *ecologies of practices* (Kemmis et al. 2012). In the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Australia, for example, the state, via the National Archives of Australia (NAA), determines the broad set of standards for recordkeeping and leaves it to Chief Executive Officers of Australian Government agencies to develop the detailed content and conduct of these practices for the needs of their agencies; so these external practices influence the local situated, *ecologies of practices*.

The *theory of practice architectures* (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008) has also proved a useful and innovative lens through which to view the impact of wider organisation arrangements and the understanding of record keeping practices in the workplace. These three different arrangements that prefigure practices exist simultaneously in a site of practice are the *sayings* (the *cultural-discursive* arrangements operating in semantic space); the *doings* (the *material-economic* arrangements operating in physical space-time); and the *relatings* (the *social political* arrangements forming the social space) (Mahon et al. 2017). These three arrangements are either brought to, or exist in, particular sites of practice and they "exist beyond each person as an individual or actor" (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008, p. 37). This theoretical framework allows the exploration of these three aspects of the social practice in a given site or sites – it allows us to explore not just how the artefact is managed (the *doings*), but also how the cultural-discursive arrangements or *sayings* and the different actors within the broader legislative framework relate to one another via the *relatings* in the socio-political realm.

The theory of practice architectures also allows investigation of the broader organisational and jurisdictional impacts of practices (Leith 2018) and is a useful framework for what Nicolini (2009b) calls 'zooming in and zooming out' (Hopwood 2014). As such, it has brought new insights to the complexity of record keeping practices in organisations where the object-only perspective is generally tied to the doings. Practice architectures have demonstrated usefully in this study that at times the sayings and doings of a practice can conflict and that, via the *relatings*, the power relations prefigure a practice.

A shortcoming that some researchers have pointed out about the practice theoretical approach is that it has a largely unspoken account of power as it is ubiquitous to practice (Watson 2017). The use of practice architectures and particularly the exploration of the *relatings* in this study has allowed this practice framework to more explicitly address and explore concepts such as power and trust and how these impacted the practice of record keeping in the sites of practice and in the Australian Government context. This is in contrast to the function-activity or business process-based view of the world that tends to follow ideal business processes and maps out the actions and outputs, rather than the real social interactions. Many recordkeeping tools are based on this ideal version of the organisation and so neither reveal conflicts such as those highlighted via the use of practice architectures nor take into account any view of the social and power relations involved in social practices.

Knowing in practice – the site of practice

A specific social practice contains specific forms of knowledge: "It is in practice … that knowledge comes to life, stays alive and fades away" (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. p.26). Practitioners' shared understanding of their practice provides direction and a means of organising their activities, with shared knowhow making it possible to carry out the practice (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009). In practice approaches, this collective, shared knowledge is more complex than 'knowing that'; it includes ways of understanding, wanting and feeling in addition to 'knowing how'. These qualities are linked to each other within the practice, and rather than being qualities of the individual they are necessary components of the practice in which the individual participates (Reckwitz 2002). According to (Gherardi 2009, p. 118),

> To know is to be capable of participating with the requisite competence in the complex web of relationships among people, material artefacts and activities. Acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to connect successfully with the field of practice.

Practice theory provides a framework for recordkeepers to understand how record keeping practices and records are shaped not only by the context or site to which they are tied but also by the social, textual and embodied practices that are valued and agreed

upon by people who participate in the practices. It also helps us to understand how different types of information and knowledge – canonical and non-canonical – are produced and sanctioned (Lloyd 2010) and how these arrays of human activity produce a shared account of 'know-how' or a shared practical understanding (Schatzki 2001).

Using a practice theoretical approach, this study has demonstrated how organisational discourse influences the interpretation of record within that organisation, and how the predominant institutional discourse relation to records exists and co-exists with jurisdictional definitions and other professional perspectives within an organisation. It also explores the knowledge that competent practitioners require in order to participate in record keeping in the Australian public sector. The following sections examine the study's findings in regard to the definition of 'record'.

The record – a shared practical understanding?

The plurality of definitions of record in the literature and in practice has long been acknowledged (Williams 2014). Some have gone so far as to suggest that there are almost as many definitions of the term record as there are contexts in which they are created (McKemmish 2005). However, despite the plurality of definitions, recordkeeping professionals generally possess a shared practical understanding of what constitutes a record. This is based on professional definitions and norms; as professionals in the field they understand the innate characteristics of records and what distinguishes them from other forms of information.

The recordkeeping professions generally define records in a principle-based way. These definitions are generally based on traditional positivist premises of records management and archival theory, and there is very little challenge or divergence within the discipline to these positivist points of view (Brothman 2002). These conceptions of record in the "strong sense" (Brothman 2002, p. 315) are limited, inflexible in scope and often underplay the complex nature of records. They also de-contextualise and idealise the record (Foscarini 2010, 2013). They serve the paradigm from which they are espoused - in this case the positivist viewpoints that prevail in the recordkeeping and archival professions.

These definitions of records are usually promulgated from standards bodies and professional associations or those responsible for legal frameworks such as the NAA,

which administers the recordkeeping framework for the Australian Government as set out in the *Archives Act 1983*. As a case in point we can take the definition of record in the International Standard on Records Management. This definition (outlined in chapters 2 and 5) was put together by a committee of recordkeeping professionals from around the globe for a particular purpose and, like the standard itself, is a compromise of many different points of view (Healy 2001; Oliver 2014). Even though it is a definition born of compromise, it still fundamentally represents the recordkeeping professionals' viewpoint and is framed in language familiar to them.

This underlying ideological understanding of records by the recordkeeping profession then frames its orientation towards records creators and users. Although, from a practice theory perspective these agents are as equal as the objects in any practice, the profession seeks to explain to them the positivist and principle-based definitions that are contained in codes of best practice or legislation. This is because the record has primacy in this top-down recordkeeping worldview, in part because recordkeeping is often a compliance exercise, but also because recordkeepers are subject matter experts who seek to have their expertise appreciated.

There may be many valid reasons for educating users on these definitions, including compliance with a legislative regime of recordkeeping, the limitations of external warrants, such as legislation, government policy and codes of best practice, to alter social systems and underlying practices within organisations has long been acknowledged (McKemmish 1993). To ensure that the right records are captured for both social and organisational benefit, recordkeepers should instead work to create a 'shared practical understanding' (Schatzki 2001) with and within their user base.

The multiple values and meanings of records

This study shows that there are multiple conceptualisations (and no one accepted conceptualisation) of the record across the Australian public sector. In the Australian Government context records mean different things to different people in different

professions and in different organisations at the same time as well as through time[15]. It also demonstrates how institutional discourses affect the value and meaning of records within sites of practice. These are important and novel insights into recordkeeping in the Australian public sector and extend our understanding of organisational recordkeeping practices in this context. These findings are consistent with those of Lemieux (2001), who proposed that there was no one true conceptualisation of the record, and Yusof & Chell (1999), who noted that professional groupings, and IT professionals in particular, have common definitions of records.

More generally, the findings of this study are consistent with the literature, which acknowledges that the various affordances records may have are many and varied. More particularly the findings of this study support and extend the arguments made by Yeo (2007, 2008), Finnell (2011) and others, that definitions of records espoused by the recordkeeping and archival professions that centre around information and evidence are limiting and do not embrace the full spectrum of understanding. The range of affordances highlighted in this study's different organisational contexts demonstrates the inadequacy of a standpoint in the archival and recordkeeping professions based on the duality of evidence and information.

Further, this study demonstrates that in an Australian Government context the legislative and technical definitions of records do not represent all of the possible affordances of records that might exist and are not or are readily understood by those outside the profession. A 'shared practical understanding' of the term record does not exist among the recordkeeping profession and records creators and users in Australian public sector agencies.

In this regard, the findings of this study are consistent with the observations of the Australian Auditor-General in his 2007 analysis of common themes in the Australian National Audit Office's reviews of recordkeeping in the Australian Public Service

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[15] This is adapted from records continuum concepts as outlined by Cumming (2010). She notes that records "mean different things to different people in different contexts, both immediately and through time" (p.42)

(McPhee 2007). Like the case study participants, he observed that most people would not find the definition of a record in the Archives Act "terribly helpful to determine what a record is from a practical perspective" (p. 6) and that even the definition in AS ISO 15489 "is quite a handful". This is exemplified by the comment of the digital marketing professional in Agency 1 who, when asked his thoughts on the definition of record in the international standard, responded that while he found it better than the one in the Archives Act, he still felt it was very subjective, as if he was "sort of like struggling. I mean as if I'm in a room, in the dark talking about what might constitute information."

