

The records processes: what are they?

Written by

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Usually we hear, use and read about “**records processes**” or recordkeeping processes. It is often used when talking about the electronic environment. Even mentioned in standards and legislation, and I'm not sure that records professionals have the same idea about what they are.

I love questioning what is taken for granted. I think it's a good way to move forward, although sometimes this position might have seemed somewhat unorthodox. The issue of records processes is something that I have to rethink at least in three recent occasions:



- Commenting and discussing the drafts of the [new ISO 15489](#) ;
- Preparing the material for the course for the UOC “ [Postgrado sobre implantación de proyectos de gestión de documentos electrónicos](#) ” , and finally
- Trying to explain the concept to a group of IT specialist that help me on a project.

The orientation of the records processes vision was settled **ISO 15489** in 2001, based in an international consensus. After almost 12 years, the list of records processes varies depending on the context. For example, in the Spanish law ([Technical Interoperability Standard for E-Document Management Policies](#)) are: Capture, Registration, Classification, Description, Access, Appraisal, Conservation, Transfer and Destruction, but in the early discussions on 15489 revision are: Capture, Aggregation, Classification, Indexing, Access implementation, Disposition implementation, Maintenance of usability, Migration and Storage.

Regardless of enumerations here are some food for thought:

1. - To those who are dedicated to process analysis and automation the concept of records processes is **difficult to understand**, because hardly fit the classic definition of process "set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs" of ISO 9000.

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Dialogue more or less real:

"Q -... but then these records processes are performed when documents are already in the repository?

A -It depends, some of them are better performed in the creation of the record during the business process

Q-Explain me with an example, I can't understand

A -For example, classifying records means to link them to the business process or activity within it is generated, that can be automated because we know in which workflow it is produced

Q -But that's not a process, it is simply a data to be captured, or if you want an automatic activity to be included in the workflow

A - Good named as you want, the requirement is that all documents created are to be classified"

2.- In the paper environment it was easy to understand records management as a process. Documents /records are sent to the archive or records center, so they are the input of the process. Then a set of interrelated activities are performed and the output was the organized and accessible records. But then the entire records management was the process and what we call now the record processes were the different interrelated activities. That it is easy to explain, is the typical support process of the organization in the process mapping. But it isn't this way nowadays, is it?

3.- And thinking furthermore. Understanding records as the input of records processes, what is the output in a digital environment? Well, sometime the same records with added information (**metadata!!**)

, but not always. For example, the appraisal or assessment can be put in the same category of records processes? Is not it rather an analysis? And access what a process is when I consult records on the screen?

And in conclusion, look more on the **objectives** of each of these records processes, rather than the process itself, since in complex technological environments there will be

multiple options

to achieve the same goals.