The New Information Governance Paradigm

Rethinking Capture to Uncover Information Otherwise 'Locked' on Paper

By **Kevin Craine**

The term and notion of Information Governance is getting a lot of attention these days, and for good reason. Information is the lifeblood of businesses today and properly managing and governing its collection and use is a fundamental corporate imperative. As the volume and variety of enterprise information continues to grow, so does the need for well-thought strategies and approaches for information governance.

Advancing Information Governance

Information governance is most commonly associated with risk avoidance. Data security, information privacy, regulatory compliance and legal discovery are just some of important factors driving policies and procedures to control corporate records and data. As a result, the customary focus of information governance is on reducing and avoiding these data-centric risks.

> Capture systems uncover a wealth of overlooked information that would otherwise be lost entirely.

But a more expansive definition of information governance is emerging that has broader implications and benefits. While risk mitigation remains an important part of the mix, organizations are now beginning to view information governance in terms of organizational cost and performance as well. Information carries great risk to be sure, but there is great cost in using information inefficiently, or not using information in ways that improve the performance of the organization.

Information Governance

Risk – compliance, discovery, data security
Cost – workflow, redundancy, errors
Performance – analytics, service, innovation

A New Model of Information Governance

The new model of information governance is rooted in three areas: risk, cost and performance. It makes sense to include activities to reduce the costs associated with finding and using business information. And the real value of information governance may indeed be found by building capabilities that increase business performance. Doing more with data to improve processes and products, boost brand satisfaction, and enable more effective and strategic decisions are just a few of the benefits of this expanded approach and good reasons to adopt the new information governance paradigm.

Capturing Advantages with Handwriting

Capture systems and data recognition technologies enable organizations to do a better job at information governance because they provide a way to digitize information that would otherwise be locked on paper. It's hard to reduce risk, cut costs and improve performance when you are constrained by a paper-pushing process. Scanning helps reduce the burden of paper, while advanced recognition technologies "read" printed information on documents, extract and redact that data, and enable a variety of processes and procedures that take information governance to a new level.

OCR and ICR

OCR and ICR technologies improve information governance by enabling organizations to capture and digitize information that would otherwise be lost or overlooked in the scanning process. Optical Character Recognition, or OCR, is the digital conversion of typewritten or machine-printed text into computer-readable text. Organizations use OCR to process forms, checks and a variety of business correspondence. Intelligent Character Recognition, or ICR, "kicks it up a notch" by providing the advanced ability to read handwritten information. We're all familiar with filling in box-and-comb information on forms, but state-of-the-art image analysis and pattern recognition systems are able to recognize, capture and process free-form and unconstrained handwriting as well.

> **Many organizations do not use capture systems in ways that live up to the full potential of the technology.**

New Strategies Needed

Despite the advantages, many organizations do not use data capture systems in ways that take full advantage of the technology. A 2014 study conducted by AIIM found that most enterprise organizations have scan and capture systems already in place, but only half employ any kind of text recognition technology. And although 40% indicate that their inbound forms contain handwritten data fields, very few are attempting to capture this information, either deferring it to manual keying or ignoring it outright. Indeed, over a third (37%) said that they had never even considered handwriting in the mix. This trend may be changing, however. The study shows also that a majority of companies (67%) feel that handwriting and annotations will "play a key role" and are "quite important" in their future strategies.

Overlooked Information

Organizations today are looking for ways to shed light on "Dark Data" – which, among other things, includes handwritten information that exists on forms, contracts and documents. Despite the increasing digitization of business today, a great number of business forms and documents still contain handwritten entries – replies, notes and signatures – that are vitally important, especially when you begin to look at this data from a broader information governance point of view. Legal discovery, privacy, compliance, process improvement, archival and retention, and a host of other aspects and applications all point to the importance of overshadowed and overlooked handwritten content.

Annotations – If you think handwritten annotations are no big deal, just ask any lawyer or legal counsel and they will tell you that written information on documents like contracts or depositions is incredibly important. The presence of – or lack of – handwritten revisions, changes and initials can have both an immediate and long-term impact on the legalities of the document, the activities associated with the process, and the efficacy of a wide range of business critical processes and information.

Comments – A great deal of important information is contained in handwritten comments, yet most of this data is overlooked or lost in the capture and archive process. Indeed, companies find a wealth of insight in comments like "this product is defective," or "response was slow" that can be powerful tools to improve products, services and performance. Likewise, comments from service technicians, account representatives and phone center staff, often scribbled in margins or unstructured comment fields, provide a big data perspective that more and more organizations are using to their competitive advantage.