Culture and the meaning of record

This is the first study to demonstrate by cross-case analysis the impact of organisational culture on records across agencies within the same jurisdiction. Previous studies have looked at the differences that arise from organisational cultures and their impact on recordkeeping across nations (Oliver 2008), or in individual cases in organisations (Svärd 2014; Wright (2013).

One of this study's novel findings is that the themes extracted from the data demonstrate how the discourses of particular organisational cultures can affect the institutional meaning of record. In each of the case study organisations, the overarching institutional values and properties of records were aligned with the predominant discourse of the agency. In addition, those within that organisation relate the record to the social action it performs in that environment. This is in contrast to the traditional legal and standard-based and principle-based definitions used by the recordkeeping professions that de-contextualise and idealise the record and emphasise the concepts of information and evidence.

These findings also demonstrate that the organisational *cultural-discursive* arrangements have a very strong influence on public sector officials' constructions of records and that organisational communities define their institutional 'genres of record' according to their own situations and contexts. Such discursive norms co-exist with disciplinary perspectives within the organisation, as well as externally with the legal framework for all Australian Government agencies. The complexity, richness and divergence of these institutional 'genres of record' go well beyond the traditional

principle-based and positivist definitions of records in the records management literature, which in the main describe an idealised form of the 'thing', not the social actions they represent.

This study further demonstrates how an organisational culture itself can sometimes be an extension of a particular professional culture, given that most agencies have a specific function that employs particular kinds of professionals in their core business. It also highlights how implicit practices for recordkeeping are contained within the practices of other disciplines and therefore within agency practices. This again illustrates the social nature of record keeping and the need to understand the ecology of practices in an organisational setting, rather than the idealised process view that records management so often relies on. The findings of the study support arguments made by authors such as Brown & Duguid (2002) that interesting information is mostly socially situated, socially constructed, and not easily transferrable into units of 'knowledge' (or things).

The effect of an organisation's culture on its definition of records has received limited treatment in the records management literature. According to Oliver (2010, 2011), organisational and professional culture can be defined as the values, attitudes and behaviours of members of the organisation or profession. These impact the perceptions of individuals towards records and influence the shape, nature and success of any records management program, which are components of an organisation's information culture (Oliver 2010, 2011). This study provides some empirical support for this proposition. The findings are also consistent with the conceptual framework developed by Bloor & Dawson (1994) that an that an organisation's culture is an expression of its operating and cultural systems; historical context; societal context; external organisation environment; and professional culture. Such factors were found to influence the various affordances of records highlighted in the agency case studies and to be unique to their own agency identities.

This study also extends our understanding of the aspects of information culture, as expressed via the Information Culture Framework developed by (Oliver & Foscarini 2014, pp. 17-9). It supports the notion that the factors at Level 1 of the framework, one of these being the value accorded to information, are simultaneously very influential and difficult to change and that understanding what those values are in particular

organisational contexts will be key to the successful implementation of records management programs. The study also extends our understanding of elements of the framework at Level 2 (records skills and capabilities), which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The findings also provide empirical support for those that object to the notion of the 'records mind' (Upward et al. 2018). A continued focus by the archival and recordkeeping professions on the records or information objects, to the exclusion of the social practices and sites within which they are situated, will be to the overall detriment of the records management profession.

Some added complexities

This study has highlighted added complexities around the use of the word record and how related concepts are actually applied in practice. Record is both a noun and a verb. The noun may be singular (a record) or collective (*th*e record) – the collective being the sum of past achievements of an organisation. These variations in usage were prevalent among the participating users and creators of records, but emphasis on *the* record was particularly evident when they were making evaluative decisions around capturing records. Writing for the record, took on a distinction of its own: it was not a passive by-product of business activity but very much a pro-active and intentional practice.

The concepts of interaction and transaction were also used interchangeably at times, with transaction a key term used by the recordkeeping profession. One could ask if a record is evidence of a transaction or an interaction. For an accountant, a 'transaction' is a financial transaction in a ledger and this is usually supported by documentation (such as invoices), that possibly represents a number of other business transactions – particularly from the Function-Activity-Transaction perspective advocated by the recordkeeping profession. However, some of the professionals participating in this study preferred the concept of 'interaction' because this word suggests people, participation and relationships in two-way exchanges of information.

This study illustrates how the social nature of record keeping and the professions involved in it allowed participants to see records as documenting both interactions and collaboration, rather than the harsher and stricter transactions implied by the recordkeeping language. The interactive, evolving and experienced-based nature of the

web is also blurring the lines between what were once simple and straightforward business transactions and interactions. The needs of consumers, the volumes of 'messy' interactions, and the new and emerging technologies are all expected to increase and present even greater challenges for recordkeeping professionals (Bertot 2015). In keeping with Web 2.0 language, interaction, may be a more meaningful word than transaction to describe the contexts in which, and of which, records are kept. It may also be a more suitable term for a digital world (Colwell 2015).

The study also confirms many of the findings of previous studies and case studies (e.g. Abdulkadhim et al. 2015; Johnston & Bowen 2005; Nguyen et al. 2009), regarding the enablers and inhibitors of good record keeping in an agency context, such as management support, aligned processes, and technology. It also highlights how 'stakeholder voices', that is, the voices of Australian Government agencies, are influencing the evolution of recordkeeping in the Australian public sector. An example is the adoption of some of the recommendations of the Management Advisory Committee (2007) report, which emphasises that agencies should take a risk-based approach to recordkeeping, rather than the stricter approach previously advocated by the NAA.

All the case study agencies and many individual participants emphasised to varying degrees the adoption of more flexible and risk-based approaches in line with the approaches outlined in the MAC report as they acknowledged the realities of the challenges associated with record keeping in the contemporary public sector. This in part reflects the fact that within an organisational and government settings the recordkeeping professional or the relevant archival authority is just one voice among many. Government organisations are required to balance many competing demands and policy directions from the various branches of government and these sometimes conflict and put strain on agency resources, forcing agencies to prioritise the implementation of some policies over others. Each organisation's pragmatic approach to recordkeeping is set by the organisation itself not by the external authorities.

It can be concluded that record keeping in the case study agencies of the Australian Government seems to work well when it is supported and aligned with agency values and embedded within the business process to which it relates. Documenting the business of government was routine because sending emails and writing letters are embedded

within the practices of public sector employees across a whole range of agencies and disciplines. However, unless the record keeping is routine as well then record keeping is in fact saving work to an additional information system that is not part of the process and so will always be considered an extra step or an additional burden.

The study also highlights how the participants' reliability and trust in relation to records was associated with the organisation itself and their colleagues in it, not necessarily with compliant recordkeeping systems per se. It did not matter to them if a record was paper or electronic, whether it came from a shared drive (considered non-compliant in a recordkeeping sense), or whether it came from a formal document management system, or even a business system. It was considered trustworthy if they found it in an organisational system or it was forwarded to them by colleagues. This is a novel finding that parallels research conducted by (Meijer 2001), which noted that accountability fora such as commissions of inquiry and courts do not seem to question the origin of records produced to them; if a record is produced by an organisation, it is considered authentic and reliable unless challenged as something other than it purports to be.

The record as practice

Context is one of the core tenets of the archival and recordkeeping professions, yet this study has shown that the professional and legislative definitions utilised de-contextualise and idealise the record, making the language of recordkeeping unfriendly and inaccessible to users and creators in organisational settings. From these findings this researcher concludes that the recordkeeping profession should be moving away from definitions that are fixed and idealised to ones that are contextual and flexible, ones that are not bound by strict criteria of information and evidence but allow for the full affordances and values of records across time and space to be included, while being as legible, useable and meaningful to those outside the discipline as those within it.

Yeo (2007) has noted, in a similar vein, that moving to a 'representational view of records' might be one way the recordkeeping profession could go beyond its self-imposed limits of transaction, evidence and information to a more multidisciplinary definition. After exploring both the alternative and the defining features of records, he proposed a definition of records as "persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers or their authorized proxies" (p. 342). But even this definition,

while all encompassing, is not accessible or useful to those within the profession as well as to those outside it. While the proposed definition might get around the issue of focussing too heavily on information or evidence (his primary critique), it also creates issues in that the term 'persistent representations' is not readily understood by those outside the discipline or academia. It therefore has the same issues from a practical perspective as the legal and best practice definitions shown to the participants in this study.

This research has demonstrated that participants outside the archival and recordkeeping professions across the Australian government define records in many and varied ways. However, they consider that a record has the following core characteristics:

- It participates in or is borne of a social practice.

- It has some meaning and value.

- Because of that value it requires preservation beyond its immediate social context.

- It is managed through time and space for as long as its value requires.

