



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

# MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM PHYSICAL TO DIGITAL RECORDKEEPING

ARCHIVES, RECORDS AND  
INNOVATION IN THE  
DIGITAL ERA

SASA CONFERENCE 2017  
CAPE TOWN

# PRESENTER



Ashabai Chinyemba

MANAGER: CENTRAL RECORDS OFFICE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

**“ARCHIVES, RECORDS AND  
INNOVATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA”**  
SASA CONFERENCE 2017

# OVERVIEW

Section 1:  
introduction

Section 6 :  
Lessons learnt

Section 2:  
Context

Section 5  
Implementation  
challengers

Section 3:  
Proposed solution

Section 4:  
Drivers of project





## **SECTION 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

# PURPOSE OF PRESENTATION



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

The presentation is not a research project

A description of real life digitisation experiences

Purpose of the presentation is

- To share experiences with colleagues
- To share the challenges of digitization
- To share lessons learnt

To make colleagues better prepared for the real deal

# CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL AGE



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

Age dominated by the increasing use of digital systems to conduct business

Characterised by:

- the rise in digital content
- Increasing reliance on digital content
- Heightened user expectations

The existence of hybrid records keeping systems

# CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL AGE



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

The role of records managers is to optimize the value of information to benefit the organisation

The challenge is that current system no longer adequate to manage records created

Records managers forced to respond to this challenge

Content management systems may provide the solution

How do we manage the transition effectively in the interest of the organisation?



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



## SECTION 2

## THE CONTEXT



# RECORDS KEEPING AT WITS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

- Characterized by a public/private environment
- Records created in user departments
- Current records stored in user department
- Semi-current records centralised in the Central Records Office (CRO)
- Only public departments submit records to the CRO
- Private companies request for advice on recordkeeping

# RECORDS MANAGEMENT AT WITS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

Active documents stored in the office of use

Transferred to the CRO when no longer very active

CRO integrate, create and maintain files

Files updated periodically until termination of relationship

CRO provides access to units, not individuals

Files generally retained for long periods of time

# RECORDS KEEPING AT WITS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

Records keeping situation characterised by:

Existence of records in all formats

Student records existed in hybrid forms: paper, photographs, microfiche, microfilm, electronic

Different equipment needed to access records

Electronic records managed on different platforms including Oracle, SharePoint, Home grown solutions

Systems not talking to one another

# THE ROLE OF THE CRO AT WITS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

To manage the central records of Wits

Records that protect the rights and interests of the University

To ensure content is accessed for as long as needed

To comply with national statutes and regulations

To produce evidence of business activity in needed in disputes

To dispose of records in an auditable way



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



## SECTION 3

PROPOSED  
SOLUTION



# PROPOSED SOLUTION



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

- Integrated information interface
- Metadata searches across all platforms
- Eliminate all the processes that create paper
- All legacy records to be digitized
- Physical/ digital storage mechanisms
- Security controls
- Storage of physical and digital records

# HOW WAS THIS TO BE DONE?



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

- Eliminate all the processes that create paper
  - All application processes to be on line
  - All registration processes to be online
  - The management of the student lifecycle to be online
  - Research processes to be managed online
- All legacy records to be digitized
- Physical records to retained in external storage
- Electronic records to be preserved in digital asset management systems

# THE DIGITIZATION PROJECT IN THE CRO



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

To be piloted with student file

Followed by records of administration

Then followed by archival collections

All documents come in hard copy

Easier to start with structured content

To be done simultaneously in the creating  
departments

Student records to be organised by student numbers



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



## SECTION 4

## DRIVERS OF THE PROJECT

# DRIVERS OF DIGITIZATION PROJECT

## PUSH FACTORS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

Reputation of the university

Challenges of storage space

Challenges of incomplete files

Files in multiple formats: paper, microform

Files stored in multiple places

Retrieval of all copies a challenge

Maintenance of obsolete equipment



# DRIVERS OF THE PROJECT

## PULL FACTORS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

The need to work speedily

Facilitates competitiveness

Working economically

Vision of the university

Increased security

Easy to comply with government regulation

Environmental friendliness

# ADDITIONAL BENEFITS



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

Working smart

All related records in one file

Multiple access by different authorised users

Information captured once for different users

Access from various locations including from home

Improved security to documents

Improved compliance

Easy to integrate with Oracle applications



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



## SECTION 5

## IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

# IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

Inadequate conceptualisation of business benefits by stakeholders

Absence of physical framework for digitisation

Absence of formal policy framework

Legal environment

Inadequate skills to operate efficiently in the digital environment



# IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Absence of champion to drive the project

Differences in understanding between IT and records personnel

IT staff not familiar with chosen systems

Resistance to change among staff

Disagreements among stakeholders on way forward with current records

Way forward with legacy records





UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



## SECTION 6

LESSONS LEARNT

# LESSONS LEARNT



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

End picture must be clearly understood by stakeholders

Understand from the beginning who owns to the project: records management not IT.

Engage champion who fully understands implications

Develop enforceable policy framework

Have necessary tools in place (retention policies, file plans)

Define who will have what functions and accesses from the beginning

# LESSONS LEARNT



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

- Select applications that are commonly used in the locality
- Ensure there is support for the application in your local IT department
- Make sure skills needed to operate the system are available on the market
- Implement through a pilot project
- Implement through external partner who clearly understands project

# LESSONS LEARNT

Recognise the role of both paper and electronic records in the system

The business world is becoming a hybrid between paper and electronic record formats

Currently no one media format that can be established as official business record

In most environments the paperless system may be difficult to implement

Apply techniques that are unique to your business



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

# LESSONS LEARNT



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

- Take stakeholders with you
- Ensure everyone involved has accepted the proposed changes
- Make sure new processes are difficult to bypass
- Ensure benefits are immediately realisable
- Ensure you chose a powerful pilot
- Business value must be clearly demonstrable across stakeholders
- Work together for the benefit of the organisation.



# LESSONS LEARNT



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

- Establish central control over the records lifecycle
- Records must be classified according to business function – functional classification
- Establish indexing and retrieval systems across the whole system
- Apply a centralized paper filing systems for digitized copies
- Apply electronic records management systems rather than document management systems



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



THANK YOU!