Signatures – Even with the ongoing digitization of business today, the function and completion of many key business processes often comes down to a handwritten signature. Loan transactions, lease and rental contracts, and a variety of authorizations across many key functions all require a company to either confirm that a signature is present and/or match a signature for transaction enablement. And organizations across all industries and markets are subject to legal discovery demands to locate and retrieve documents that were signed by a certain individual.

> **Organizations today are looking for ways to shed light on "Dark Data."**

Newer ICR technology can help organizations from all industries capture overlooked handwritten information and use that information in intelligent ways. In financial services it could mean checking for completeness of new account forms and for signatures on compliance statements. In healthcare it might mean finding and redacting handwritten data for HIPPA privacy compliance. For a utility or telecom company, it might mean the ability to collect and analyze handwritten log comments and include that information for use in data analytics.

Capturing Improvements

Despite the popular notion of "going paperless," the fact remains that paper documents continue to be the backbone of information gathering and process input. Scanning forms and capturing data using recognition technologies like OCR and ICR is one way to begin to bridge the gap between paper and digital media and make improvements to long-standing, paper-bound functions. Information governance activities for privacy and records retention, as well as cost containment and performance improvements, can be triggered by specific keywords. Sensitive content can be automatically tagged, routed, redacted and analyzed. Initials, handwritten notes, text amendments and tampering can all be important parts of the process as each can be automatically detected and process staff alerted.

> In any organization there is lost information that is never noticed, never leveraged, and no one ever thinks about.

Automatic Redaction
Protect the Privacy of Overlooked Information

Once a document is scanned, that captured information generally follows two paths within an organization. One involves a business path; to enable a process, transaction or workflow. The second moves information to an archive; generally a records management or document management system. These two systems often have different policies, encryption and security scenarios.

But not every bit of information contained on every document needs to be archived. For example, you may want to capture and identify a social security number on a contract or authorization form, but once that information is entered into a line of business system it may not make sense to store it an image repository. Indeed, the social security number may have no remaining value in terms of archive, but it certainly will present a significant risk if a security breach should occur. And a 20-year-old image archive may be a treasure trove of personal information that is a tempting target for hackers.

Advanced capture systems have field level redaction capability that covers up certain types of content before it is entered into an archive. Some go a step further with the ability to perform a look-back analysis that recaptures and redacts sensitive data that has been overlooked and could result in increased exposure and risk. These automatic redaction capabilities enable more comprehensive privacy and data security strategies that boost information governance overall.

Analytics and Decision Making
How do you know what you don't know...and how it is hurting you?

In any organization there is lost information that is never noticed, never leveraged, and no one ever thinks about. Organizations can no longer afford to ignore valuable handwritten content, especially as demands for improved information governance increase. Otherwise, they may be exposed to more risk and cost, and missed opportunities to optimize the performance of the firm. Indeed, handwritten data

and free-format fields play an important role in most business processes – and an increasing important one as organizations seek to exploit the "Big Data" they may contain.

Advanced analytics are powering new competitive advantages. The use of Big Data — large pools of data that can be brought together and analyzed to discern patterns and make better decisions — is now a differentiating activity for organizations from all industries, sizes and types. The more data that is captured, collected and thoughtfully considered, the more effective organizations are at enhancing their performance. In the end, the power of data enables better business decisions that increase the quality and efficiency of processes, products and services. Capture systems make this a possibility by uncovering a wealth of overlooked information and dark data that would otherwise be lost to the process entirely.

> **The real value of information governance may be found by building capabilities to increase business performance.**

Moving Forward

Companies are adopting a new, more expansive paradigm of information governance that is focused on risk, cost and performance. Capture systems using ICR technologies help organizations to do a better job at information governance by providing the ability to capture overlooked and handwritten information that is commonly lost in the scanning process. As a result organizations are better able to reduce risk, cut the costs and inefficiencies of working with paper, and enable smarter, more thoughtful business decisions that improve organizational performance.

If you have not considered ICR in the past – or if you thought it was too costly or complex to implement – now is the time to reevaluate how the technology and capability can improve information governance and ultimately the performance of your organization. Use this paper to build the awareness and perspective needed to move forward productively. Look for solutions and partners that provide the right mix of experience, vision, and advanced capabilities that leverage the full value of the technology.

About the Author

Kevin Craine is the author of the book "*Designing a Document Strategy*," and the host of the "*The Bizcast*" on the C-Suite Network. His books have sold in over 30 countries and he is a respected authority on document management and process improvement. Kevin holds an MBA in the Management of Science and Technology and a BA in Communications. He is the executive director of Craine Communications Group. For more info visit CraineGroup.com.

Need a White Paper Written?
We've written for some of North America's leading brands. Now you can benefit from our expert writing, editing and strategic communications services.
Visit CraineGroup.com or call 503.452.9166