This practice theoretical framework and approach highlights, in a way that many current records management methodologies do not, that while practices may produce a documentary output, they also produce a reflexive understanding of what activities facilitate or contest the construction and reproduction of records as well as a shared meaning about the nature of records with the context. In this sense this study has shown through the use of a practice theoretical framework that *records are practices,* not simply artefacts. The meaning of record cannot be separated from the *site* or social practice that creates and sanctions it and so the meaning of the term record will always be contextual.

Records literacy

The study found that a degree of 'records literacy' already existed among the staff of the Australian Government agencies who participated in the study. All participants were able to articulate to some degree the elements of the records capability framework for all public sector staff (not recordkeeping specialists) set out by the NAA. This is an important and novel finding as it the first time that research has been conducted into the

levels of records knowledge of staff in multiple agencies across the Australian Government, and it indicates that capabilities for all Australian public sector employees as set out by the NAA may not only be aspirational but achievable.

Most importantly, all members of the agencies concerned were able to articulate to some degree the framework and policy for keeping Australian Government records, particularly when it came to their own roles. This was most evident in relation to the HR Professional in Agency 3 who noted a raft of legislation that affected the information they managed that extended well beyond those mentioned by most participants (the *Archives Act 1983*, the *Privacy Act 1998* and the *Freedom of Information Act 1983* were most commonly cited). Participants were also able to quite easily articulate the reasons and principles for keeping records from individual, professional, agency and whole of government perspectives.

These findings provide empirical support for Oliver & Foscarini (2014) and their proposed middle layer (Level 2) of the Information Culture Framework, which is concerned with skills, knowledge and experience that users have in relation to managing information and records. They put forward two considerations: first, to be a competent practitioner one must have information and digital literacy skills (and the recordkeeping profession could learn and draw from the larger body of knowledge of information literacy that currently exists); and second, practitioners must have knowledge and understanding of the relevant laws, standards and norms applicable in the environments and roles in which they work. It is this second element that these findings support as a key element of the social practice of record keeping in an organisational setting.

Records literacy is a fledging area of research and it has been noted that the library and information science discipline's broad knowledge base on information literacy can inform how the recordkeeping and archival community explore this concept (Oliver 2017a). But this study cautions against thinking of records literacy as just a set of knowledge and skills that are transferable across contexts. Like information literacy, records literacy is a social practice, not just a set of skills, and is contextual and constituted through a complex suite of activities that are sanctioned by the discourse in which the practice is situated (Lloyd 2011).

The results of this study mirror those of Lloyd (2010) and demonstrate that the outcomes of the social practice of record keeping produce a practical understanding about how records are created and kept; a reflexive understanding of what activities facilitate or contest the construction and reproduction of records; and a shared meaning about the nature of records within the site or context. They contest the idea that records literacy can be taught independently of context and transferred generically across settings, as this does not take into account how the application and operationalisation of record keeping skills are influenced by the situated forms of knowledge and the methods that are sanctioned across the domain of practice.

Significance

The notion of 'significance' played a key role in the record keeping processes of participants. This is an important and novel finding because it represents a shift away from the traditional role of the professional recordkeeper as being the sole arbiter of determining which of the records of the Commonwealth of Australia are considered significant. Participants acknowledged this practice went beyond the scope of Normal Administrative Practice as currently considered by the NAA, but they saw it as a practical way to ensure the fidelity of the record and to manage information overload in this digital age.

Significance has always been a factor in recordkeeping (Oliver (2017a). The earliest forms of records and recordkeeping systems were focussed heavily on transactions of significance – land ownership, letters patent, taxation records etc. With records initially the province of rulers and the rich and powerful in society, they have always been associated with power (the etymology of the word archive is proof of this[16]). But with societal change, the advent of technologies, and rising levels of literacy among populations, recordkeeping is now significant for everyone. The increasing proliferation of types of records, not to mention the sheer volume of records generated, was cause for the records management field to come into in its own right just after the World War II.

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[16] The term archives derives from the Greek (archeion) which meant at one time government palace, general administrator, office of the magistrate, records office, original records, and authority. The verb (archeio) meant I command, I govern, and the word (arche), which is the root of both noun and verb, meant origin, command, power, authority (Duranti 1989).

But since that time, and more recently with the advent of the personal computer, email and the internet, the proliferation of records and information has increased exponentially.

For those within the profession, significance in a recordkeeping sense has now come to be associated with those records that should be retained over the longer term because they have some continuing or cultural value (Caswell 2016; Trace 2010). The determination of what is significant is usually performed by recordkeeping and archival professionals in accordance with an established practice known as appraisal and in accordance with legislative retention schedules where these exist. These records of continuing value are then managed over the longer term, with most other records being destroyed once their evidential and business value has ceased.

The role of significance has not previously been identified as important in terms of what gets captured into recordkeeping systems. There is an assumption by those in the recordkeeping disciplines that all records will be captured as per the organisational and legislative mandate. However, this study has highlighted that the notion of 'significance' as both a way of managing information overload and identifying the key records of activities that needed to be kept.

Risk-based judgements about what records are to be kept in the first place (as opposed to all records) were being made at the point of capture by case study participants, who were outside the recordkeeping professions. By making these judgements the participants were ensuring what they considered to be the fidelity of the record. The internal thresholds that formed part of their knowledge of the practice of record keeping were best summarised by the Communications professional in Agency 3 who noted that after working in the public service for a number of years one would get a feeling of not only the weight and impact of what was being worked on and the consequent level of recordkeeping that would meet organisational and accountability requirements, but also the requirements of the corporate memory and what one's colleagues may need to know if they were ever to backtrack and figure out how something came about.

Participants reported that part of their practice was making the clear distinction in their own minds that they are creating something *for* the record. In this sense the record was in no way the passive and objective by-product of business activity but rather there was

a proactive and intentioned act of creating something for the record. This illustrates again that not all transactions are part of nicely laid out business process, as some models of recordkeeping portray.

It may be seen, then, that there is occurring a paradigmatic and philosophical shift away from the professional recordkeeper being arbiter of what is significant to the end user having some role in the appraisal process at the point of capture. Many records in the age of email are not being routinely captured as the passive by product of business activity because this requires a process of manual intervention by the records user or creator. This has implications for the completeness of recordkeeping in the future from a policy perspective, particularly when considering the current interpretation of the Normal Administrative Practice as set out in the *Archives Act 1983*.

Implications

In this section of the chapter, the implications that arise from the study's findings for both theory and practice are discussed.

Implications for theory

Through the use of case studies, this study has demonstrated that practice theory, and specifically the use of frameworks such as ecologies of practices and practice architectures, can assist the archival and recordkeeping professions and researchers in this field to explain how different communities approach the social practice of record keeping in their organisational settings. It highlights how records and record keeping, are social practices and, as such, involve agents, bodily movements, specific knowledge and objects as equally interconnected parts of the whole.

By adopting a practice theory perspective, the profession might be able to shift from its current 'records mind' and pre-occupation with the object to a worldview that sees records not simply as the passive by-product of business activity but as being shaped by the social, textual and embodied practices that are value and agreed upon by the people who participate in the practices of the context. This new worldview would position records, not just record keeping, *as* practices.

A practice theoretical view represents a paradigmatic shift from the way current models of recordkeeping that consider the record to be primary. It provides a framework to explore and understand the nuances of how records and agents co-exist and interact in an organisational setting. Current models tend to ignore the human elements of practices altogether (the records lifecycle), privilege the artefact over the human elements of practices and focus on the role of records at a social level to the detriment of the local practices (the Records Continuum). And when attempts have been made to shift the balance away from the object and the 'records mind', theorists have removed the record (as opposed to the system) from the model entirely (recordkeeping informatics). A practice theoretical approach instead explores record keeping in an holistic fashion such that neither the actor, the environment (site) nor the object takes precedence over the other.

While being critical of the interpretation of the Records Continuum Model in practice, this researcher is not necessarily advocating that it be replaced. It is still the current theoretical framework for recordkeeping in Australia. Instead, there may be another way to interpret and view the Model from a more contemporary practice theoretical perspective. Giddens (1984) theory of structuration, which provided many of the foundational ideas for the Records Continuum Model, emphasises that practices are predominantly recurrent, routinised, and collective types of conduct that help to maintain social order because of their repetitive and stable natures (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011). Record keeping practices include, for example, creating, capturing, organising and managing records, as well as the enabling of access to those in organisational and archival collections. While common to most institutions world-wide, such practices are also unique in that the records, activities, interactions and knowledge involved are bounded by time, space and particular contexts.

