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Review of Records and Information Management (3rd edition)

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Review of *Records and Information Management*, 3rd ed.

Patricia C. Franks. Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2025. 584 pp.
Softcover. \$79.99. ISBN: 979-8-89255-588-3

Patricia C. Franks in the third edition of *Records and Information Management* has substantially updated content throughout to reflect current changes in technology (especially Artificial Intelligence or AI), standards, regulations, and practices. At no point does the content feel dated, which is no small feat in a constantly evolving world. Franks' extensive background qualifies her to share expertise in this area. She is a professor emerita at San José State University where she teaches enterprise content management. In addition, she has served in leadership roles with National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators (NAGARA) and the Upstate New York Chapter of ARMA International. Her well executed inclusion of AI throughout the book is supported by her research as lead on the application of AI in archives and records management in an InterPARES Trust AI multinational interdisciplinary project.

A message of hope is a core theme throughout *Records and Information Management*. Records management is needed more now than ever before, and records and information management (RIM) professionals have a solid foundation to adapt to today's ever-changing sociotechnical landscape. The world has changed drastically in recent years with increased remote work post-pandemic, the explosion of GenAI with ChatGPT in late 2022, reimagined business operations, and a shift to predominately digital records in recent years. As the infiltration of GenAI into daily life and the perception by some that AI is a "magic bullet for any task" (p. 422) has shown, new tech can receive a lot of hype before it plateaus. By understanding emerging and disruptive technologies, it is possible for the RIM specialist to find a path forward as both a user of the technology and as a recordkeeper. This book's "goal is to provide stability in a world that gets overly excited about the next new thing" (p. xxi). By extension records management can be a steadying influence in moments of great change. RIM professionals do not need to reinvent the wheel, instead solid policies and procedures can simply be adapted if changes are met with creativity and flexibility.

The central premise of the book is that records are essential in day-to-day operations of business and successful organizations manage their records. Records are created as a side effect of business operations which aim to improve customer satisfaction. Yet without ready access to or proper disposal of those very records business would suffer. Adding complexity to the issue, very few information systems are created with records management in mind. RIM specialists come to the rescue by integrating records management requirements into operational processes.

Foundational to a solid records management program is first understanding business operations and how records are created, used, stored, and disposed of within business workflows. With that knowledge in place, a records management plan can be developed. Ideally, business plans and records management programs are fully integrated across an organization. A benefit of *Records and Information Management* is its broad applicability to new and existing records and information management programs. Franks provides practical steps for each stage of a program's development from creation, assessment, adjustment, and maintenance. No matter which step your organization is at, the book can help you build a stronger information governance program.

Woven through *Records and Information Management* are practical business techniques applied directly to the work of records and information management. For example, creating a mission, vision, and strategic plan are traditional business methods, but Franks takes it a step further by applying them specifically to information governance and records management. A systems analysis approach and data mapping can both be used to identify records throughout their lifecycle. A well-developed business case can help convince higher-ups that a digital preservation plan is necessary and worth funding. Business resumption plans built with records in mind can help organizations recover after disasters. Additionally, discussion of legal and regulatory requirements (both U.S. and international) is routinely included to help ensure a legally defensible strategy can be attained. Businesses without a solid records management plan in place may be adversely affected by court rulings, the inability to resume business after a disaster, higher than necessary costs of maintaining records, and under performance. The use of regular business methodologies applied to records management is well explained and provides practical strategies for RIM professionals to build and strengthen their work.

Franks has a finger on the pulse of the current moment and demonstrates a remarkable ability to look forward to future possibilities. There is nothing groundbreaking in acknowledging manmade and natural disasters are a possibility, AI is changing how work is completed and cyberattacks are always looking for weaknesses to exploit. What is unique to Franks is how she posits an organization's core goals at the center of disaster planning and risk mitigation, rather than focusing on the records themselves. "Today's leading companies have turned the traditional business model on its head" and information assets (rather than tangible assets) are "leveraged to achieve company goals" (p. 289). The increased monetary value of information has increased risk and raised interest in protecting information. Valuable information is also at the heart of many emerging technologies that may impact future records work. It works out nicely for RIM specialists that their goals to protect records align with organizations leveraging records to achieve goals. When you realize how integral information and records are in data rich businesses, it helps drive the desire to do the work of planning for uncertainties, events that may not happen, or new tech that may not live up to the hype. Many internal and external influences can be mitigated if they are adequately identified and prepared for.

Records and Information Management covers a lot of information that would be useful to a wide array of readers from beginners to practicing professionals, as well as the lone arranger to large staff organizations. The content is especially useful for business and corporate records. New or aspiring RIM professionals are presented with a great introduction to all things information management. However, the use of acronyms throughout could be confusing jargon for the uninitiated. The book provides seasoned RIM practitioners with a comprehensive review and update of current changes and potential future developments that may have an impact on the profession. RIM adjacent professionals (archives, IT, risk management, etc.) can gain an understanding of how a wide variety of roles from across an institution share responsibility for information governance and how they could ideally work together to form a cohesive enterprise-wide information management program. It helps you see how your piece of the process fits into the larger puzzle of records management.

The book effectively functions as an introductory textbook while also serving as an edited volume of thought-provoking mini essays relevant to the current moment. The new edition includes two new Paradigms and Perspectives essays at the end of each chapter written by practitioners in records and information management or related fields. For instructors considering adopting the textbook, there are several perks. The organization of the book into fourteen chapters fits nicely into a standard sixteen-week semester and supplementary PowerPoint slides can be requested. The third edition is less expensive than the previous edition and may help save students money. The third edition is longer than the second edition with an additional 89 pages in the chapters (not including front or back matter). Each chapter averages 35 pages including notes. While the book is not arranged as such, it can be divided into three overarching categories: records and information lifecycles, creating an information governance program, and standalone chapters. The chapters could be rearranged to easily fit within an individual instructor's learning plan.

As an archivist in a small university archives, I genuinely appreciated the inclusion of specific software names, standards with their full technical titles, frameworks, and solid examples from a wide range of institutions. All of which allow the reader to further explore a topic and provide a jumping off point for research. For example, if you need to implement a new system, knowing the names of some of the leading software products will help you find other comparable software that can meet your organizational needs. While at the same time knowing the relevant standards the software needs to meet can help with making decisions. As an archivist, I expect to receive permanent records at the end of their active life, but because there is no point person over records management at the university, I often serve as the de facto RIM specialist. This book has helped me feel more confident in my recommendations and given me plenty of ideas on how we can improve. *Records and Information Management* is a useful book for anyone who deals with records management at any stage of a record's lifecycle.

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