Managing the Digital University Desktop

Understanding and Empowering the Individual; Preserving the Public Record and Institutional History

Report on March 10, 2004 Board Meeting (held in conjunction with workshop)

On March 10, Managing the Digital University Desktop project staff held a pilot email management workshop for 44 Duke and UNC employees in the Gothic Reading Room in Perkins Library at Duke University. Members of the project advisory board were included as participants. With support from a Robertson Scholars Collaboration grant, project leaders presented draft email management guidelines developed using data from our two campus survey and 100 follow-up interviews at both schools. Using feedback from the workshop attendees, we will refine the guidelines and add to them. The guidelines will be presented in a web-based "Frequently Asked Question" (FAQ) format on both the project website and the websites for the Duke and UNC Archives.

Six draft guidelines were presented to test group. After an overview of each guideline, we broke the attendees into discussion groups; each discussing one of the guidelines. The topics covered and the group leaders were as follows.

- **Attachment management** – Tim Pyatt, Duke University Archives, and Lynn Holdzkom, Board member
- **Deletion management**– Helen Tibbo, UNC SILS Professor, and Frank Holt, UNC Records Service Coordinator
- **Personal email** (Duke and UNC versions) – David Mitchell, Duke Records Manager, and Susan Ballinger, UNC Archives
- **Email as an official record** (Duke and UNC versions) – Janis Holder, UNC Archives, and Jill Katte, Duke University Archives
- **Email filing guidelines** – Paul Conway, Duke Libraries, and Russell Koonts, Duke Medical Center Archives and Board member
- **Printed formats** – Kim Chang, Project Manager, Emily Glenn, Duke Medical Center Archives

Some highlights of comments received included:

- Archivists/records managers should be proactive with managing email as they try to be with paper records.
- Deletion management is relevant because it's known that people retain a lot more than they should.
- A flow chart or decision tree would be helpful for FAQs
- Clear definitions for all FAQs. Make sure jargon-free as much as possible, but that where needed, jargon is defined clearly and succinctly.
- Need IT involvement—both in training for IT staff to be records-management/archives aware themselves and for them to pass info along to users.
- All FAQs need lots of examples.

- Guidelines need to be software neutral.
- Making email available and searchable to satisfy audits or other legal obligations must be considered, keeping in mind too that excessive retention could present a liability to the institution.
- When developing rules for deletion, there needs to be consistency when applying these rules to managing email and paper based content. Without consistency, systematic destruction of email will not happen on a routine basis. One way to have consistency is to not delete anything.
- The ability to easily share information is a convenient feature for retaining email.
- Time management is another concern. It is debated whether it is worth the time and effort it takes to review and decide which email can be deleted, or just keep it all and deal with locating it when the need arises. A study is needed that analyzes the cost associated with an employee who takes time to appraise each message to determine its appropriate retention vs. not worrying with it.
- Perhaps the issue of "ownership" needs to be clarified, i.e., what really belongs to the university (public or private)? Is personal email on a university server university property?
- A bullet should be added to specify the laws/regulations that might protect the content of email (FERPA, HIPAA, personnel laws, etc.)
- Simplify terminology, such as "record series," and avoid other RM and archives jargon.
- Need examples and definitions of personal, short term value, and continuing value …Also add action statements to each type of message -- when someone finds a message of continuing value, what should he/she do?
- Three possible filing structures were mentioned. The feeling was that most people will want options and not mandates:
    - Retention Schedule Structure
    - Functionality Structure (filing by month)
    - Personal/Actual Use Structure
- A retention schedule is a useful tool that should be applied to emails as it is to printed records. Part of that schedule needs to educate people so that they can learn who or which office is the official record creator or retainer. Group agreed that chairs of committees etc. should be assigned the job of retaining the official record.
- Users should be able to build guidelines into their workflow.

Project staff are in the process of incorporating comments and suggestions from the workshops participants into the FAQs and will be posting the results on the project website this summer.

Submitted by:

Tim Pyatt
MDUD co-principal investigator
May 2004