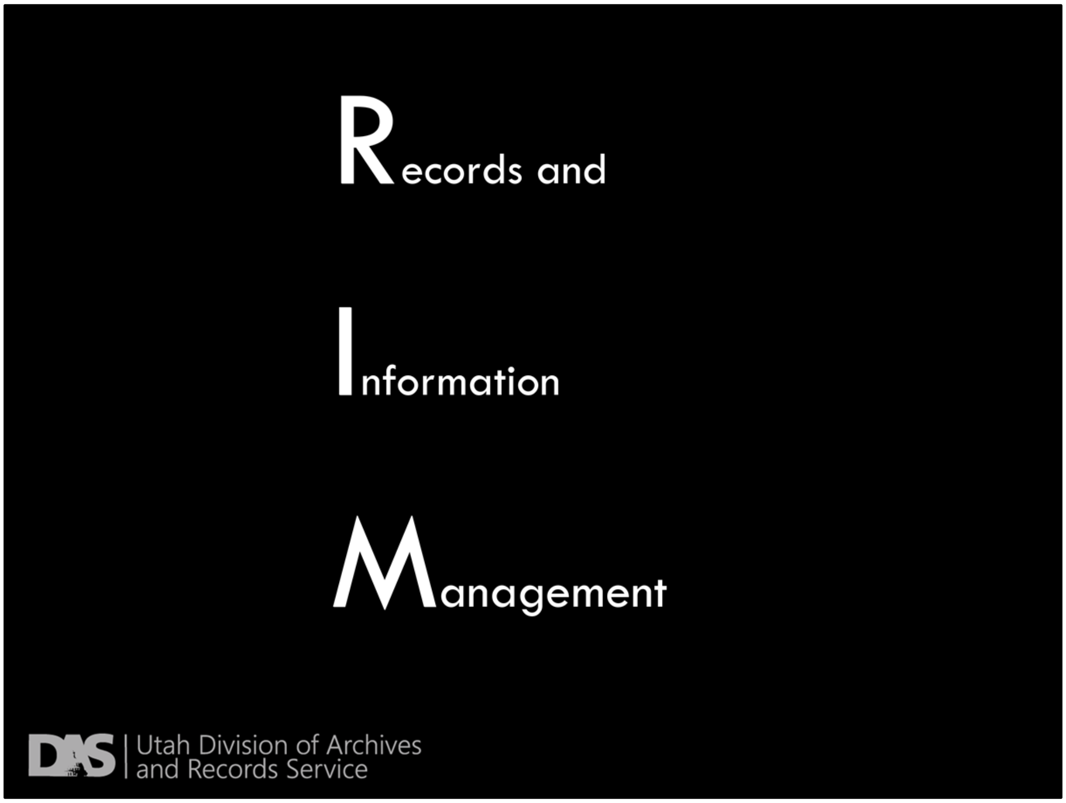
Hello everyone, I am Renée Wilson, and I am a RIM specialist at the state Archives, working primarily with state agencies.

Before I really jump into my presentation, I want to let you know about this little update we've made recently at the archives. You may have read an email or blog about it, but basically, the records analysts have a new name.



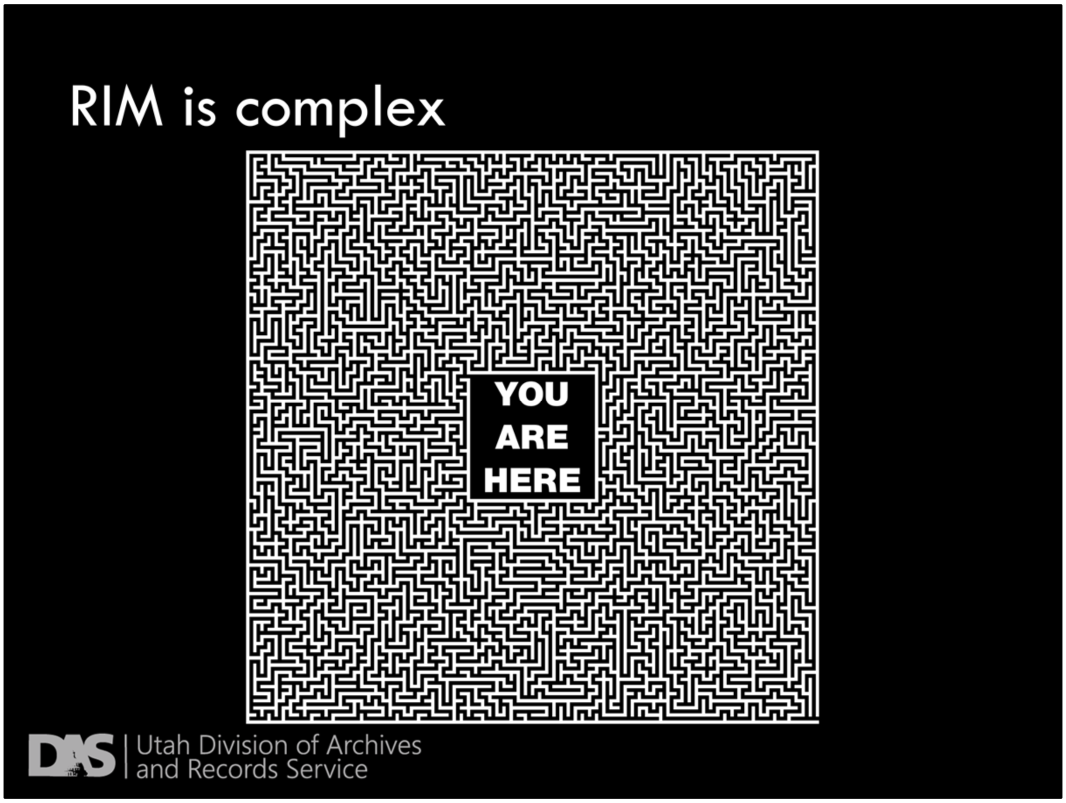
We are now the RIM section. RIM stands for RECORDS and INFORMATION MANAGEMENT. So if you hear me say RIM a lot, that's what it means. And if you don't hear me say RIM a lot, that's because I'm trying to take up more time by saying, "Records and Information Management" instead.

Anyway, the people who used to be called records analysts are now called…

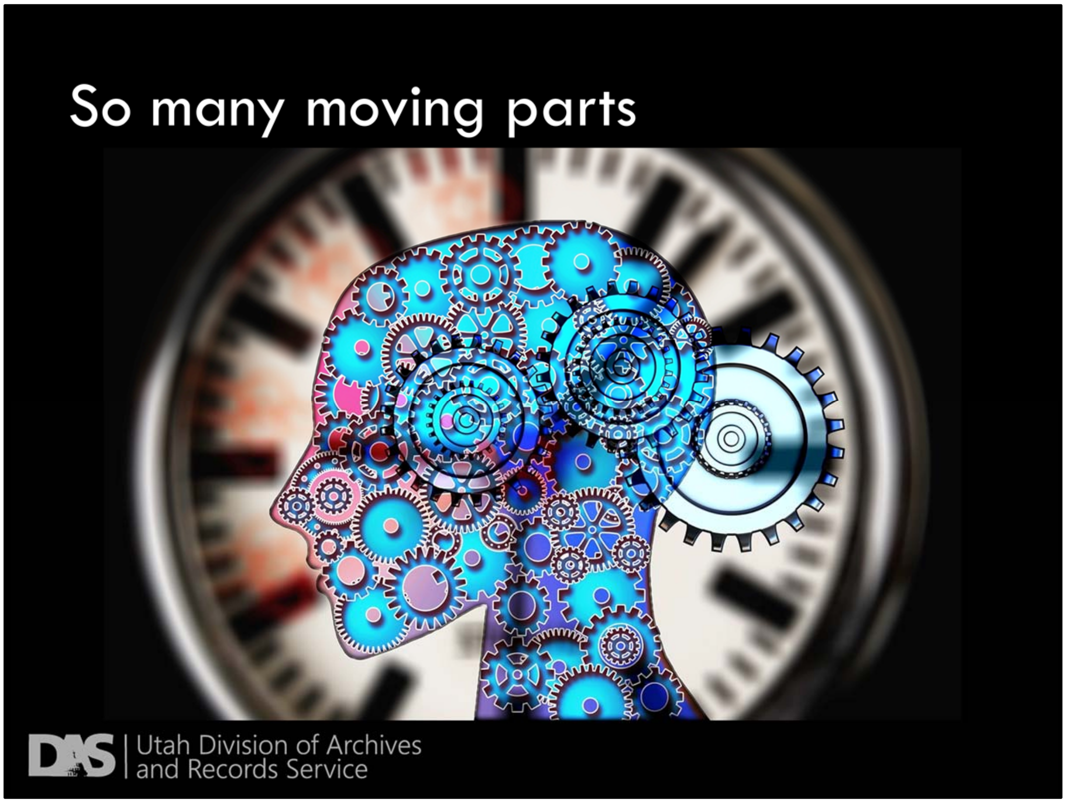
RIM Specialists.

