SOCIAL NETWORKS
AND THEIR IMPACT ON
RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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Social Networks and their Impact on Records and Information Management
A Research Paper by Helen Streck
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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Social Networks are used by hundreds of millions of people around the world. Social Networks'[1] impact on Records and Information Management (RIM) begins with clearly defining what we mean by a Social Network. For the purposes of this paper, a Social Network is defined as an internet-based service that allows individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.[2] The widespread use or popularity has no bearing on the definition, but as you will see later in this paper, the popularity has an impact on the RIM profession.

The goals of this research paper are two-fold: 1) to provide the reader with the information collected and reviewed by the researcher, and 2) to begin, in earnest, the discussion by records and information professionals about what they can, will, and cannot do with the records and information created on, distributed by or displayed on Social Networks.

SCOPE

There are many questions and discussions occurring today about Social Networks. This paper is not meant to be exhaustive of the possible questions or issues surrounding Social Networks, but rather to focus on the following topic areas:

- Provide an overview of Social Networks,
- Identify the real—or perceived—issues that exist due to the generation gap,
- Identify specific characteristics that impact the RIM profession or professional, and
- List some of the legal considerations perceived to be emerging issues from using Social Networks.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted over a 15-month period, from April 2009 through July 2010, to gain an understanding of what Social Networks are and how people and organizations use them. The methodologies employed for gathering data included:

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[1] For purposes of this paper, Social Networks is the same as Social Media.
[2] Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), article 11.

Survey. A survey was sent to over 1,000 RIM, IT, and legal professionals across the United States. Respondents to the survey represented a variety of industries including: government, non-profit, energy, legal, manufacturing, media, retail, technology, and telecommunications. The viewpoints and voices of those who responded are included in the findings in "Impacts to the RIM Profession" section of this research paper.

Participation on Social Networks. In order to have a working knowledge and be able to speak to the Social Network experience in this research paper, the researcher joined and participated on six (6) different Social Media sites for varying lengths of time. At the time of this writing, the researcher still participates on two Social Networks on a regular basis. The researcher continues to be a regular blogger on electronic records management.

Media. Articles written in newspapers, trade journals, blogs, and online articles were read and reviewed for relevancy to the focus of this paper.

Other Research Material. Two other research papers on the topic of Social Networks were read and information added to this paper from either of those papers will be referenced.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with individuals who represent RIM professionals, attorneys, IT professionals, and Human Resources professionals from different industry segments.

This research paper provides the reader with the findings of the research and the opinions of the researcher. However, this paper does not contend or claim to be exhaustive of all issues that may arise with the use of Social Networks.

SECTION 2. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Since Social Networks began, hundreds of millions of individuals and thousands of organizations have been attracted by the concept of connecting with others using Social Networks. This attraction or fascination extends beyond just the use of Social Networks for social reasons. While Social Networks are generally established to be topic-focused, they are truly organized around people and can be seen as "egocentric" networks. There are hundreds of Social Networks, with a variety of technical availabilities, supporting a very diverse range of interests, beliefs, activities, and practices. Social Networks are internet-based systems and services that allow individuals to: (1) create multiple public or semi-public profiles either within or between different Social Networks, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, often referred to as "friends", and (3) view, traverse, and communicate with their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.[3] As of this writing, there are over 184 different Social Networking sites that have been launched across the globe, in a variety of countries and languages. Some Social Networks are specific to a topic or industry while others are more open-ended.

What makes Social Networks unique is not that they allow individuals to meet, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social or professional connections or relationships. Some connections made are frail, because they are based on a single encounter. Some users accept the challenge of seeking to have the greatest number of connections, friends, or followers without any real relationship.

Social Networks started as a means for people to have a social connection with other people with similar interests. They were once considered a tool for youthful revolution, but over the course of the last seven years, Social Networks have been used both for social purposes as well as for conducting business by a variety of organizations and industries. Examples of industry sectors using social networks include private companies, non-profits, political organizations, government and education.

"Facebook has always focused on building ways for people to connect to each other and share information with their friend. We think this is important because people are shaping how information moves through their connections. People are increasingly discovering information not just through links to web pages but also from the people and things they care about. This flow of information has profound benefits – from driving better decisions to keeping in touch more easily. . ."[4]

The first recognizable Social Network launched in 1997 and was called SixDegrees.com which achieved limited success. Social Networking became more mainstream around 2003. Today the four most popular Social Networks, with popularity being determined by the amount of traffic to the site are: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linkedin. Today YouTube is considered the second largest search engine, just behind Google™.

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[3] Dana M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship," Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, 2007.
[4] Mark Zuckerberg, Building the Social Web Together, Building the Social Web Together, April 21, 2010.

In the table below, you can see the distribution of traffic volume across 10 different countries for the month of February 2010.

