



Information Management 2006 end-of-year report

1. Introduction

Monash University faces a number of information-related challenges as it continues to move into the 21st Century:

- growth in the volume and complexity of information upon which the university depends;
- an increasing number of information islands and information-centric applications;
- convergence in digital content and media; and
- increasing statutory and regulatory requirements about how information is managed.

In 2005 the university developed an Information Management Strategy covering all aspects of the university's information activities. Revised in 2006, the latest edition is now available at <http://www.monash.edu.au/staff/information-management/strategy/>.

The strategy defines information as “selectively encoded and communicated knowledge in context”. The vision developed for information and knowledge at Monash University is:

Managing information to better create and share knowledge

Information resources are as important as the university's other key assets – human, physical, and financial assets. Skills, systems, processes and practices for managing these assets are well established. But although developing, sharing and imparting information are the defining activities of the university, information management remains a relatively new field. Best practice information management will require change in work practices, processes, staff skills and technology.

2. Principles

The following Information Management Principles have been developed to inform and guide information management activities at Monash University. The Information Management Strategy (pp35-44) elaborates some of the implications of these principles.

- **Productivity and efficiency:** Information, and the way it is managed, should contribute to the productivity of members of the Monash University community.
- **User-Centeredness:** Information systems and services should be designed (or re-designed) to operate in a way that is user- and task-centred. This should inform all aspects of system or service design.
- **Availability:** Information should ideally be accessible (subject to security and acceptable use guidelines) to anybody who needs it, at anytime, anywhere, and anyhow (i.e. on any device).
- **Staff and student involvement:** The process of developing and implementing the information management strategy and its accompanying policies should be as open, transparent and inclusive as possible. The university needs to provide an adequate, relevant and ongoing development programme to enable staff and students to create, access, manage and disseminate information resources effectively.
- **Trustworthy information and systems:** Information provided by Monash University should be, and be perceived to be, trustworthy (that is, relevant, accurate and timely) to the maximum extent possible.
- **Corporate Importance:** Information is a strategic resource, and will be managed appropriately. In general, university-wide information will be centrally managed to ensure integration and avoid fragmentation. Information needs and how information is managed should be identified as an integral part of strategic and project planning.

- **Information Sources:** University-created information may be made available from a core source or a derived source. The core source for any item of university-created information must be identifiable and accessible. Any derived sources of information must be identified as such. Each core source should have an identified custodian, an identified access community and an identified set of maintenance responsibilities.
- **Statutory requirements:** Information must be managed in accordance with external statutory and regulatory requirements. Information must be stored in such a way as to allow a timely response to freedom of information and local requests, as well as legally-mandated controlled discovery. Information arising from research involving human subjects must be dealt with in accordance with the Human Ethics Committee requirements.
- **Retention and disposal:** Essential information must be retained while required and then appropriately disposed of. While it is retained, it must be managed in such a way as to be recoverable in the event of loss on a timescale consistent with university requirements.
- **Information management principles determine IT principles:** The information management principles in this strategy should be used to inform IT principles. These IT principles will support and enable the implementation of the information management principles, as well as determine the deployment of IT systems.

3. Implementation

A considerable amount of progress has been achieved over the last 12 months with many significant milestones met and most activities on schedule to be completed as projected in the Information Management Strategy Implementation Plan (<http://www.monash.edu.au/staff/information-management/implementing/>).

A number of resources are now available to assist in the successful adoption of information management best practice:

- Seminars (eg. <http://monash.edu/staff/information-management/seminar/>), forums (<http://monash.edu/staff/information-management/forum/>) and case studies (<http://www.monash.edu.au/staff/information-management/stories/>) provide opportunities to learn about planning, implementation and best practice activity at all levels;
- Training courses (<http://monash.edu/staff/information-management/training/>) provide intervention in key areas such as email and file management, templates, styles and record keeping;
- Online resources (<http://monash.edu/staff/information-management/resources/>) provide a growing knowledgebase of “How-To” guides describing best practice skills and techniques.

Communications and co-ordination

An intensive communications programme was conducted during September 2006 with a 'Spring cleaning' theme, promoting the information management principles and other aspects of the program. Communications about the purpose and value of information management will continue during 2007 through the Information Management Forum.

The Information Management Strategy was revised in mid-2006 and candidate projects were documented and submitted for funding in 2007. Not all projects received funding and some projects will continue through 2008.

Theme 1: Working with information efficiently and effectively

This group of activities seeks to assist staff and students to improve their ability in working with information. Particular sub-themes are staff development, classification, document and records management, repositories and search and discovery.

Major achievements in 2006 were the implementation of an electronic document and records management system (improving information filing record-keeping and discovery systems) and implementing the first phase of Information Management for Workgroups, a replicable “franchise” model for improving workgroup

and individual practice. Other achievements include regular Information Management forums, the first series of information management “How-To” guides, information management topics incorporated into new staff induction, information training courses and reviewing the effectiveness of 2006 information management activity.

Planned activities for 2007–2008 include continuing the rollout of the electronic document and records management system, adopting the Information Management for Workgroups framework, continuing Information Management forums and online collaboration, developing information management best practice in the deployment of the new collaboration technologies, releasing further Information Management “How-To” guides and enhancing new staff induction and training courses.

Theme 2: Delivering information and services to users through web technologies

Informed by the University Web Strategy which was released in 2006, this group of activities serves the delivery of online information and services, building on the existing progress Monash has made in using web technologies. Particular sub-themes are the roles of the university’s public web site, intranet solutions, and web content management.