So, Records analysis is now call RIM, and records analysts are now called RIM Specialists.

Right. Let’s move on.



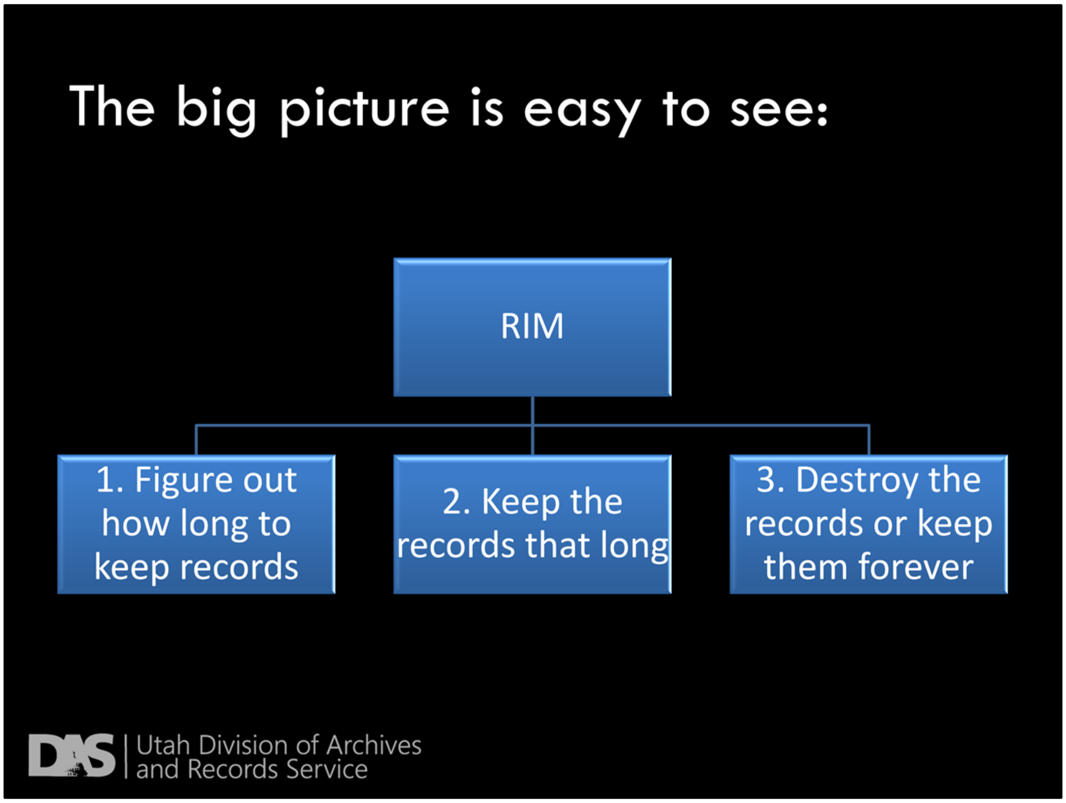
I've been working in the RIM field for only a short amount of time, about one-and-a-half years, though I've been "around" RIM for much longer. And the more I learn, the more I realize that records and information management is very complex.



This is because there are so many different components to RIM, so many facets and moving parts.

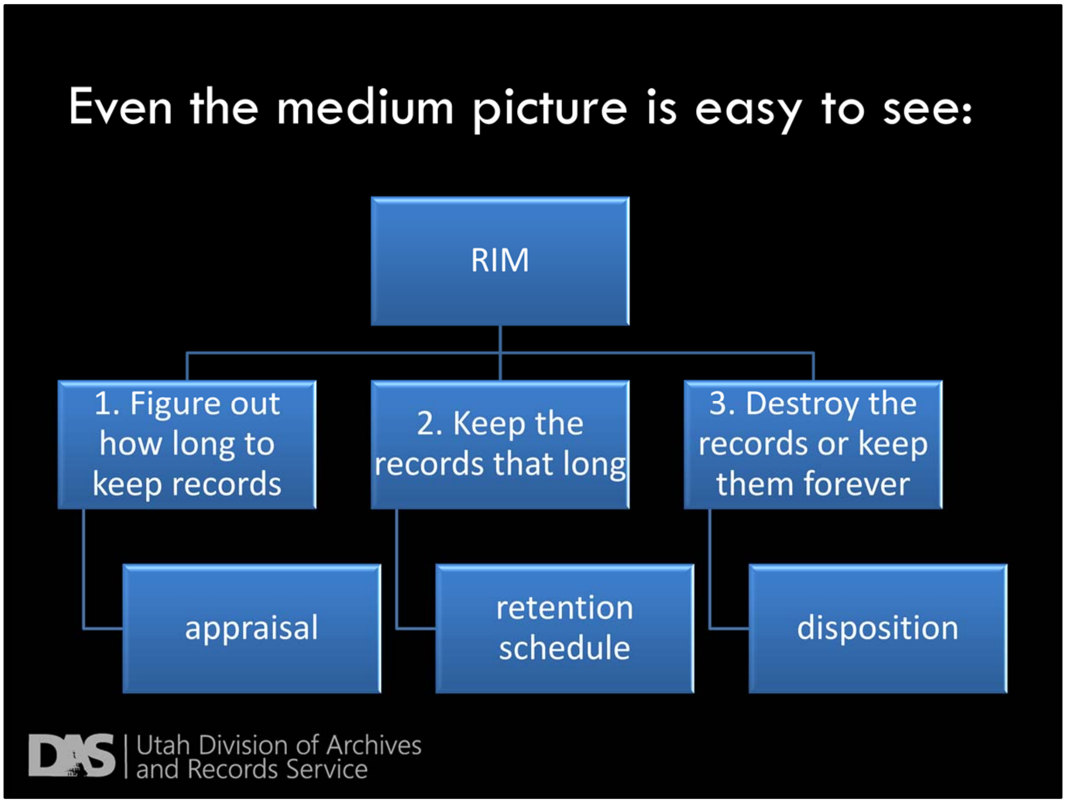
I actually sat down one day and wrote down all the various facets of RIM that I could think of, like retention, designation, format management, etc. My goal was to then map these out to figure out how all the pieces fit together to make one big picture. I like puzzles and I'm usually good at making things fit, so I thought this would be a good challenge for me.

But guess what? It was not a good challenge, because it was too complex. There were too many factors to keep track of.



The big picture behind records management is easy to see. The purpose of records and information management is to manage the records and information.

First, you have to figure out how long you need to keep your records. Then, you keep the records as long as you need them. Then once that's over you destroy them, except some of them you keep forever. Pretty simple.



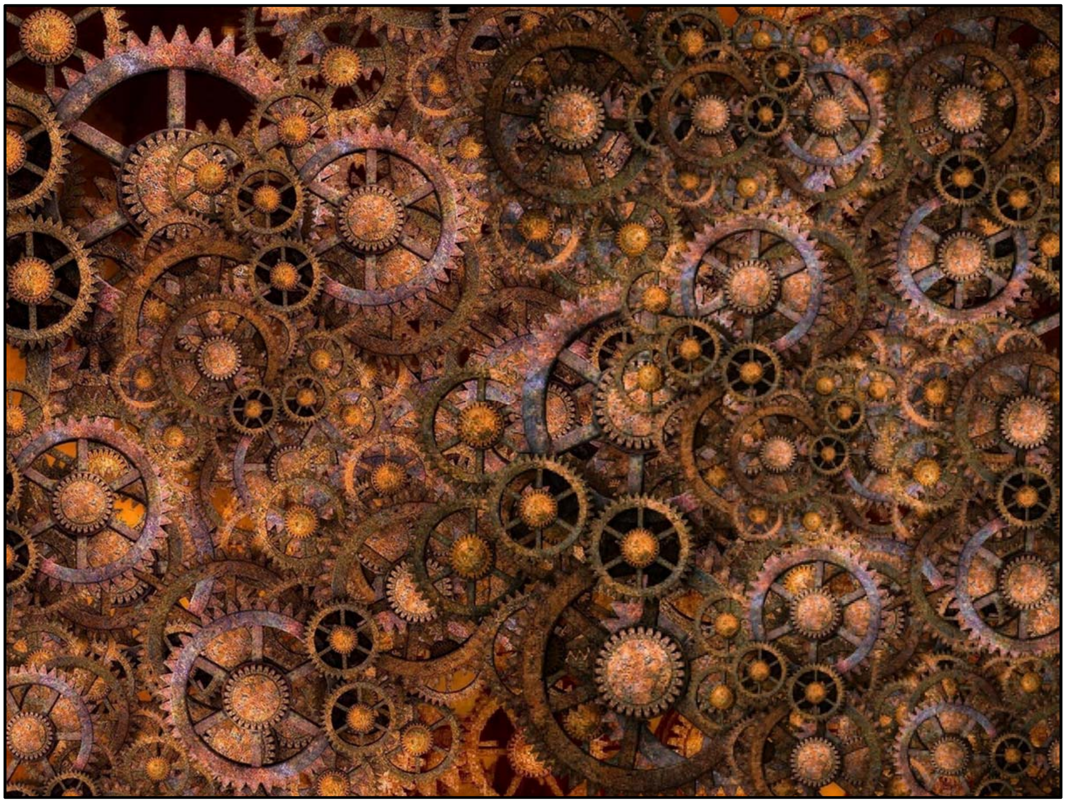
Even the medium picture is easy to see.