Global* Social Network Traffic / Feb 2010			
Web Site	% Reach of Active Social Users	Sessions per Person	Time per Person (hh:mm:ss)
Facebook	52%	19.16	5:52:00
Myspace.com	15%	6.66	0:59:33
Twitter.com	10%	5.81	0:36:43
LinkedIn	6%	3.15	0:12:47
Classmates Online	5%	3.29	0:13:55

Source: The Nielsen Company

*United States, Brazil, Australia, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom

Unique audience represents active usage, not overall membership of social networks

It took 38 years for television to reach 50 million viewers; four years for the Internet to reach 50 million people; 3 years for the iPod and less than one year for Facebook to reach 50 million people. At this writing there are over 550 million people who have accounts on Facebook. If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest country in the world. Social Networks can no longer be ignored or considered just a social phenomenon.

This "youthful revolution" has not gotten weaker but has taken on steam, into something that is being used by all industries and all ages with the fastest growing segment of users on Social Networks being women between the ages of 55 and 65.

Yet in their short lifespan, Social Networks can be seen evolving and disappearing. They are started with a focus on a specific topic or area and then may evolve into something different. Once out for public consumption, a Social Network may capture our attention, but our attention needs constant stimuli to keep the attraction.

SECTION 3. ISSUES INFLUENCED BY THE GENERATION GAP

It is no surprise when we hear that people of either the younger or older generation do not think like us. Each generation has unique experiences that are different from other generations as well as the social and economic issues of each generation. If we do not think about situations, problems, or issues in the same way, it can be deduced that the way the younger and older generations work and communicate differs also. Yet in today's workforce there are five generations working at the same time with five different experiences and five differing perspectives. Youth of the millennium generation are growing up as a part of the technology revolution, and they more readily embrace new advances in technology such as Social Networks. They were born during the birth of Social Networks, so Social Networks are seen as the norm to them. Email is passé. The newest generation can be characterized by the following traits:

- They don't understand the need for an 8-to-5 work day;
- They expect organizations to be flatter and less hierarchical;
- There is an expectation that organizational mobility or growth is tied to the work product and not to who you know;
- They have the expectation that if you are in a job or management position that you are competent;
- They are keenly aware of the latest and greatest technology; and
- They prefer a more transparent organization.

"Children of today have more in common with other races, ethnicities, and cultures than with their parents, because of generational diversity."

Ron Harris, Manager Workforce Diversity, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee

While these traits appear altruistic, they can frighten many of the older generations, because older generations tend to struggle to keep up with technology or the affects that technology may have on managing information. Many individuals from older generations developed friendships from working relationships. The older generations' perception of corporate-mobility was tied in part to who they knew. The traits of the youngest working generation are a shift from what has been held as the "norm".

Organizations are constantly looking for solutions to improve business processes while increasing efficiency. To do that, organizations have been turning to technology solutions to achieve results. Now they are looking at Social Networks for the same reason. The older generations can be seen as less flexible, slower to grasp technological tools or concepts, higher paid, and thus more costly to the organization. Younger generations will be seen racing right past older generations in using and understanding the use and capabilities of Social Networks. Older generations in the workforce must continue to sharpen their knowledge and skills of Social Networks and the impact they have on their organizations' information assets.

Through Social Networks, today's younger generation comes to work with their social relationships and networks already intact. They use Social Networks to seek others with common interest or views. Work becomes just that – WORK! They are less interested in building social relationships at work with people.

The latest generation has very little in common with older generations; having conversations is limited and thus they want to stay connected with their friends during work hours using Social Networks. Those friends on Social Networks are the ones who share similar views or interests.

However, the use of Social Networks—or should I say, the misuse of information—can create a negative perception of the latest generation's use of Social Networks. The potential for misuse is a real risk today. As each new generation enters the workforce, they tend to lack practical application or experience with laws and regulations which govern the use and management of information. Younger generations, like the generations before them, tend to be passionate about causes and very quickly take sides on an issues based on a "friends" view or perspective, and younger generations lack the experience that comes with time in understanding how our personal information can be used both in a positive and negative manner. Therefore, the younger generation more readily shares a generous amount of personal information about themselves on Social Networks. They do not have the time needed at work to understand the application of rules coming into the workforce or the parameters for protecting information that must be met with implementing technology.

> *"Facebook involves lots of young persons who either are not old enough to give meaningful consent or have not had enough life experiences to know the consequences."*
>
> *Robert Ellis Smith, Publisher, Privacy Journal*

Yet, the younger generations' demand for and expectation of privacy are the same as the older generations. They expect that their information will be kept private and not be shared unless they give permission. They may lack the awareness of the "openness" of Social Networks or that as information is posted it may be seen by more than just designated friends. In a study conducted by professionals from the University of California Berkeley and the University of Pennsylvania, they found that "a gap in privacy knowledge provides one of the explanations for the apparent license with which the young behave online. 42% of the younger generation answered five online privacy questions incorrectly. 88% answered only two or fewer correctly. The problem is even more pronounced when presented with offline privacy issues – the youth of today were more likely to answer no questions correctly about privacy than any other age group." [5] It is the lack of corporate or information management knowledge about what is appropriate data to be shared that affects the rate at which business data as well as personal data is released.

