

The Microsoft SharePoint 3.0 Juggernaut: Why Records Managers Should Care – Part 2

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Part two of a two part article on a few of the opportunities and challenges created for records managers with the release of Microsoft SharePoint Services v3.0. In Part One of this article, the author explored why SharePoint 3.0 will change the landscape for many records managers. This section continues the discussion of SPS features and functionality and the impact on records managers.

SharePoint 3.0 has added extensive features that can be employed by records managers for extending the control of records under their supervision. While most records managers have employed some degree of records control automation, new demands arising from a growing web of governance rules and/or laws has created the need for more help than ever before. The recognition by Microsoft of the growing importance of structural management of official records is core to the records management features of SharePoint; the savvy records manager will employ them to their fullest.

Some of SPS's Records Management features that hold the greatest benefit to records managers include:

- Information Rights Management – a policy enforcement feature to help insure the integrity of documents. (See Microsoft Records Management Team blog <http://blogs.msdn.com/recman/archive/2006/04/13/575811.aspx>)
- Hold Orders – policies to place a document or set of document in suspense for discovery, litigation, audit or other reasons; hold policies prevent document disposition until all hold orders are rescinded. (See blog <http://blogs.msdn.com/recman/archive/2006/09/27/773369.aspx>)
- Information Management Policy – disposition and management rules for all objects under SPS control. (See blog <http://blogs.msdn.com/recman/archive/2006/06/16/633393.aspx>)
- Audit – tracking of all requests by users to read or alter documents including all actions on Hold Orders (See blog <http://blogs.msdn.com/recman/archive/2006/07/28/681298.aspx>)

But perhaps the most helpful features for day-to-day management of digital content isn't a single feature at all but rather the overall tight integration between SPS and other Microsoft components. Office 12 integration is tight and intuitive whether users are writing letters, working with Email, processing an eform, or collaborating on content. The structured storage and management available in SPS is just a click away. Properly configured SPS repositories automatically categorize objects into the established file plan and impose full controls over the content. Office 12 integration is a singular reason for records managers to be integral participants in even casual SPS deployments. For these reasons, records managers' involvement in SPS deployments will:

- Ensure the application design of the folder structure and metadata schema properly follows your file plan
- Build and implement content types that match your retention schedules to automate document lifecycle management as much as possible which will enhance user acceptance.
- Establish Information Management Policy for SPS applications (disposition and management rules)
- Define "hold order" types to deal with litigations & external events (see above)
- Ensure audit trail information and reports will verify that your system is functioning as expected and you are in compliance with applicable regulatory or governance requirements.

- Ensure there is a mechanism for accepting records declared as official from outside of the SPS application in a way that they fit into the file plan & metadata schema.
- From my perspective, I think it is also crucial that records managers strive to keep the deployments manageable and not overly complex. As anyone who has tried to implement an RMS in the past has come to realize: if the act of storing an object into the RMS isn't simple, it won't happen. Simplicity rules in the users' world.

In summary, Microsoft's new-found focus on integrating document, digital rights, and records management in the SharePoint 3.0 release means new opportunities for records managers to deliver the message of complete, reliable and accurate corporate records management and to be a part of designing solutions deployed across the enterprise. The 800lb gorilla is in the room; records managers need to find her a place to sit!