The first step, figuring out how long to keep the records, is called appraisal. The next step is what tells you how long to keep the records, and that is called the retention schedule. And then when the records are done being retained, the thing that happens to them—either destroyed or kept forever—is called a disposition.

But once you start getting into the nitty gritty of records management, things get pretty complicated.

And this chart isn't even really detailed; these topics are still pretty broad and non-specific. My conclusion of the matter is that overall, records and information management is just a messy business.

If I were to draw a diagram of RIM components, all the little moving pieces, it wouldn't look so much like this…



…as it would like this. This is utter chaos and confusion, and there are lots of little bits poking out all over.

So anyway, I'm a RIM specialist, obviously. This is me with my fellow RIM specialists here at the Archives.

Our job is to help you with this complex quagmire called RIM. As part of this help, and as many of you know, we offer lots of training sessions throughout the year.

This is a picture of one of our recent training sessions. Ha ha, just kidding.

One of my favorite parts of training is after the training is over. Not just because it's over, but because then I get to read the feedback and figure out how to do better next time.

One comment I got once said something to effect of, "I was really excited to come learn about records management, but after sitting through the whole three hours I have no immediate takeaways, nothing I can go back to my office and implement right away."

That was a little sad for me to read, and has stuck with me ever since. It's with that feedback in mind that I created today's presentation. We often talk about the theory of RIM, or the overall process of RIM, but I want to give you specific tips and solutions, actionable "how-to's", so to speak.

These tips are all pretty Archives-centric, since that's what I know the most about. Hopefully you'll find them helpful. So, without further ado, here are…

Eleven practical tips and solutions for your Records and Information Management program.


1
Utah Division of Archives
and Records Service

Let me start with a simple one.

We sometimes hear people say that ALL of their records are:

- public
- or permanent
- or digital
- or on their website

so they don't really need to know about records management.

This is the face I make when I hear comments like this.

Okay, but the truth is it takes time to learn that records are records.

Electronic records are records. Permanent records are records. Databases are records. All of them are records and all of them need to be managed.

I'm guessing that your records really are NOT all permanent or digital or public, though that could be useful and make them easier to manage. But yes, digital records are records, and they need to be managed too. If you have questions about your digital records, or which of your records are records, please contact us.

By the way, you'll find that a lot of these tips end with "contact us" or "call us or email us".


2
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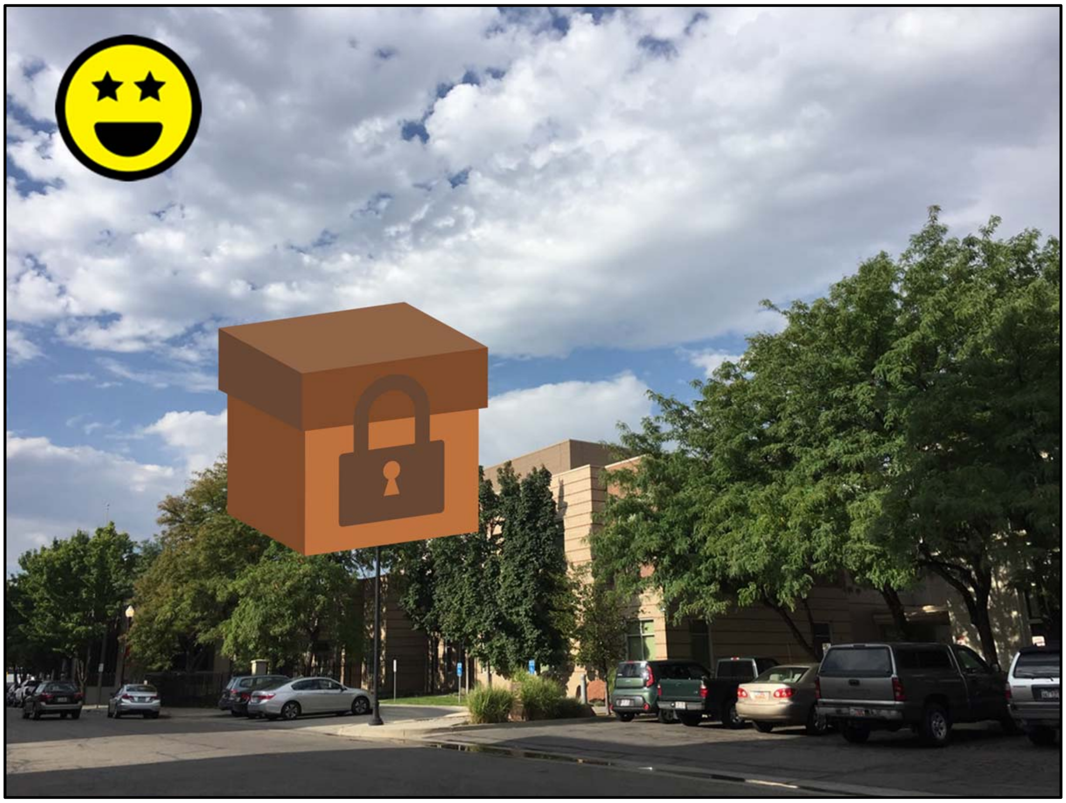
Here's another simple one. We get asked a lot if you can shred your paper records after you digitize them. Rather than destroying your records after you digitize them,



for permanent records, send your paper records to the Archives. We do love paper here at the Archives. Paper has proven to be a very stable format, especially compared to digital media. So, if you're going to destroy your permanent records anyway, you may as well send them to the Archives and we'll preserve them.

Kendra Yates gave a wonderful webinar a while back that went into more detail on this topic. You can find that video on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qOzAHclYFA if you'd like to know more about what's involved.


3
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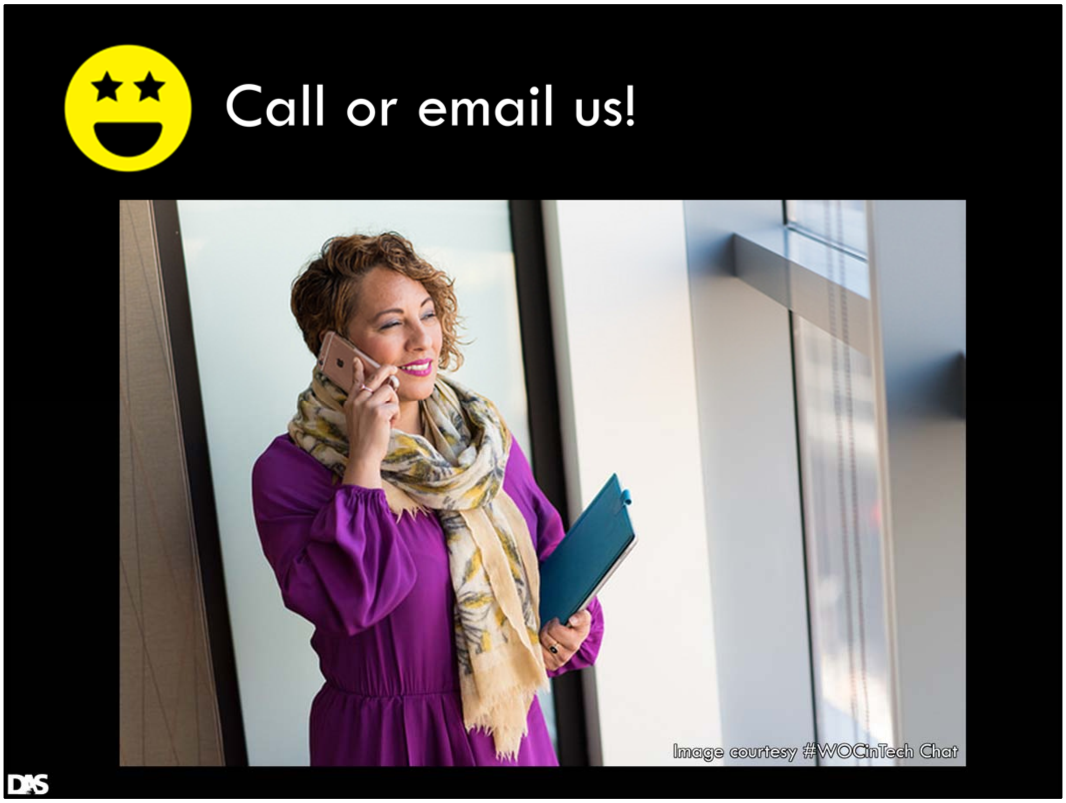
If you are an agency who has some records you'd like to send to the Archives, but you never send them because it's just too far or you don't have the budget… can you guess what the solution is?



