

ABSTRACT

Records Management in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica: A Survey and Analysis of Current Practices in Ministries

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Records management in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica has not allowed for cost-effective procedures and benefits and was not originally based on well-conceived practices. Ad hoc practices were adopted from foreign programmes and implemented wholesale and in some cases piecemeal, with little regard for the needs and capabilities of the local situation. As these practices were not regularly reviewed and ameliorated in keeping with international trends, the inconsistencies and inefficiencies inherent in the records management programmes of both countries have been largely perpetuated up until the present.

The austerity measures employed by the Governments of both countries to reduce their internal deficits and external debts have adversely affected the quality and extent of service provided in the ministries as proper measures were not institutionalized to account for downsizing of staff and services.

Despite the existence of a variety of government information policies which claim to allocate resources for records management development, they are merely documented lip-service as few plans and measures were

realistically implemented. Observation of ministerial practices in both countries confirmed that the lack of statutory commitment to records management engenders and exacerbates the pervasive attitude of disinterest among the civil service staff who handle records and relegates records management simply to "getting the job done".

Current records management practices in ministries of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica must shift from mere transactional exchanges of information to a more transformational approach where information managers become active change agents who are professionally trained and can enforce standards.

The general findings indicate that a more comprehensive, integrated and professional approach to records management should be taken by both countries and adequate budgetary resources made available for the development of this vital aspect of information management.