If viewed and interpreted more from a contemporary practice theoretical perspective, the Records Continuum Model could provide the archival and recordkeeping professions with a suitable lens with which to *zoom in* and *zoom out* (Nicolini 2009b) and to examine and incorporate the human and non-human agencies that are connected-in-action in the wider recordkeeping context. It also provides a lens with which to incorporate interactions from the individual to the societal. If positioned appropriately, it could stimulate the recordkeeping research and practice community to focus more on

the social aspects of recordkeeping and 'how people come to know' rather than on the mere management of artefacts. A contemporary practice approach promotes a non-individualist, socio-material epistemology and methodology that approaches both subjects and objects as bearers and generators of knowledge (Huizing & Cavanagh 2011).

In seeking to articulate the knowledge required to participate in the social practice of record keeping, this study offers insights into the fact that a 'shared practical understanding' between the recordkeeping profession and those outside it does not yet exist. This is mostly because the professions use technical and principle-based definitions of 'the thing' rather than language that describes records in terms of the social action they represent. The study recommends that in both in theory and practice, the recordkeeping and archival professions consider moving away from definitions that are fixed and idealised by adopting definitions that are contextual and flexible. Such definitions would not be bound by strict criteria or the duality of information or evidence, but instead allow for the inclusion of the full affordances and values of records across time and space while at the same time ensuring they are legible, useable and meaningful to those both inside and outside the disciplines.

Finally, this study provides empirical support for the propositions put forward by Oliver (2010, 2017b); Oliver & Foscarini (2014)around organisational and information culture and its effect on the value and meaning of records within organisational settings. This has implications for the strengthening of this area of knowledge by reference to real-world case studies and making it a core part of the know-how of recordkeepers in modern organisations. The research also provides insights into the fledgling area of records literacy research by putting forward the proposition that records literacy, like information literacy, is a social practice.

Implications for practice

Some of the findings of this study have implications for recordkeeping practices in the Australian Government and potentially for similar jurisdictions. The results of the study demonstrate that, in practice, contextual approaches and definitions should be adopted in order for recordkeeping programs to succeed. The profession and records and archival authorities need to consider how they redefine and reconstitute the concept of

record and give serious thought to corresponding amendments to their legislative and professional frameworks so that they are more flexible and contextual in approach.

This study shows that in an agency context, the broader organisational discourse regarding records can impact individuals' attitudes towards and perceptions of records in such settings. It is recommended that this be an area for attention by recordkeeping practitioners so that they can understand, as well as explain, what a record is and how its values are applied to information. Creating a mutual understanding and pursuing the concept of the *record as practice*, rather than enforcing a top-down systems-based approach, and aligning their recordkeeping efforts with these values will assist it to become part of the culture, not push against it.

That there is a lack of a shared understanding of the term record has real world consequences for practitioners who are working within legislative regimes that prescribe definitions their users do not understand. A compelling case can be made for practitioners to adopt or adapt relevant definitions, to suit their own agency contexts (the *record as practice*), as long as they do not conflict with statutory regimes. Most of the case study participants considered the definition in the *Archives Act 1983* (the Archives Act) unhelpful in practice, so individual practitioners will need to develop guidelines relevant to their specific agencies. Since the definition in the Archives Act was considered so broad as to be meaningless, it seems unlikely that such guidance would add confusion or contradict the legislated definition.

This study has also demonstrated for the first time that the level of awareness about to record keeping and its legislative framework is quite high, particularly in relation to public sector employees' own roles. This indicates that the NAA's map of public sector employees' capabilities may indeed be achievable, not just aspirational. This can have only positive implications for the future state of record keeping across the Australian Government. Ways to harness and measure this baseline knowledge or even to extend it could be explored by the NAA and the Australian Public Service Commission. This might also include some kind of acknowledgement that competence in record keeping involves site specific knowledge, rather than a generic set of skills and capabilities that are transferable

The notion of 'significance' and the risk-based judgements made by users and creators of records have implications for the concept of Normal Administrative Practice (NAP) within the Australian government. NAP allows agencies to destroy certain types of low-value and short-term information in the normal course of business. NAP has so far been interpreted by the NAA as applying only to the destruction of drafts, duplicates, working papers and facilitative records like meeting invitations etc. It has not been used to destroy information that may already be covered by a disposal authority on the assumption that it would be captured into recordkeeping systems. However, it is possible that the concept of NAP could be expanded by agencies or the NAA itself to explicitly allow and incorporate the risk-based judgements that are highlighted in this study. The overall fidelity of the record could still be ensured, but a more practical and useful outcome may prevail. In the age of email it is not possible to capture every record that cannot be destroyed under NAP.

And finally, related to risk are the concepts of reliability and trust. Thus, the finding that reliability and trust in relation to records was not necessarily associated with compliant recordkeeping systems *per se*, but with the organisation and their colleagues. This finding is significant, not only for organisations, but also for the accountability mechanisms in democratic systems built on records from governmental sources. This questions the necessity the recordkeeping disciplines orthodoxy of insisting that records always be stored in compliant recordkeeping systems which users generally find unhelpful. Especially in light of the previous research by that highlights that external accountability fora do not seem to challenge the origin of the records presented to them (Meijer 2000, 2001).

Conclusion

This is the first study to explore how records creators define and construct the concept of record in contemporary Australian public sector organisations. It contributes to the academic discussion on recordkeeping through the use of a practice theoretical approach to explore the nature of the record in organisational settings.

This study demonstrates that a practice theoretical approach has far wider application than to just the recordkeeping and archival professions (Ivanov (2017). It can be extended to obtain a far more nuanced view of the holistic practice of recordkeeping and

its different dimensions within organisational settings. This approach sits in contrast to the top-down, object-focussed and function-activity/business process views that predominate within the recordkeeping and archival professions.

A practice view also shows us that via its cultural-discursive arrangements (the *sayings*) each organisational culture creates and perpetuates its own view of records according to its context (*site*). In an agency context, the broader organisational discourse regarding records was found to impact individual public servants' understandings of records, and that while individual disciplines are also influential in certain practices, ultimately they are subservient to, or are adapted to fit within, the agency culture. This study across multiple cases supports and extends our understanding of organisational culture and its impact on records by illustrating its key role within national and jurisdictional contexts.

Finally, while there is no one accepted conceptualisation of 'record', there may be some similarities in themes across agencies and across professions even though the professional *sayings* across the Australian public sector are diverse. For the participating records creators, the term record has already moved beyond an association with the hardcopy world. The findings of this study support and extend our understanding of the findings and arguments made by Yeo (2007), Finnell (2011), Lemieux (2001) and others who outline that current professional definitions of records are limiting and do not embrace the full spectrum of understanding of the term. The findings also demonstrate that a practical understanding of the term record is not shared between those in the recordkeeping profession and those outside it.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study, including those presented by a practice theoretical framework, with respect to the constructions and perceptions of records by Australian public sector employees in general and in the context of the four agencies or sites. The limitations of the research are also discussed and suggestions for future areas of research are also considered and proposed.

The research questions

This study began with three research questions. These questions are asked in order to gain new and rich insights into the ways that users in organisational settings understand records and to allow the researcher to map this unexplored aspect of record keeping. Each of these themes are explored in more detail later in this chapter, but a short summary of the answers to these questions is provided below.

Research Question 1

How do records creators in the Australian public sector define, construct and perceive records and their properties in an organisational context?

The study has clearly demonstrated that while there may be some similarities across *sites* and across professions in how records are used and defined, the general professional sayings in relation to records across the Australian public sector are diverse. There is no one accepted conceptualisation of the record in our modern digital workplaces, but institutional 'genres of record' do exist based on *site*-specific practices.

Research Question 2:

Are there particular influences on records creators' perceptions, constructions and definitions that stem from professional or organisational perspectives?

This study has shown clearly that records creators' perceptions and constructions of records are influenced by organisational or *site*-specific knowledge within their everyday practice of record keeping as well as the knowledge that is unique to their particular professional orientation.

Research Question 3:

If there are definite professional or organisational influences on records creators' perceptions, definitions and constructions of records, which plays the major role?

This study has demonstrated the predominant impact of organisational influences on records creators' definitions, constructions and perceptions of records. The knowledge required to effectively participate in the practice of record keeping in a *site* is an understanding of what a record means, and the values that records are accorded, in that context. This takes the primary place within the practices of record keepers in an Australian Government context but also melds with their professional orientations and understandings in an organisational setting.

The practice theoretical approach

The major theoretical and methodological contribution of this work is demonstrating how a practice theoretical approach is of use to the recordkeeping and archival disciplines to provide a more nuanced and real-world view of recordkeeping practices in contemporary organisations. In particular the practice approach represents a paradigmatic shift away from the discipline's previous emphasis on the record as artefact to the conceptual position of record keeping as a social practice in the digital world. A practice theoretical framework has allowed for the exploration of record keeping practices in an holistic fashion, one where all elements of practices are considered equal parts of an interconnected whole and where neither the actor, the environment (site) nor the object takes precedence over the other.