That's right! Contact your RIM specialist!

Let us know you have permanent records you want to transfer. We do trainings and visit agencies throughout the whole state, and we may be able to come to your agency to pick up your records. I've done this a couple times, and it's really one of the highlights of the job. We love visiting agencies we don't often get to see, and seeing your records and your towns. Take a look at our training schedule to see when we'll be in the general vicinity, and give us a call.

We know you want to give your records a nice forever home, and so do we.

4

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and Records Service

This one is one that not many people know about.

You know if you go on to the Archives website, you can look up your agency and see all the record series which your agency has "set up" with the State Archives—meaning that the Archives has given the series an Archives series number. That's this number right here.

Keep in mind that a series is just a group of records, so your series exist whether they are set up in the Archives system or not. We just assign them an Archives series number and we keep a data file about your series.

Anyway, there are some circumstances under which you don't actually need to set up your series in the Archives system. The rules are a little different between state and local agencies, and there are a lot of "ifs", so bear with me.

(3rd point) …meaning you know which General Retention Schedules you're following, and other people also know where to find that information.

If all of these apply, you do not need to schedule your series in the Archives system, because you will be managing your records within your own agency according to approved retention schedules.

Also, for just transitory records.

When to keep track in-agency

If ALL of these apply (local agencies such as municipalities, counties, special districts, etc.):

- Records will be located in-office only (never sent to Records Center or Archives)
- Your agency has implemented its own ordinances / policies in accordance with Utah Code 63G-2-701
- Your agency has reported those ordinances / policies to the State Archives

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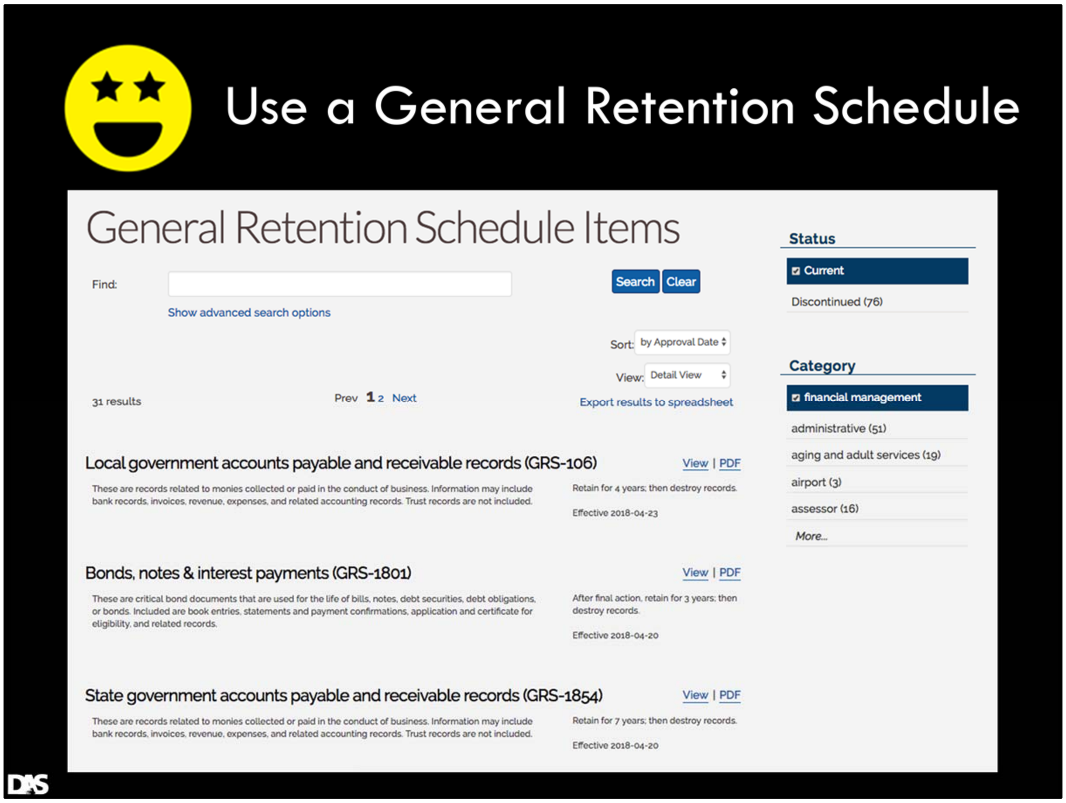

For example, if you're using a General Retention Schedule, and the records will just be managed in your office, meaning they'll never go to the Records Center or the Archives, you don't need to set that up with the Archives.

When to schedule a series with the Archives

If ANY of these apply:

- Records will go to the Records Center or State Archives at some point
- Records are permanent
- Records require a unique retention schedule approval by the SRC
- Your agency prefers to schedule series with the Archives for RIM purposes
- Your agency wants to see all your series on the Archives website

To Think About

- Consider pros and cons
- Do what's best for your agency
- Make a conscious decision
  - – write it down in an accessible location
  - – let others know
- Contact your RIM specialist with questions


5
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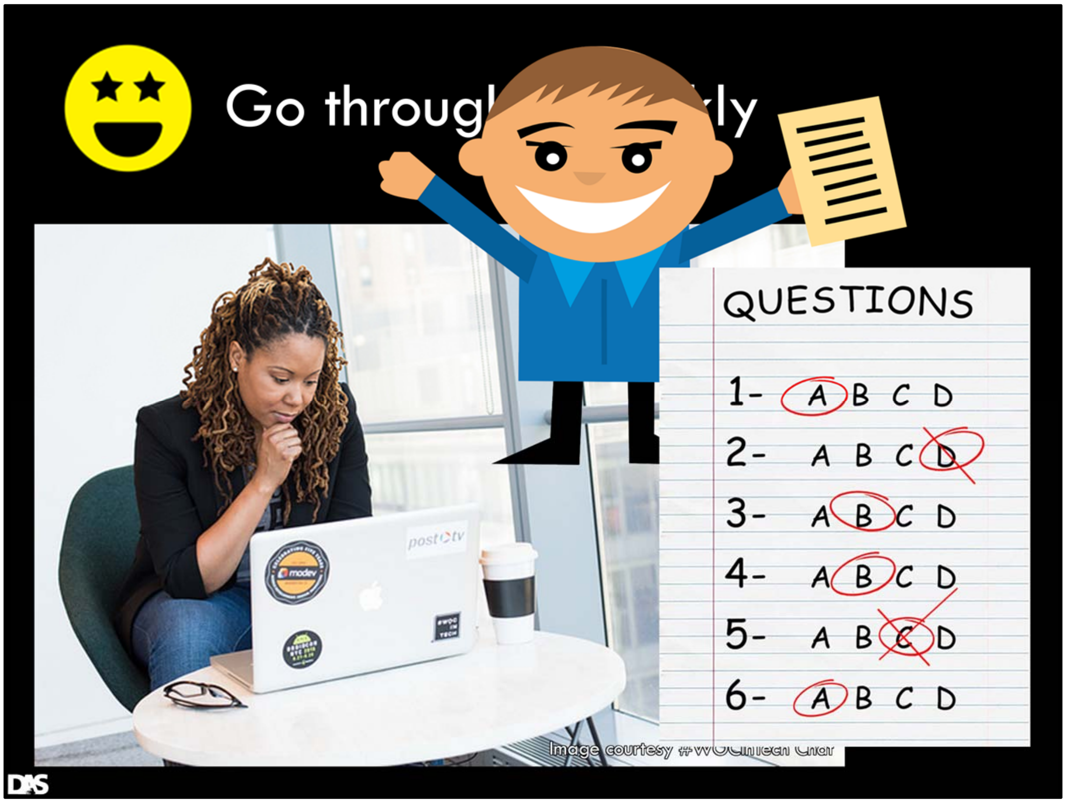
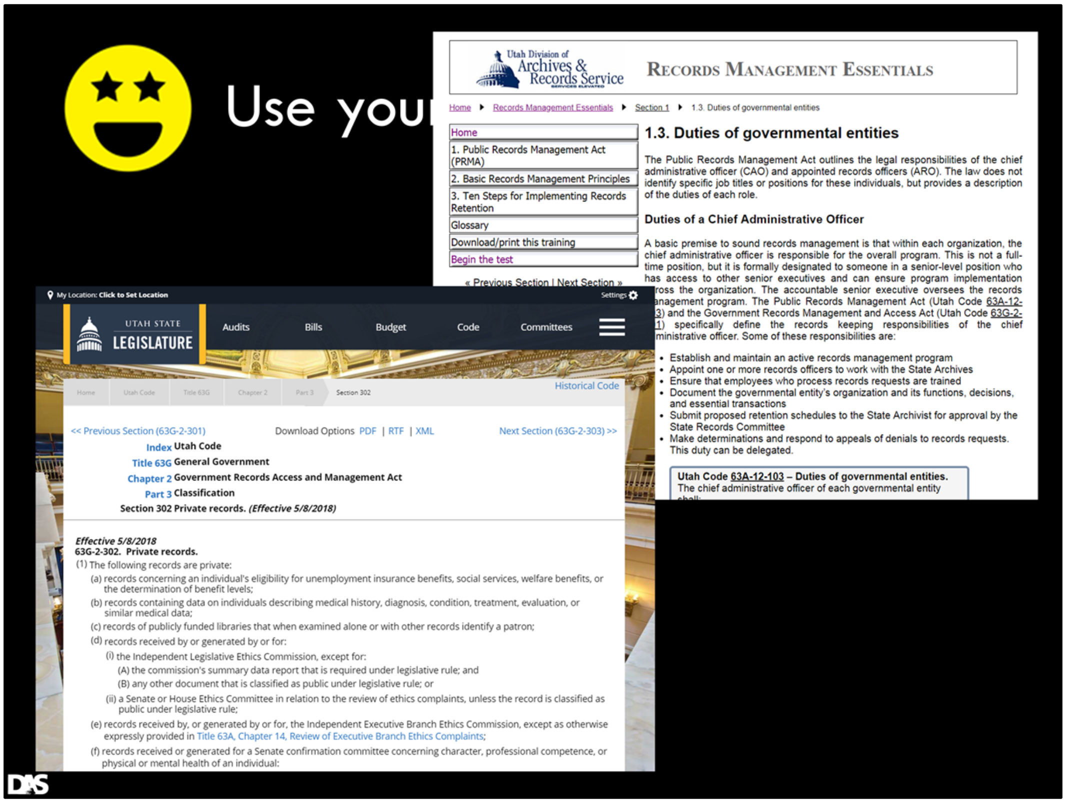
and Records Service