A number of core web services saw significant enhancements in 2006, with both the main Monash website (<http://monash.edu/>) and the my.monash portal (<http://my.monash.edu/>) implementing new user-centred designs and a new search engine (<http://search.monash.edu/>) being implemented. The web content management system has matured in use, with all ten faculties using it, and nine out of ten faculties using it as their primary means of managing web content. A new research directory (ROPES) was also released, allowing researchers to monitor and share information about their research publications and projects.

Activities in progress in 2007 include the migration of several existing intranets into the my.monash portal (in line with the web strategy) and completing the rollout of the web content management system and the “Future Students” website. Significantly improved web interfaces to major enterprise systems (mySAP for HR and finance and a Callista Connect pilot for student information) will also be released in 2007.

Planned activities for 2008 (contingent on funding) include developing a unified intranet to support a range of different staff roles and communities, piloting a student intranet, implementing new portal technologies to improve the ability to deliver information and services (including enhanced learning and teaching services), and building on the new portal engine to provide direct access to frequently-used functions from SAP and Callista.

Theme 3: Providing high quality management information

The Business Intelligence Strategy was prepared in 2006 and provides a comprehensive plan, systems architecture, and governance arrangements to provide managers with the information they need to make effective decisions. A systematic enterprise approach is being pursued that can be applied to all portfolios in a series of staged releases, drawing on data recorded in our existing enterprise data bases and other sources. This will require a high level of coordination and cooperation across multiple areas of functional responsibility to ensure the consistency of data and processes across the university.

Significant progress has been made in 2006 in surveys and evaluations, admissions load planning and monitoring systems, university KPI reporting and improvements to the underlying applications integration infrastructure. Work in these areas will continue through 2007-2008. The Business Intelligence Strategy will also be implemented in a series of stages through 2007-2008, commencing with the research and advancement portfolios.

Theme 4: Supporting collaborative activity

Monash’s current collaboration practice is heavily focussed around in-person meetings, emails and emailed documents. Improved support for collaboration is required to assist a highly mobile community working in teams across multiple campuses together with people external to the university. Existing collaboration services such as email, calendar and voice will be upgraded and a new suite of services will support synchronous and asynchronous collaboration. Planned enhancements include shared workspaces for collaboratively developing documents, tasks and schedules and real-time collaboration with desktop-based

audio and video conferencing. Advanced telephony (VoIP) will increase the integration between these methods of collaboration.

Most of these systems will provide opportunities to improve work practices at an institutional level, for workgroups and for individuals. Effective change management strategies will be key to their success.

In 2006 a broader programme was formed to promote an integrated set of services supporting collaboration. The new workgroup collaboration suite (IBM Lotus Notes) was selected and a desktop video conference solution was implemented as a pilot.

Activities in progress for 2007 include implementing the first phase of the workgroup collaboration suite (including email, calendar and supporting mobile devices), desktop video conferencing for staff, evaluation and selection of a VoIP telephonic solution and the first phase of its implementation. A broad collaboration strategy will be completed that includes videoconferencing services for meeting spaces.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include implementing the second phase of the workgroup collaboration solution (including students), integrating this with the electronic document and records management offering, implementing the telephonic solution and investigating new and emerging collaboration technologies that might be applicable for Monash University.

Theme 5: Supporting research data management

Research data management incorporates both the storage and curation of the data itself and support for the collaborative analysis, modelling, visualisation and publication of papers. Monash University has been very active in this area and has played a leading role nationally, demonstrated by our success in attracting approximately \$18 million of federal and state funding for VeRSI, ARCHER, ARROW, ARROW2 and DART projects, as well as ARC funding under the LIEF scheme to establish large scale data storage facilities for researchers. Most of these projects were initiated in 2006 and will complete in 2007-2008.

In recognition of the increasing volume and complexity of data created by researchers at Monash University, a research data management policy is being developed under the guidance of the eResearch Steering Committee, and sets out a framework for best practice data management throughout its lifecycle, including retention and preservation of research data, as appropriate. The policy will be implemented in 2007-2008.

4. Benefits

The benefits to the university from each of these implementation themes will accrue across each of the areas in which the university operates. Some of these benefits include the following:

	Research & Research Management	Learning & Teaching	Admin & Support
Working with information efficiently and effectively	Improved management of research datasets, reduced risk of data loss, corruption or compromise	More efficient management and deployment of learning content; improved handbook production processes	Improved access to administrative documents to support planning and decision making; revitalised policy bank
Delivering information and services to users through web technologies	Integrated delivery of targeted research resources through new researchers' portal; improved visibility for Monash research performance	Improved Monash student experience through better access to a range of targeted resources	Enhanced access to internal information resources through proposed staff intranet
Providing high quality management information	Better targeting of research support, opportunities to more accurately measure Monash performance against the Research Quality Framework	Better information to support decisions about curriculum planning and course design; improved information about student evaluations of units.	Reduced risk of making decisions on incomplete, incorrect or outdated information pertaining to all aspects of the university's functions
Supporting collaborative activity	Improved research collaboration both inside and outside Monash	Improved collaborative development of curriculum materials; better support for student constructivist group learning and assessment work	Collaborative development of policy; improved cross-campus activity; integrated administration virtual workspaces and electronically supported meetings
Supporting research data management	Improved efficiency, compliance and collaboration in research	Improved flow of information from research to inform research-based teaching	Sustainable business model for supporting and administering research data management

5. Conclusion

Good information management does not just happen. It needs to be consciously managed and supported at all levels. The Information Management Strategy and its implementation aim to facilitate this. The university planning processes and senior staff have a vital role to play in this implementation by supporting improved information management practices, ensuring staff understand their responsibility for information resources, and by advocating the themes and supporting the actions proposed in the Information Management Strategy.

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