A practice approach sits in contrast to current models within recordkeeping that either ignore the human elements of practices altogether (the records lifecycle), through interpretation have privileged the artefact over the human elements of practices or focussed on records role at a social level to the detriment of the local practices (the Records Continuum), or in an attempt to shift the balance away from the object and the 'records mind' have removed the record (as opposed to the system) from the model entirely (recordkeeping informatics). By using real cases studies and data, this study demonstrates how practice theory, and specifically the use of frameworks such as *ecologies of practices* and *practice architectures* can assist the archival and

recordkeeping professions and researchers in this field, to understand and describe how different communities approach the social practice of record keeping in an organisational setting.

A social practice involves agents, bodily movements, specific knowledge and objects as equally interconnected parts of the whole. Viewing records and record keeping from a practice theoretical perspective shifts the profession away from its current 'records mind' (Upward et al. 2018, p. 57) and pre-occupation with the object, to a worldview that sees records as not simply the passive by product of business activity, to one where records are shaped by and shape the social practices of which they are part. This represents a paradigmatic shift for the recordkeeping professions away from the current worldview of the artefact and positions records, not just record keeping, as practices i.e. records are practices, not just artefacts.

Contextual records management or *site*-specific practice

In a practical and professional sense, the findings of the study highlight that as a social practice record keeping is *site* specific. Therefore, the implementation of records management should also be tailored so it is *site* specific. Indeed Finnell (2011 p.9) noted that if one agrees that there is no universal definition of a record, then one is bound to a view of records as contextual and if records are contextual, so then is the theory of management applied to them. Since organizations have different opinions on what constitutes a record then a records management theory by its nature has to take account of organizational variation.

This study has demonstrated the predominant impact of organisational culture on records creators' definitions, constructions and perceptions of records. The knowledge required to effectively participate in the practice of record keeping in a site is an understanding of what a record means, and the values that records are accorded, in that context. These findings reinforce the Information Culture Framework developed by (Oliver & Foscarini 2014, pp. 17-9), which note that the values accorded to information are very influential and difficult to change.

In addition, this study has demonstrated that records creators and users describe and relate the record to the social action it performs in that environment. This is in contrast

to the traditional legal and standard-based and principle-based definitions used by the recordkeeping professions that de-contextualise and idealise the record and emphasise the concepts of information and evidence. Understanding the relevant values and affordances of records present in the organisational setting is key to ensuring that the recordkeeping program is working with the culture of the *site*, not against it.

Yet, while the contextual nature of records management is recognised in the discipline, the contextual nature of recordkeeping is generally focussed from a disciplinary perspective on the uniqueness of the records generated by the unique functions of that organisation. This study has demonstrated that multiple definitions of records can exist and co-exist within the same site and current models of recordkeeping should be explicitly expanded to allow for the deployment of context-specific definitions of records within a broader jurisdictional and best practice framework.

Further, these findings would then suggest that recordkeeping professionals' understandings now need to go beyond the identification of the documentary forms of records, the business process they enable and the technologies that are used to manage records. They need to understand first and foremost what values in a particular organisational context are ascribed to records and how they are defined in that context, rather than seek to explain. The limitations of external warrants, such as legislation, government policy and codes of best practice, to alter social systems and underlying practices within organisations has long been acknowledged (McKemmish 1993).

Re-thinking the record

The study demonstrated that while there may be some similarities across sites and across professions in how records are used and defined, the general professional sayings in relation to records across the Australian public sector are diverse. There is no one accepted conceptualisation of the record, although the term has clearly moved beyond an association with the hardcopy world in the eyes of records creators in our modern digital workplaces. This move beyond a purely hardcopy association reflects the socio-material and materially mediated nature of practices (Lanzara 2009). As practices have evolved to be all digital, so too has our understanding of the concept of record.

The study also showed there was equally no consistency in the affordances and values that that records possessed in the views of the participants and that these values and affordances ranged well beyond the two main purposes of records as set out by the recordkeeping professions – evidence and information. While there was no consistency in the values and affordances or definitions of records by participants, their role and value and the value of records and record keeping was acknowledged by all participants.

This study has also demonstrated, that while participants outside the archival and recordkeeping professions across the Australian government define records in many and varied ways, they consider that a record has the following core characteristics:

- It participates in or is borne of a social practice.

- It has some meaning and value.

- Because of that value it requires preservation beyond its immediate social context.

- It is managed through time and space for as long as its value requires.

The practice theoretical framework and approach adopted by this study also highlights that while record keeping practices produce a documentary output, they also produce a reflexive understanding of what activities facilitate or contest the construction and reproduction of records as well as a shared meaning about the nature of records with that *site* or context. This study has shown that *records are practices,* not simply artefacts i.e. the meaning of record cannot be separated from the *site* or social practice that creates and sanctions it and so will always be contextual.

This study has also highlighted that the notion of 'significance' played a key role in the construction of what constituted a record and thereby the record keeping processes of participants. Significance could be seen to be related to risk. These internal risk-based judgements and thresholds formed part of the knowledge of the practice of record keeping and were used both as a way of managing information overload and to identify the key records of activities that needed to be kept.

Users and creators of records made risk-based judgements about what records are to be kept. They chose to keep records that represented and preserved the overall fidelity of

the record, as opposed to keeping all records in line with the idea that they documented a transaction. Subjective judgements about what records are worthy of being kept are being made at the point of capture by those outside the recordkeeping professions.

This practice sees a paradigmatic and philosophical shift away from the professional recordkeeper as arbiter of what is considered significant. Instead the records creator or user has a role in this decision at the point of capture. This has real implications for the completeness of recordkeeping in the age of email, but it also has implications from a policy perspective. If this is considered acceptable practice the current interpretation of a Normal Administrative Practice as set out in the Archives Act 1983 could be widened to include it, or the best practice definitions of record used by the recordkeeping discipline could be nuanced to include a 'significance' threshold not previously envisaged. It is impractical and impossible to keep everything that falls under the definition of record in this digital age and then schedule it for appraised at some later date The appraisal of records could become a shared responsibility between user the users and creator of records and the professional recordkeeper, based on the shared practical understanding generated in that context.

Related to risk are the concepts of reliability and trust. Thus, the finding that reliability and trust in relation to records was not necessarily associated with compliant recordkeeping systems *per se*, but with the organisation and their colleagues. This finding is significant, not only for organisations, but also for the accountability mechanisms in democratic systems built on records from governmental sources. This questions the necessity for records to always be stored in compliant systems which users generally find unhelpful, especially in light of the previous research by Meijer (2000), 2001; Meijer 2003a, 2003b) that highlights that external accountability fora do not seem to challenge the notion of the origin of the records.

And finally, in seeking to articulate the knowledge required to participate in the social practice of record keeping, this study offers insights into the fact that a 'shared practical understanding' between the recordkeeping profession and those outside it does not yet exist. This is mostly because the professions use technical and principle-based definitions of 'the thing' rather than language that describes records in terms of the social action they represent. The study recommends that in both in theory and practice,

the recordkeeping and archival professions consider moving away from definitions that are fixed and idealised by adopting definitions that are contextual and flexible. Such definitions would not be bound by strict criteria or the duality of information or evidence, but instead allow for the inclusion of the full affordances and values of records across time and space while at the same time ensuring they are legible, useable and meaningful to those both inside and outside the disciplines.

While this researcher has not added yet another definition to the plethora of definitions already available, this research has demonstrated there are four key characteristics of a record, according to the users and creators of records across the Australian Government. These are:

- a record participates in or is borne of a social practice;
- a record has meaning and value (whether that be business, social, accountability, historical, personal, informational etc.);
- because of its value a record requires preservation beyond its immediate social context; and
- a record is managed through time and space for as long as its value requires.

Limitations

As with all research, there are some limitations that arise from the theoretical and methodological approaches taken. These limitations, as well as the appropriate strategies applied by the researcher (where relevant) to mitigate their impact on the study are addressed below.

This study's *site*-based approach to the investigation of record keeping practices reflects the limitations of all comparative case study research and include among other things researcher bias and lack of generalizability (Flyvbjerg 2006; Walsham 1995, 2006). As already stated in Chapter 3, the researcher is an 'insider-researcher' and the issue of researcher bias and the mitigation strategies applied to address this were addressed in detail there. Overall, however, the researcher's 'insider' status was seen more of an advantage that a disadvantage as he had a greater understanding of the culture being studied (Bonner & Tolhurst 2002) and had knowledge of how to best approach people within that setting (Smyth & Holian (2008) in Unluer 2012).