Rather than spending hours on the certification test…



Take the test quickly without worrying too much about wrong answers. You never know, you might pass the first time around! And if not, just check which questions you missed and look up the right answers, then take the test again.



Also, it is totally okay to use the Utah code and the training materials when taking the test. It's an open-book test. It's not cheating to use CTRL+F. The point of the test is not to have you memorize every possible scenario and section of law, but rather to get you familiar with the law in general and with the tools available so that when you do face a question, you know where to go to find the answer. It's about knowing your resources.


6
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and Records Service

This next one is another short one. Instead of spending 5, 10, 15 minutes searching for the right General Retention Schedule… can you guess the solution?

…Contact your RIM specialist at the Archives. This is one of my absolute favorite phone calls to get, because it's usually easily resolved. The RIM specialists at the Archives work with these General Retention Schedules every day. It's possible we may know the answer right off the top of our heads, and if not, we can look into it and get back to you so that you don't have to spend your time trying to figure it out.

Plus, we also may have information on General Retention Schedule updates. So, if you're looking for an obsolete schedule, we'll be able to find that and tell you the new schedule to use. Or if we know we're updating a schedule, we can tell you about the update.

Obviously I'm hoping you can find what you're looking for on our website. But if not, I hope you won't stress too much about it, and just call or email us instead.


7
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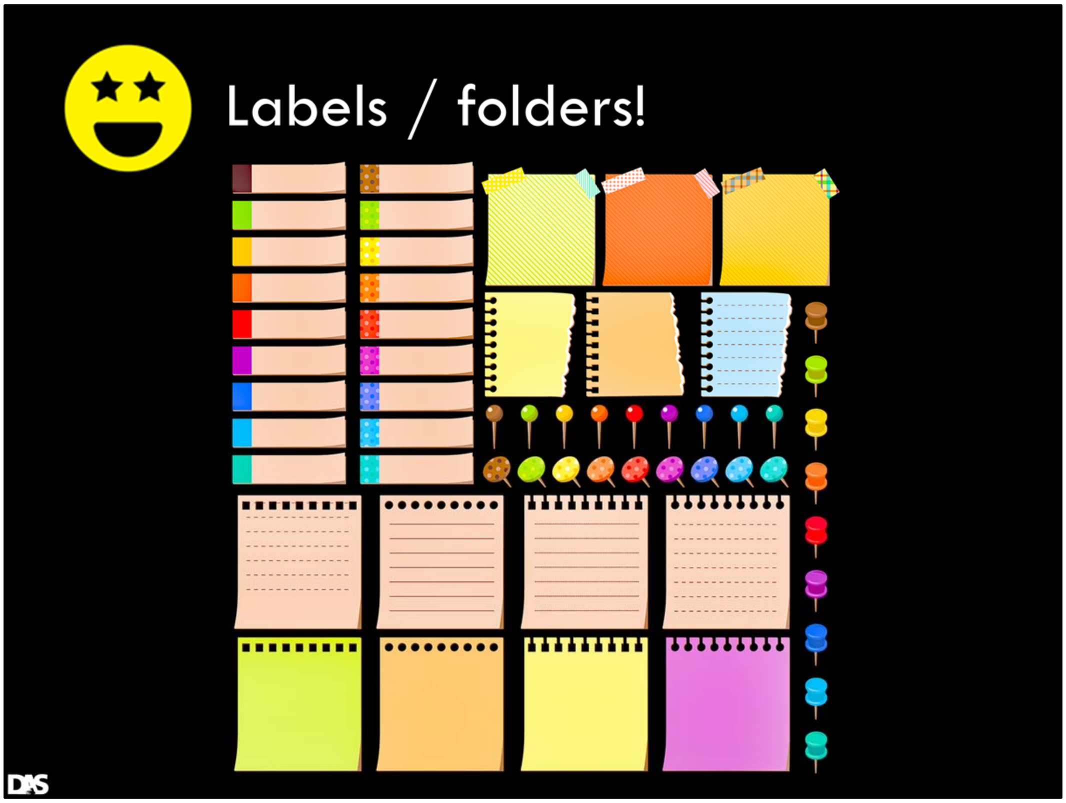
and Records Service

Okay, this is a big one. The elephant in the room. No discussion on RIM would be complete without mentioning email.

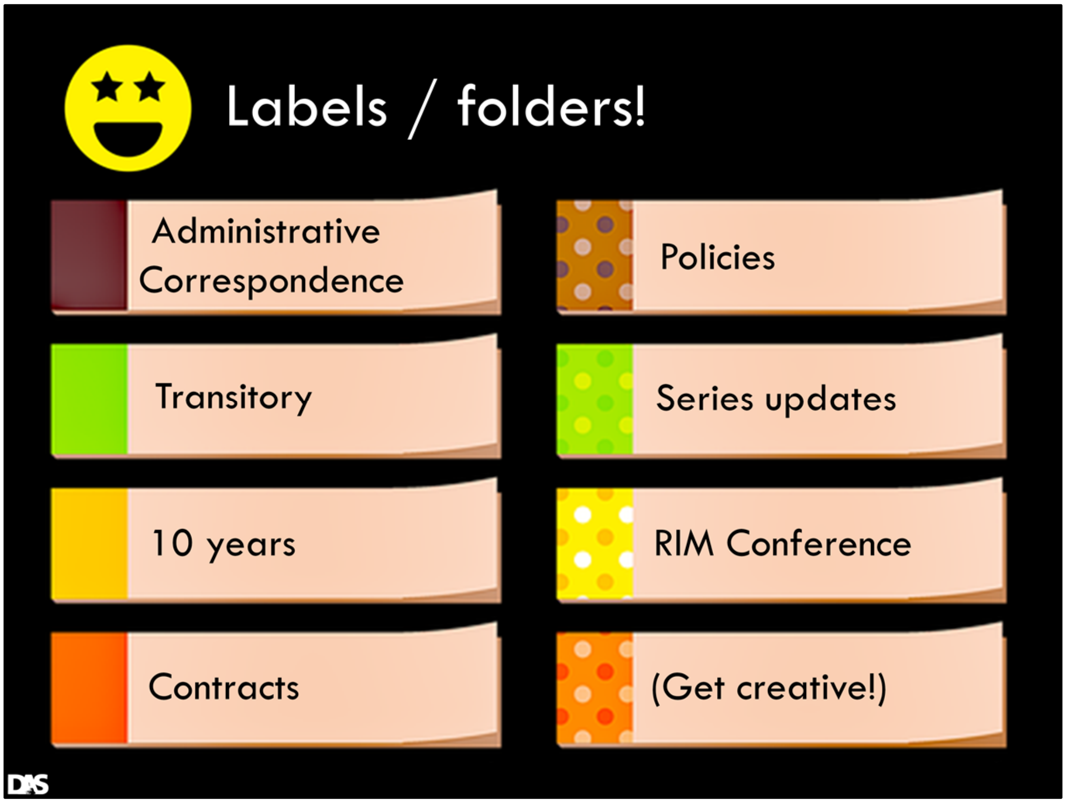
Email is itself a big, complex issue within the big complex world of RIM. There are too many aspects of email to discuss in 45 minutes, but there are a few things you can do right now to start managing your email.



My number one tip for managing email is to make use of labels and folders. You may have heard me talk about this before, because it's one of the easiest things to implement and it helps tremendously.

The goal is to label each email you receive, right when you respond to it. I started doing this a few years ago, and once you get used to labeling each email, it takes less than a second to do so. Can you add one second per email to your day? I really hope so.

Labeling an email doesn't magically change it or make anything happen to it. You're basically just using the label so you'll know what to do with the email later on. You can also set up certain features to automatically label and manage your emails, like filters to apply labels, or scripts to delete emails with certain labels.



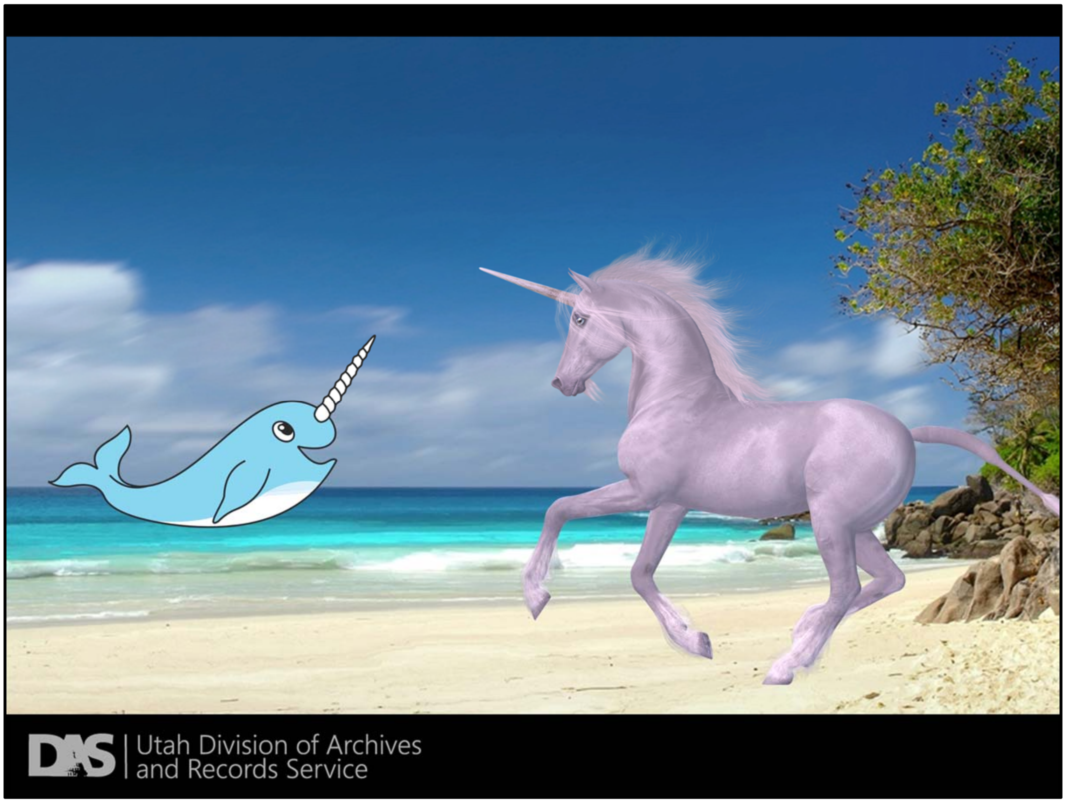
All major email providers have some sort of labeling or folder feature. There are also many applications available for managing email.

The great thing about labels is that you can tailor them to your needs. If you'd like to label emails according to what series they belong to or what General Retention Schedule they follow, you can do that, like if you made a label for routine administrative correspondence.

Or, for all the emails you know are very short-term, you can do a transitory label. My label for transitory correspondence just says "delete".

Or here are some other examples. I have a label for emails about series updates, and a label for emails about this conference. You can get creative when you create these. Use a scheme that works for you. I have one particular label that is not actually appropriate to put on the screen, because I find it helpful to label some of my emails with that particular label.

Seriously, labels are the way to go.



Now I can imagine some of you are thinking at this point, “Well gee, Renée, this sounds really nice what you are saying…”

…but I have 900 employees. Or 500 employees. Or even a dozen employees, really. And I'm supposed to get them to start doing this new thing? I can't make them use labels and folders.

You're absolutely right. You can't make them…

…but you can train them.

Think about it like this. As a state employees, I have to take a lot of training courses. I take one for driving a state vehicle, one for workplace harassment, and one for internet security.

In fact, I can't even drive a state vehicle until after I've taken the training. So, what if we did something similar with records training? Mandatory email labels training. This isn't something new we're implementing, it's just something we do. Make it part of the routine. Wouldn't that be great if you weren't allowed to use email until you've had the training? I think some people would never take the training…

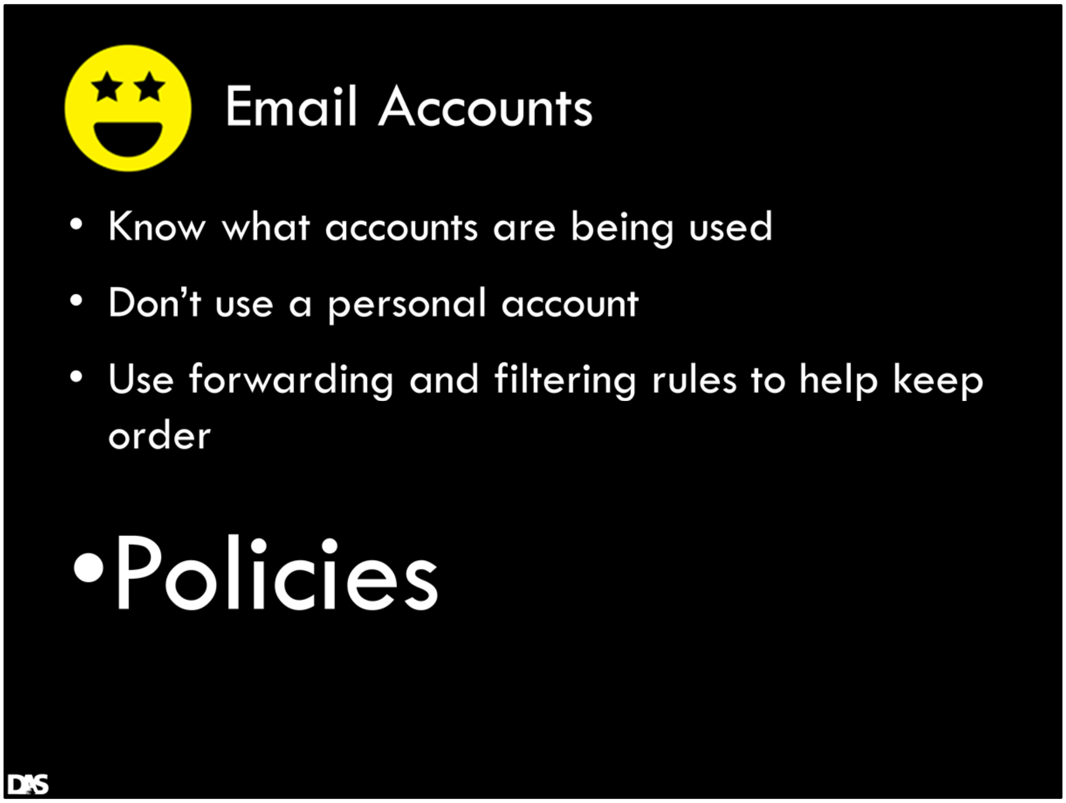
But you really can train people. Just do it in small steps.

Choose two or three labels to start with, labels that can apply to everyone, or have each division choose their own.

Show people how to use the labels—how to create them, how to apply them, and even how to have a filter apply them automatically. Use specific examples that are relevant to your agency.

Gently remind people. No nagging, and there doesn't need to be any hounding. Make it part of your process.

In the end, no, not everyone is going to use them. But if you make them the norm and the policy, you'll have a higher likelihood of more people doing it.



Another tip for managing email is to know what accounts are being used, and who has access to what. We see a lot of confusion when multiple people try to use the same address to certify, and then the certificate prints up with someone else's name on it.

Secondly, don't use a personal account. Just don't. Even if you don't have an official work account, paid for by your agency, you can create one for free.

And then of course you can use email forwarding and filtering to maintain order. This is going to be very specific to each agency.

Really, there are a ton of different email management practices you could employ. I could spend the whole day talking about this, and there are entire conferences dedicated to the subject. The most important thing is to create specific policies and then share them with employees. There are examples online of email policies, and we've posted some additional information on our website to help agencies with this very important step.


8
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and Records Service

Instead of complaining about the test with your co-workers…

Complain about the test with your co-workers, and THEN contact the Archives to give them feedback on what you disagreed with or found disagreeable. Then contact a politician with any concerns about the law (because we can revise the test, but we can't revise the law).