The findings of this study are limited, as they are with all case study and practice-based research, in that they can only be said to represent the four cases selected and cannot be generalised to the wider population. However, they can be generalized to theoretical propositions (Yin 2003) and Walsham (1995) further expands on this to state case studies can be generalized in four ways: the development of concepts; generation of theory; drawing of specific implications; and the contribution of rich insight (Walsham 1995).

It should also be noted that participants for the study were chosen by the recordkeeping professionals within each agency that participated. Their willingness to be involved and the relationship with the recordkeeping professionals within their agency may mean that the results are not representative of the public service as a whole. It is possible that the participants in the study are generally more predisposed to recordkeeping than the broader population of Australian public sector employees although nothing emerged from the interview data to indicate that this was the case.

While the study makes no claim to have generated theory, the results of this study give rich insight into the approaches to recordkeeping that exist among a diverse range of agencies and their equally diverse users within a whole of jurisdiction approach to recordkeeping and given the strong consistency of themes across all agencies (and the number of cases selected in which these themes are repeated) could be said to draw specific implications in relation to record keeping practices in the Australian Government and perhaps more generally to the various public sectors in Australia with similar jurisdictional approaches to recordkeeping. By using the process of zooming in and zooming out (Nicolini 2009b, 2009c), the study was successful in extracting the sector-wide practices from the *site*-specific and in making connections between the practices in the contexts of all *sites*. It has demonstrated how record keeping practices are connected to larger organisational and professional cultures. The concept of 'significance' in the practice of record keeping was also a key finding of the research.

Practice theoretical research has strong ethnographic antecedents and it is usual within a practice theoretical framework to include the use of observations in some form (Nicolini 2009c). Due to the nature of this research, as outlined in Chapter 3, observations were not used. Instead this study relied on the interview as its primary data gathering technique and the lack of observations was overcome in the *sites* of practice by using

elements of the 'Interview with the Double' (Lloyd 2014; Nicolini 2009a) and 'Interview with the Third'(Irvine-Smith 2017b) techniques.

Future research

In light of the conclusions of the study and their significance for recordkeeping in the Australian Government and the broader archival and recordkeeping disciplines more generally, a number of directions for future research are suggested.

There is limited scholarly research into the actual record keeping practices in contemporary organisations and the recordkeeping disciplines would certainly benefit from replications of a similar research design, using a practice theoretical approach, with other types of organisations and in other jurisdictions. In particular it would be interesting to explore whether the same themes and socio-technical constraints were present in the private and not-for-profit sectors in contrast to the public sector as relatively little research has been conducted in these spheres.

It may also be interesting to conduct an in-depth study that compares and contrasts the Australian recordkeeping domain with that of other similar jurisdictions internationally such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America or Canada, to see if the same themes and issues arise. Preliminary analysis between Canada and Australia suggests that these similarities may exist in other Commonwealth jurisdictions (Colwell & Wright 2016) but more detailed research is required in order to support this hypothesis.

This study has also demonstrated for the first time that there is a high the level of awareness in relation to record keeping and the legislative framework for it, particularly where it relates to the actual role that public sector employees perform. This gives some indication that the records and information management capabilities for all public sector employees proposed by the National Archives of Australia (NAA), may not be aspirational but indeed achievable. These findings also give some indication of the level of records literacy that may exist across the Australian public sector and the overall state of record keeping across the Australian Government and the fledgling area of research that is records literacy might benefit from such an exploration.

This study has also put forward the proposition, based on parallels with the research of Annemaree Lloyd (2007, 2010, 2011), that records literacy (like information literacy)

should be considered as a social practice. Records literacy is not just a set of skills and capabilities that once learnt are transferable, rather the situated forms of knowledge required to enact a practice in that context (such as understanding what a record is in that organisation setting) are not easily transferable but rather part of the knowledge of the practice. Further detailed research is required to fully understand the social practice of records literacy.

This study also highlighted that reliability and trust in relation to records was not necessarily associated with compliant recordkeeping systems *per se*, but with the organisation and their colleagues. Meijer (2000), 2001; Meijer 2003a, 2003b) highlights that external accountability fora do not seem to challenge the notion of the origin of the records. It may therefore be useful to explore to what extent records really do need to be stored in systems such as the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) in this current environment, especially since the shortcomings in the records management orthodoxy of relying on the EDRMS as the 'silver bullet' and principal tool for recordkeeping has been acknowledged for some time. (Joseph, Debowski & Goldschmidt 2012).

If one of the prime reasons for maintaining records in an EDRMS is to maintain the requisite amount of transparency and accountability, yet where records are stored does not seem to affect the ability to provide this, one might suggest that compliant recordkeeping is possible without an EDRMS. If sufficient reliability and authenticity is provided by modern technologies that are not strictly 'records compliant' a rethink of the entire orthodoxy of digital recordkeeping promoted by the recordkeeping disciplines up until now may be required.

And finally some findings, but particularly the notion of 'significance' has implications for the concept of Normal Administrative Practice (NAP) within the Australian government (a process under the Archives Act that allows agencies to destroy certain types of low-value and short-term information in the normal course of business). NAP has previously had a limited interpretation by the NAA. It has not been allowed to be used to destroy information that may already be covered by a disposal authority on the assumption these records are being capture into recordkeeping systems. It would be interesting to explore how the concept of NAP could be expanded by agencies or the NAA itself to explicitly allow and incorporate the risk-based judgements that were

highlighted as part of this study, so long as the overall fidelity of the record was ensured. It is plain that in the age of email not every record that cannot be captured into an agency's recordkeeping system and an exploration of how the alignment of public service practices and values could be made practical via the use of NAP could have very real benefits for the practice of record keeping in the Australian public sector.

Conclusion

Context is one of the core tenets of the recordkeeping professions, yet the recordkeeping professional definitions of record are principle-based and so decontextualise and idealise the record (Foscarini 2013). This study has shown that the definitions of records promulgated by recordkeeping professions and archival authorities are unfriendly and inaccessible to users and creators of records in organisational settings. The recordkeeping professions should consider moving away from definitions that are fixed and idealised to ones that are contextual and flexible - not bound by strict criteria of information and evidence but ones that allow for the full affordances and values of records across time and space to be included. However, it is also important that at the same these definitions are legible, useable and meaningful to those outside the discipline as those within it.

This research has also demonstrated that all of the many and varied perspectives regarding records are valid and that agency information cultures have a significant impact on the values and meanings of records. There is also significant variance in these values and meanings, not only within the same jurisdictional context but also within the same agency. As the values and meanings that are ascribed to records are embedded within organisational culture and hard to change, understanding these are vital to positioning a records management program for success. As one voice among many in organisational settings, recordkeeping practitioners should seek to understand what those values are within their organizational setting and adapt their practice accordingly. Models of records management practice should also be adapted to place emphasis on site-specific practices and definitions of records rather than a principle-based, top down or one size fits all approaches.

Lastly, the major theoretical and methodological contribution of this work is demonstrating to the recordkeeping and archival disciplines how a practice theoretical

approach provides a more nuanced and real-world view of recordkeeping practices in contemporary organisations – and in particular the paradigmatic shift it represents away from the artefact to the holistic concept of the social practice of record keeping in the digital world. The insights gained about users and creators and their practices in contemporary public sector organisations demonstrates the complexity of the organisational reality in which users and creators and recordkeeping and archival professionals work. Understanding this complexity and the social nature of recordkeeping is an ongoing challenge and one which requires greater attention and understanding from the recordkeeping and archival community if it is to continue to ensure that information and evidence is maintained for legal, accountability and historical purposes in an ever changing world.