9
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and Records Service

Okay, this one is important. Does this ever happen to you? You have this thing you have to do once a year; maybe it's a report you have to run or something you have to mail. But it only happens once a year, and every year when the time comes, you think, "Okay, now how do I do that again?" Or you go on vacation for a week. You always mean to leave instructions for your co-workers to fill in while you're gone, but you're always just so busy that you forget to make a list, or the list only has a few things that absolutely must get done. At the Archives, we talk about what would happen if so-and-so got "hit by a bus". Perhaps a better example would be what would happen if someone took an extended leave or went on vacation, but for some reason we always just say got hit by a bus.

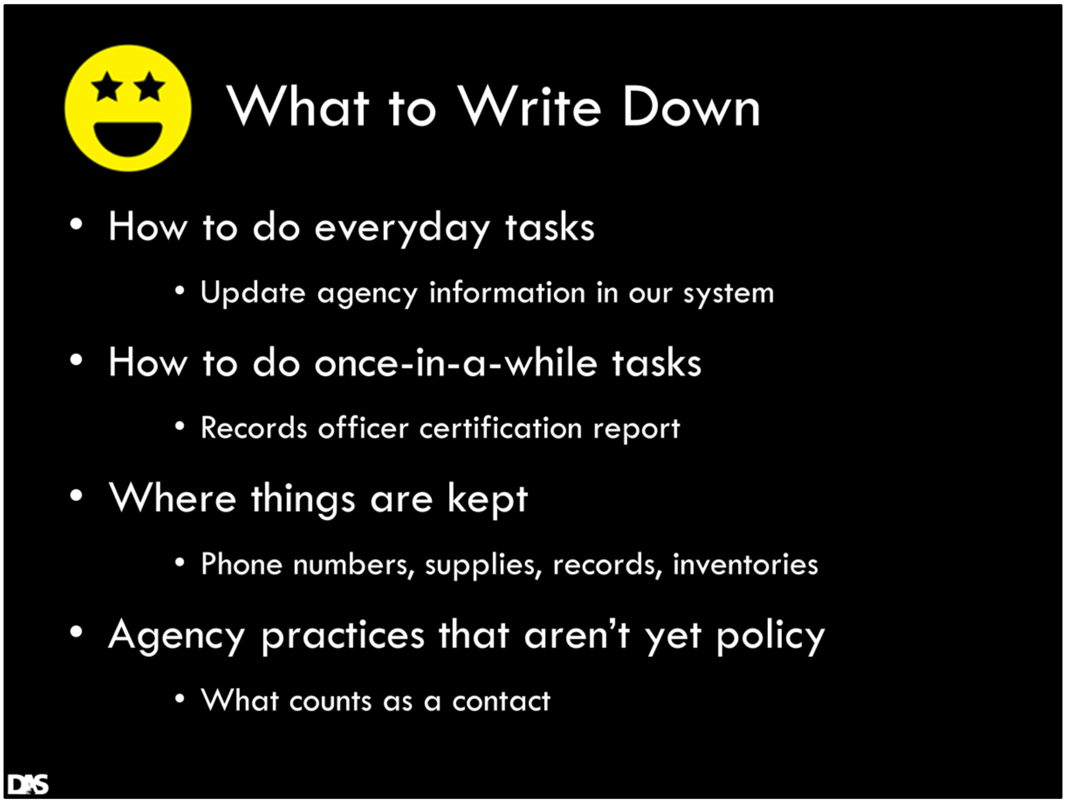
Anyway, what would happen if you took a leave of absence or vacation? Would anyone know how to fill in for you? This is called "succession planning", or "writing down what it is you do so that when you're gone the other people in your office will have some clue as to where to pick up."

One of things I've heard often over the years from records officers is, "I've inherited a mess. What do I do?" This solution won't answer that question, but hopefully it will keep someone from ever having to ask that question in the first place.

The answer is to write things down. Write down what you do, and keep this information in a place where people can find it.

A good way to think of this is to compare it to a sub folder that teachers use. If a teacher needs to take the day off, the substitute teacher goes to the sub folder to see what needs to be taught, and what the students are working on.

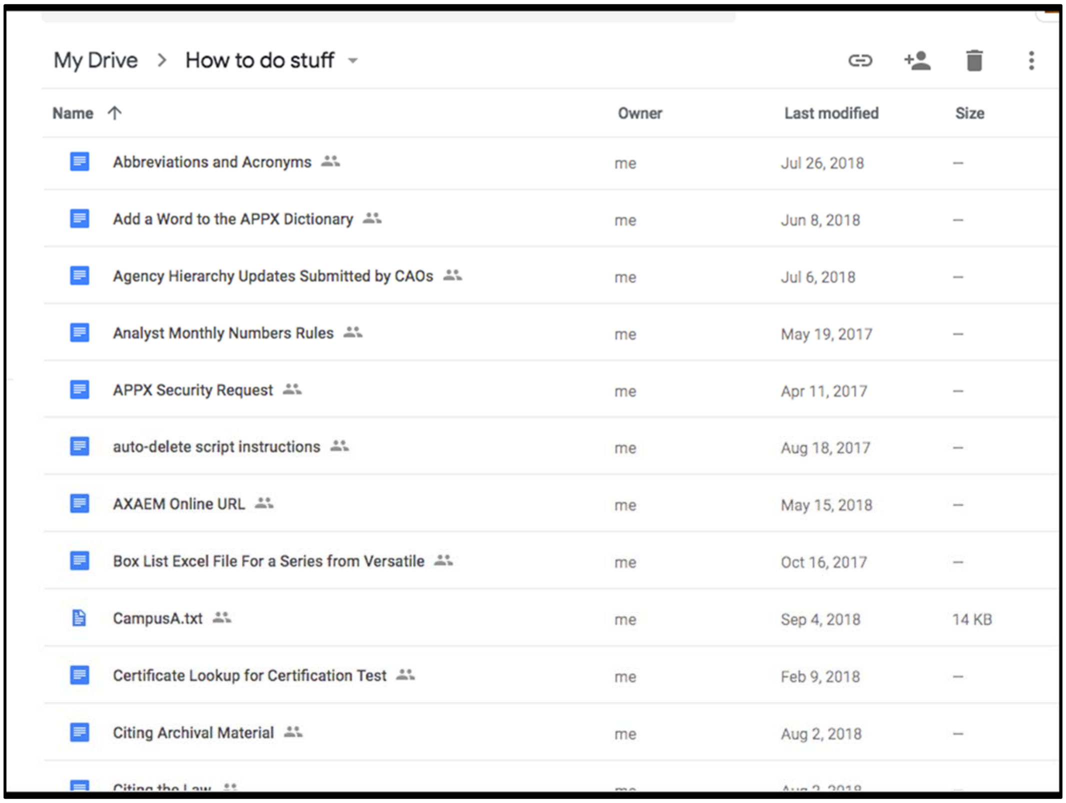
Records officers are responsible for a lot of things, so creating this folder is not a task that can be done in a day. The best way to do this is just piecemeal, one thing at a time as it comes up.



So what should you write down?

(list)

Writing down one thing a week or even a month will still give you a hefty folder to pull from.



This is my folder in my Google Docs called "How to do stuff". A very useful title. I've been adding to it for a little over a year now, and it's a pretty decent folder of useful stuff.

The trick is that any time there's something I don't know how to do, I write it down and stick it in here.

Use the "Sub" folder:

- When you're out of the office
- To help shape your performance plan
- To show the value of records management
- As a starting point for writing official policies