Australian Government
Department of Finance

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) Commonwealth entities and companies (179)
30 September 2015 | finance.gov.au/flipchart

Agriculture and Water Resources (9)

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources - M
Australian Fisheries Management Authority
Australian Grape and Wine Authority - R, ^
Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines
 Authority (APVMA) - I, ℗
Cotton Research and Development Corporation - R, ^
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation - R, ^
Grains Research and Development Corporation - M, R, ℗, ^
Murray-Darling Basin Authority - I, ℗
Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation - R, ^

Attorney-General's (18) - HC

Attorney-General's Department - M
Administrative Appeals Tribunal
Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI)
Australian Crime Commission - I
Australian Federal Police - M, I, ^
Australian Financial Security Authority - E
Australian Institute of Criminology - I
Australian Law Reform Commission
Australian Security Intelligence Organisation - M, ^
Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC)
CrimTrac Agency - I, E
Family Court and Federal Circuit Court - M
Federal Court of Australia - #
National Archives of Australia – M, E
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
Office of Parliamentary Counsel
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions - #
Australian Human Rights Commission - ℗

Communications and the Arts (18)

Department of Communications and the Arts - M
Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) - M,
Old Parliament House - E
Australia Council - ^
Australian Broadcasting Corporation - M, X, ^
Australian Film, Television and Radio School- ^
Australian National Maritime Museum ℗
Australian Postal Corporation - B, M, T, ^
National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
National Gallery of Australia - M, ℗, ^
National Library of Australia – M
National Museum of Australia - M, ℗
National Portrait Gallery of Australia
Screen Australia - #
Special Broadcasting Service Corporation - M, X, ^

Australia Business Arts Foundation Ltd (Creative
 Partnerships Australia) – ^
Bundanon Trust - ^
NBN Co Limited - B, M, T, ^

Defence (11)

Department of Defence - M, #
Army & Air Force Canteen Service (Frontline Defence Services) - R, ^
Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund - ^
Defence Housing Australia - B, M
Royal Australian Air Force Veterans' Residences
 Trust Fund - ^
Royal Australian Air Force Welfare Trust Fund – ^
Royal Australian Navy Central Canteens Board – R, ^
Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund - ^
AAF Company - ^
Australian Strategic Policy Institute Ltd - ^
RAAF Welfare Recreational Company - ^

Education and Training (8)

Department of Education and Training - M
Australian Research Council - M
Australian Skills Quality Authority (National Vocational
 Education and Training Regulator)
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority - I, ^
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
 Islander Studies
Australian National University - U, ^, x
Australian Institute for Teaching and School
 Leadership Limited -I, ^

Employment (10)

Department of Employment - M
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency
Workplace Gender Equality Agency
Fair Work Commission
Office of the Fair Work Building Industry Inspectorate
Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman
Safe Work Australia
Seafarers Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation
 Authority (Seacare Authority)
Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding)
 Corporation-M, F, ^
Comcare - M, ℗

Environment (9)

Department of the Environment - M
Bureau of Meteorology – M, E

Clean Energy Regulator - M
Climate Change Authority
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority - I
Australian Renewable Energy Agency – M, ^
Clean Energy Finance Corporation - M, ^
Director of National Parks - ℗, ^
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust - I, ℗, ^

Finance (5)

Department of Finance - M
Australian Electoral Commission - M, #
Future Fund Management Agency - M
Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation ^
ASC Pty Ltd - B, M, T, ^

Foreign Affairs and Trade (6)

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - M
Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)
Australian Secret Intelligence Service - ^
Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) – M
Export Finance and Insurance Corporation - M, F, ℗, ^
Tourism Australia - ℗, ^

Health (19)

Department of Health - M
Australian Aged Care Quality Agency
Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) - I
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety
 Agency (ARPANSA)
Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA)
Cancer Australia
National Blood Authority - M, I
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) - M
National Health Funding Body (NHFB) - I
National Mental Health Commission - E
Organ and Tissue Authority
Professional Services Review Scheme
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care - I
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare - ℗, I
Australian Sports Commission (Australian Institute of Sport) - M, ^
Food Standards Australia New Zealand - I
Independent Hospital Pricing Authority - I, ℗
National Health Performance Authority - I
Australian Sports Foundation Limited - ^

Human Services (2)

(Part of the Social Services Portfolio)
Department of Human Services - M
Australian Hearing Services (Australian Hearing) – M, T, ^

Australian Government
Department of Finance

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) Commonwealth entities and companies (179)
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Immigration and Border Protection (1)

Department of Immigration and Border Protection - M

Industry, Innovation and Science (8)

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science - M
Geoscience Australia
IP Australia
Australian Institute of Marine Science - I, ^, Ⓟ
Australian Nuclear Science and Technology
    Organisation - M, Ⓟ, ^
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research
    Organisation - M, Ⓟ, ^
National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental
    Management Authority (NOPSEMA)
IIF Investments Pty Ltd - ^

Infrastructure and Regional Development (10)

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development - M
Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB)
National Capital Authority - M
Airservices Australia - M, T, ^
Australian Maritime Safety Authority - Ⓟ, ^
Civil Aviation Safety Authority - ^
Infrastructure Australia
National Transport Commission - I, #
Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited - B, M, T, ^
Moorebank Intermodal Company Limited - B, M, T, ^

Prime Minister and Cabinet (19)

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet - M
Australian National Audit Office
Australian Public Service Commission (APS Commission)
Digital Transformation Office — E
Office of National Assessments - #
Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman
Office of the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security
Office of the Official Secretary of the Governor-General - ^
Anindilyakwa Land Council - ^
Central Land Council - ^
Indigenous Business Australia - M, ^
Indigenous Land Corporation - ^
Northern Land Council - ^
Tiwi Land Council - ^
Torres Strait Regional Authority
Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council - ^
Aboriginal Hostels Limited
National Australia Day Council Limited - ^
Outback Stores Pty Ltd - ^

Social Services (3)

Department of Social Services - M
Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) - #
National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition
    Agency (National Disability Insurance Agency) - M

Treasury (17)

Department of the Treasury - M
Australian Bureau of Statistics - M
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) - I, *
Australian Office of Financial Management (AOFM) - M
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) - *, ^
Australian Securities and Investments
    Commission (ASIC) -M, I, #, *
Australian Taxation Office - M
Commonwealth Grants Commission
Inspector-General of Taxation
National Competition Council
Office of the Auditing and Assurance Standards
    Board (AUASB) - #
Office of the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) - #
Productivity Commission
Royal Australian Mint
Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation - M, F, ^
Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee (CAMAC) - #
Reserve Bank of Australia - M, F, Ⓟ, ^

Veterans' Affairs (2)

(Part of the Defence Portfolio)
Department of Veterans' Affairs - M
Australian War Memorial - M, Ⓟ

Parliamentary Departments (4)

Department of Parliamentary Services - M, ▲
Department of the House of
Representatives - ▲
Department of the Senate - ▲
Parliamentary Budget Office - ▲

TYPES OF ENTITIES

96	**Non-corporate Commonwealth entity** is a Commonwealth entity that is not a body corporate.*
68	**Corporate Commonwealth entity** is a Commonwealth entity that is a body corporate.*
15	**Commonwealth Company** is a *Corporations Act 2001* company that the Commonwealth controls.

KEY TO SYMBOLS

Governance Structure or Characteristics

B	Prescribed as Government Business Enterprises under the PGPA Rules.
M	Material entities (comprising 99% of revenues, expenses, assets and liabilities of the total General Government Sector). All Departments of State are considered material in nature.
I	Inter-jurisdictional entities in nature (interacts with State, Territory or foreign governments)
R	Corporate Commonwealth entities established by regulation under an Act or by a rule under section 87 of the PGPA Act.
HC	The Attorney-General's portfolio includes the High Court of Australia, which is part of the Commonwealth, is an "agency" named in the annual Appropriation Acts and is in the "General Government Sector". However, it is not a Commonwealth entity under the PGPA Act, due to its status under its enabling legislation, which also sets its employment framework.
E	Executive Agency, through an Order made by the Governor-General, under subsection 65(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*
*	3 entities have a body corporate status but are prescribed as non-corporate Commonwealth entities.

Employment Arrangements

PS Act	Officials are taken to be employed under *Public Service Act 1999* unless stipulated by an employment related key below.
^	Entities that do not engage staff under the PS Act.
#	Entities can engage officials under enabling legislation as well as *Public Service Act 1999*. These include Defence under the *Defence Act 1903*, the *Naval Defence Act 1910* and the *Air Force Act 1923*.
▲	Has officials employed under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*.

Government Financial Statistic (GFS) Classification

GGS	All Commonwealth entities and Commonwealth companies are part of the GGS unless stipulated by a GFS classification below.
T	Public Non-financial Corporation (Trading)
F	Public Financial Corporation
U	Unclassified entity (not classified as GGS, PFC or PNFC)

Government Requirements

Ⓟ	Subject to the requirements of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs). All non-corporate Commonwealth entities are subject to the CPRs.
X	Entities that are exempt, or partially exempt, from government policy orders (section 22 of the PGPA Act).

Definitions

Listed Entities	A listed entity is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity prescribed by an Act or the PGPA Rules. All non-corporate Commonwealth entities are "listed entities" except for Departments of State and Parliamentary Departments.

GovernancePolicy@Finance.gov.au

Appendix B – Interview guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of records in by different groups of professionals in Australian public sector agencies.