10
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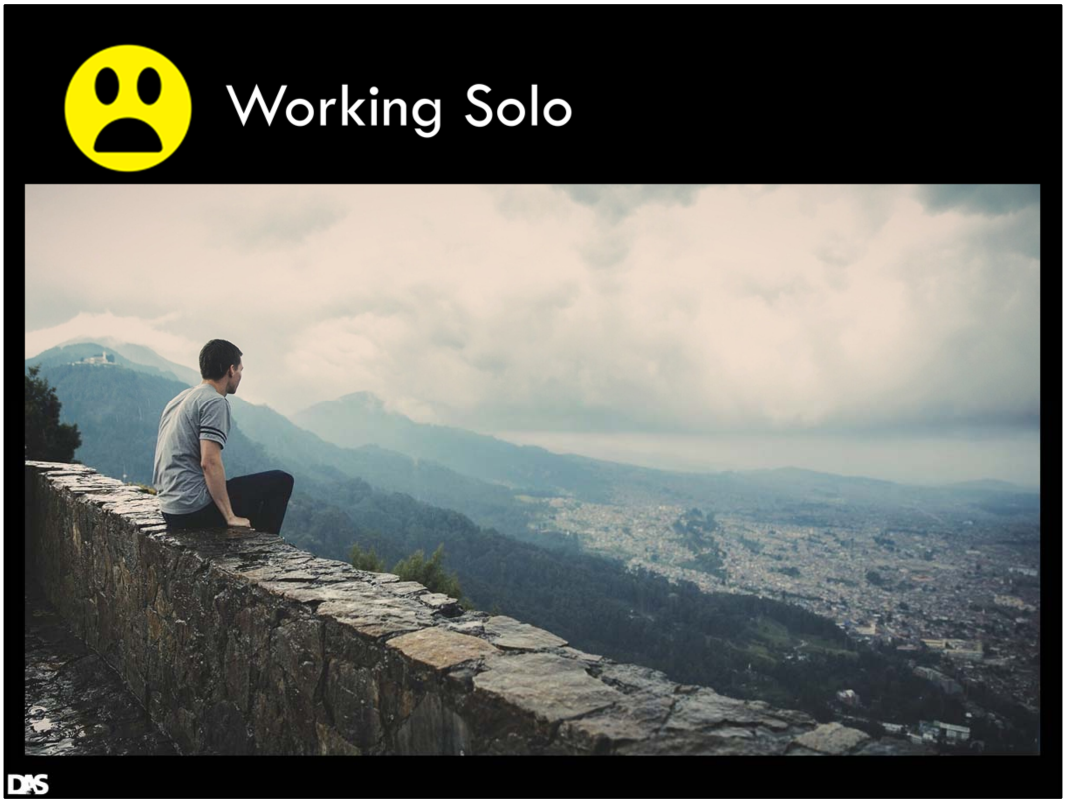
and Records Service

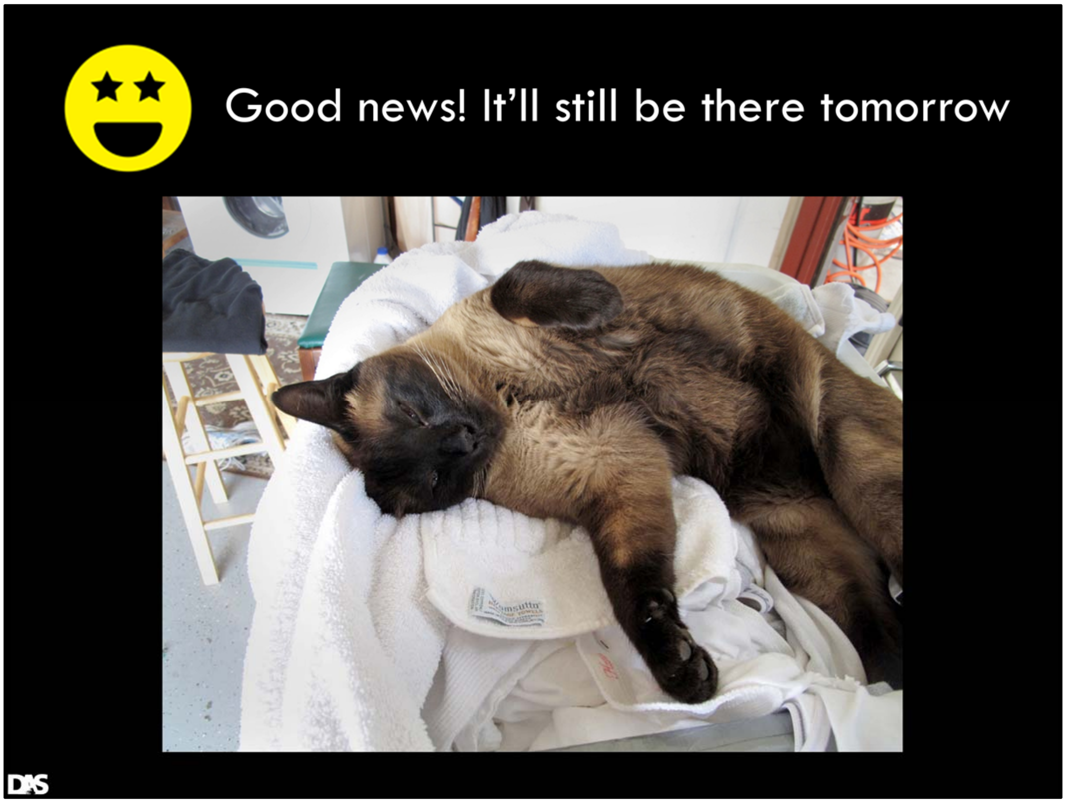
Look, we know you're a smart, strong, independent person. We know you're capable of handling whatever is thrown at you. But guess what?



You don't actually have to do everything alone. Because if you try to do everything alone, it usually ends up looking like this.

And we don't want that.

One thing I've consistently seen about records officers is that they simply have too much to do. Often a records officer's main job isn't even as a records officer. So it's great that you're strong and smart and independent, but guess what? You don't have to work in a vacuum. You have resources.



Your first resource is your attitude. I like to think of my work like I think of my laundry, because both are never-ending. My philosophy is that I'll do as much as I possibly can, but at the end of the day if I need to leave some things undone, guess what? They'll still be there in the morning. In fact I'm pretty sure if I took a week off, they'd still be there waiting for me when I got back.

Anyway, this is job security, right? There's always something to do.

Okay, but for real, there are so many resources available today. I promise you that whatever problem you are facing, other people have had similar problems.

First resource: search the internet. This is becoming easier to do with the proliferation of "smart" assistants like Alexa and Google, and people are getting better at getting in the mindset of "I have a question; I can find an answer".

NAGARA
https://www.nagara.org/

ARMA International
http://armautah.org/

ULCT (Utah League of Cities and Towns)
http://www.ulct.org/

UASD (Utah Association of Special Districts)
https://www.uasd.org/

UMCA (Utah Municipal Clerks Association)
https://umca.org/

UAC (Utah Association of Counties)
https://www.uacnet.org/


11
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and Records Service

This last tip comes courtesy of my sister, who once told me, “Whatever you do, do something.” This applies to records and information management, as well as to so many other aspects of life.

Only YOU have your point of view. Your unique skills and talents are vital for the success of your RIM program.


I STARTED THE DAY WITH LOTS OF PROBLEMS.
BUT NOW, AFTER HOURS AND HOURS OF WORK,
I HAVE LOTS OF PROBLEMS IN A SPREADSHEET.
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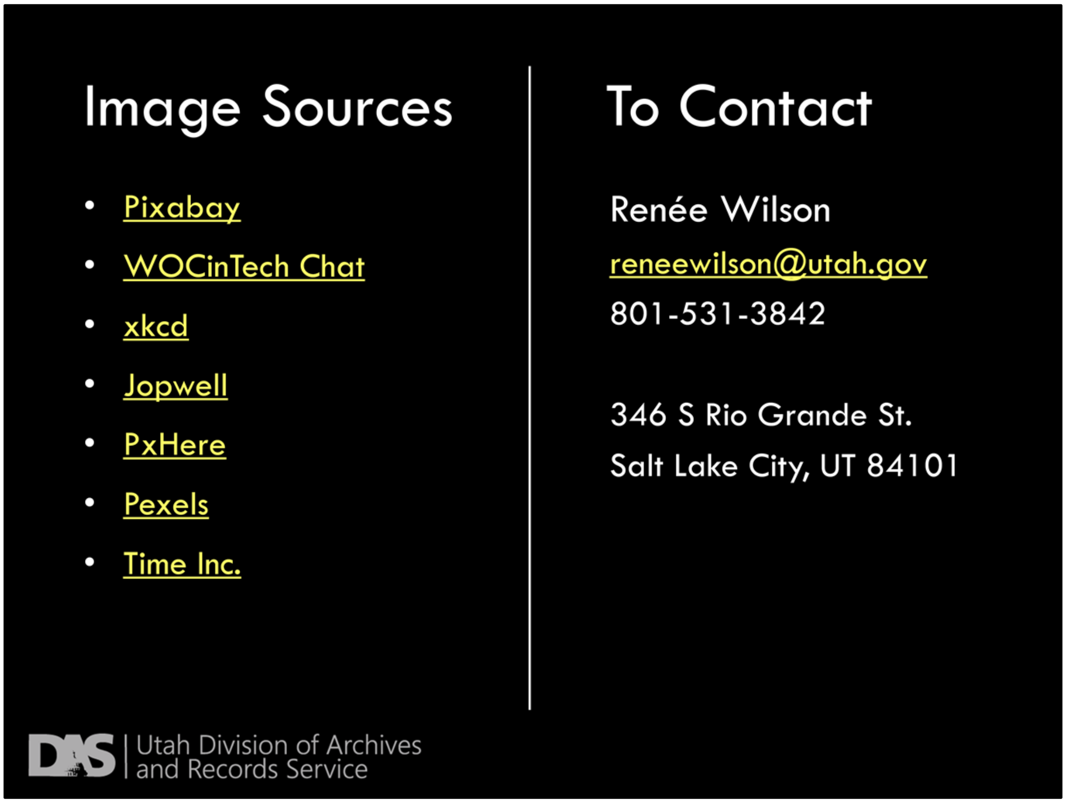
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