The ultimate aim of this study is to extend recordkeeping professionals understandings of how their users perceive records so that we can design and implement better recordkeeping regimes and systems and ensure that the records of the Australian Government and properly managed for business, accountability and cultural purposes.

Background

Can I start by asking a few background questions?

How long have you worked in the Australian Public Service and the public sector?   In what kind of roles?

Can outline your professional qualifications for me?

How do you professionally identify? Why?

How long have you worked in this agency and in what roles?

Please describe your current role for me.

In your current role can you describe for me the kinds of tasks you would do on a day-to-day basis?

What kinds of current documents, information sources and records that you use, create and interact with most often?

What kinds of non-current documents, information sources and records might you use for research – investigating a historical issue?

How often might you recall non-current records for research?

Are these paper off-site storage via the records management program? Digital etc?

Taking these examples, can you explain for me which you would consider to be records and why?

How would you describe the difference between documents and records? Between archives and records?

Are there particular qualities records have that other forms of information don't?

How do records become archives? In this agency can you describe how this happens?

In your professional education was there emphasis on concepts such as evidence, information, records or documents?

From your professions perspective how would you describe these concepts?

Policy awareness

Are you aware of your agency's records management program and policy?

If yes, can you briefly describe it for me?

Which pieces of legislation and/or government policies are you aware of which have an impact on the management information, databases, records or documents?

> Prompts re privacy, FOI, Archives Act, protective security policy, information classification, Digital transition policy, Cloud computing, specific recordkeeping requirements to particular professional areas – tax, OH&S etc.

From a personal/professional/agency perspective - how would you describe the reasons for keeping records?

How would you describe the contribution of the records to your agency? The Government? Society?

How do you / your agency enact behaviours in your that support these goals?

Defining records

How would you define a record?

What are the differences between documents, records and information?

The effect of formats on perceptions

Your agency uses paper and digital records management? What kinds of formats that you generate would you consider records?

Prompt re other digital formats?

- Tweets, Facebook posts
- SMS
- Communicator conversations
- Websites
- Emails, word documents
- Pictures/scans
- Databases – other business systems not the records system which are still recordkeeping systems

Is your perception of records paper more strongly associated with records than digital formats? Or why is it equal in your mind?

The role of time/format on authority (if not already covered above)

Which of the sources you deal with would you describe as having these qualities?

Informational value / evidentiary value / Business value / Cultural value

Reliability / Authenticity / Trustworthiness

Prompt - perceptions of reliability and authenticity with ephemeral digital forms such as social media, databases, transactional websites etc

Prompt - archives are more authoritative than records? Electronic more than paper?

Reactions to Professional definitions

The following definition is provided in the *Archives Act 1983*. Can you provide your thoughts on the definition and its usefulness for your profession/agency?

The following definition is provided in the International Records Management Standard. Can you provide your thoughts on the definition and its usefulness for your profession/agency?

Information culture

How easy to you find it to access information to support decision-making?

What automated workflow and other tools are used?

How easy do you find it to access information from someone else within your workgroup/another department/division? Do you know where to go?

Are the processes for records management routine in your area? Are they embedded to your work or perceived as a separate additional duty?

What does work well in terms of records management?

What doesn't work well?

How would you describe the role of records in information-sharing?

Thank you for your time

Thank you for taking time to take part in this research. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C - Participant Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

RECORDS AS INFORMATION, RECORDS AS EVIDENCE?

Exploring perceptions of records in an age of social media

UTS HREC APPROVAL NO.: 2013000688

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Christopher Colwell and I am a PhD student at the University of Technology, Sydney. My supervisor is Dr Michael Olsson and my co-supervisor is Dr Hilary Yerbury.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research is to find out about the perceptions of records among differing professional groups and agencies within the Australian public sector.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

I would like you to participate in one semi-structured interview lasting up to one hour in which I will ask you about your thoughts and experiences in relation to your perceptions of records, their functions and management. I may contact you later by email etc in order to ask to review the transcript of your interview, ask follow-up questions and or/ascertain your opinion regarding ideas and themes emerging from the analysis,

The interviews will be conducted by me. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and they will de-identified using a pseudonym. The data will be stored securely for a period of seven years. I propose to publish the results from this study as my PhD thesis as well as in other academic publications and at conferences. A copy of the final research will also be provided to your agency.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that self-conscious after talking about these issues. Information which could identify you will be removed from any submissions made for publication and the data you provide will be kept confidential.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

Your agency has agreed to be a case study agency for my research and you are able to give me the information I need to find out about different perceptions of records among diverse professional groups within an Australian Government agency.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

You don't have to say yes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisors can help you with, please feel free to contact me on xx xxxx xxxx (email: xxxxxx@uts.edu.au).

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on xx xxxx-xxxx, and quote this number UTS HREC Approval No. 2013000688

Appendix D – Agency Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Records as information, records as evidence?
Exploring perceptions of records in an age of social media
UTS HREC APPROVAL NO.: 2013000688

Consent form for agency

I _____(*officer's name/title*) on behalf of _____(*agency name*) agree to the agency's participation in the PhD thesis research project being conducted by Mr Christopher Colwell under the supervision of Dr Michael Olsson Senior Lecturer, Information and Knowledge Management at the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007. (Telephone: xx xxxx xxxx, email: xxxx@uts.edu.au).

I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of records by different professional groups within Australian Government agencies in an age of social media.

I understand that the agency's participation in this research will involve semi-structured interviews with its staff, in which they will be asked to talk about their perceptions on the nature and properties of records and their uses for up to one hour. These interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I understand that the researcher may contact these staff later by email or phone in order to ask follow-up questions, or have them review the transcripts of their interviews and/or ascertain their opinions regarding ideas & themes emerging from the analysis.

I understand that Mr Colwell will also perform documentary analysis on publicly accessible documents about the agency or where he requires access to other documentation he will file a Freedom of Information Request with the agency for documents not available on the agency's Information Publication Scheme. Release of any of these internal documents to him will be subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

I am aware that I can contact Mr Colwell if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw the agency's participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Mr Colwell has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data collected as part of this project, including data gathered from publicly available documents or documents released to Mr Colwell, may be published in a form that does not identify this agency or its staff in any way.

_____ ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

_____ ____/____/____
Signature (researcher)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: xx- xxxx xxxx, xxxxx@uts.edu.au), and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix E – Individual Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Records as information, records as evidence?
Exploring perceptions of records in an age of social media

UTS HREC APPROVAL NO.: 2013000688

Consent form for participants

I _____ *(participant's name)*
agree to participate in PhD thesis research project being conducted by Mr Christopher
Colwell under the supervision of Dr Michael Olsson Senior Lecturer, Information and
Knowledge Management at the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123,
Broadway NSW 2007. (Telephone: xx xxxx xxxx, email: xxxxx@uts.edu.au).

I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of records by
different professional groups within the Australian Government agencies in the age of
social media.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve one semi-structured
interview, in which I will be asked to talk about my perceptions on the nature and
properties of records and their uses for up to one hour. These interviews will be audio-
recorded and transcribed. I understand that the researcher may contact me later by email
or phone in order to ask follow-up questions, to have me review the transcript of my
interview and/or ascertain my opinion regarding ideas & themes emerging from the
analysis.

I am aware that I can contact Mr Colwell if I have any concerns about the research. I
also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at
any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Mr Colwell has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that
does not identify me in any way.

_____ ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

_____ ____/____/____
Signature (researcher)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: xx xxxx-xxxx, email: xxxxxx@uts.edu.au), and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix F - List of interviews/transcripts

Agency	Interviewee(s)	Duration
1	Information professional / Information management professional	01:07:15
1	Digital marketing professional	00:54:32
1	International marketing specialist	00:54:05
1	Human resources professional	00:56:31
1	Legal professional	00:40:54
1	Marketing professional	00:40:27
1	Business advisor	01:00:54
1	Information technology professional	01:00:52
2	Information management professional	01:01:39
2	Digital commerce professional	00:58:25
2	Human resources professional	00:44:07
2	Business project manager	00:41:13
2	Finance professional	00:52:46
2	Manager	00:49:58
2	Senior manager	00:40:59
3	Legal manager	00:49:51
3	Communications professional	00:54:25
3	Legal professional / Program administrator	00:47:54

Agency	Interviewee(s)	Duration
3	Finance professional	00:32:16
3	Human resources professional	00:59:35
3	Records and archives manager	00:45:59
3	Information technology professional	00:35:55
4	Information professional / Records management training specialist	00:56:08
4	Information manager	00:58:17
4	Information architect	01:00:42
4	Legal professional	00:47:22
4	Social media producer	01:02:04
4	Strategic planning professional	00:51:23
4	Business manager	00:14:19
4	Archivist	00:47:23

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