Educating new generations, today and into the future, about the corporate rules for privacy and managing the information asset is paramount to the Records and Information Management profession. Organizations must provide the rules for defining what is a record and what is not a record early in the working career of an employee. Social Networks are not to blame for the information being shared or leaked, humans are; and not just the younger generations. Social Networks are communication tools, and in-and-of-themselves are neither good nor bad. Organizations are responsible for investing in and

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[5] Chris Hoofnagle, Jennifer King, Su Li, and Joseph Turow, "How Different Are Young Adults from Older Adults When It Comes to Information Privacy Attitudes & Policies?" Research Paper for UC Berkeley School of Law, Berkeley School of Information, and Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, April 2010.

educating their employees about the rules of Records and Information Management to protect the information assets of the organization.

Educating employees is more important than ever before as more and more organizations are using Social Networks as a part of their business strategy. Organizations from every industry segment are beginning to use Social Networks as a way of doing business. They can be seen as a "great" move for advertising products or for researching new job applicants. Organizations are going to analyze the use of Social Networks to determine buying preferences. The buying power and decision makers of the near future are in the younger generations, who are comfortable with the technology and consider it the "norm."

Organizations using Social Networks to do business have a profound impact on the Records and Information Management profession and an organization's need for the role that Records and Information Management professionals serve in the organizations. Organizations are capitalizing on the volume of individuals using Social Networks to expand their market reach and to leverage the power of word-of-mouth which is the value of Social Networks.

SECTION 4. AREAS OF IMPACT TO RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The impact that Social Networks have on the Records and Information Management profession is divided into two distinct areas: 1) the impact on the RIM professional as an individual, and 2) the impact on the RIM profession, answering the question, how does a Social Network affect me personally and professionally?

Impact on the Professional

Social Networks are a place and a tool where RIM professionals can connect with other RIM professionals beyond face-to-face meetings to share information or to seek assistance. You no longer have to wait until the next conference or seminar to reach out and have a discussion with someone you connected with at past conferences or seminars.   Even the ARMA International association has an internal Social Network called ARMA iConference. The relationships we developed at conferences that created a sense of anticipation each year so we could go see our "friends" no longer have to wait for the next conference for us to maintain that relationship.

Likewise, there is a value in the speed of distribution of questions and answers that can be seen on various Social Networks. RIM professionals who have questions can post them on Social Networks and within minutes—if not seconds—receive answers from other RIM professionals. For the individual, this removes the feeling that may exist of being all alone on the job. This type of Social Network where the topics are specific to RIM professionals creates a community of commonality.

"Relationships centered around events and face-to-face meetings are now expanding and extending beyond once or twice per year. Social Networks strengthen relationships which can lead to a stronger association."

Patrick Cunningham, CRM FAI

Another benefit for RIM professionals seeking jobs or seeking professionals to fill positions, the individual can reach out to other RIM professionals and have their resumes forwarded or contacts made using Social Network contacts or communities, as well as offer recommendations and personal referrals for others to view instantly.

Career changes and announcements can be posted on Social Networks which makes it easier for someone who is making a career change to push their information to the widest possible audience in the most efficient manner, using the "word-of-mouth" concept of Social Networks to get the message out quickly.

Getting the message out quickly can have negative consequences too. As stated by Patrick Cunningham, CRM FAI, "There can be significant human consequences when the dissemination of information on a Social Network outpaces the traditional mechanisms." This has been experienced by the military when notifying families of the death of a soldier. Notifying the families by personal contact takes time, while the ability to "notify" others via Social Networks can be done in seconds. Current methods of notifying others or communicating a sensitive message need to be reevaluated to ensure that the proper order of communication is made.

RIM professionals must be aware of how fast information can be disseminated; traditional methods may need to be reexamined to be timelier. Once the message has been posted on a Social Network site it cannot be taken back. Words have the power to create emotion and—gone unchecked—can cause unwanted, unnecessary personal consequences.

The communication disseminated on Social Networks by organizations to customers or "friends" has real impacts to the RIM profession or the RIM program within an organization. The context of these communications on Social Networks may be considered "records" and fall into categories that need to be retained and later disposed.

RIM Profession

As highlighted earlier, many industry sectors are using Social Networks to do business. Some of the types of organizations using Social Networks as a tool include, but are not limited to:

- Public Agencies
- Private Companies,
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Community Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Professional Associations
- Corporations

> *Epic Change sent Tweets on Twitter accounts to raise $11,000 from 372 donors in 48 hours to build a classroom in Tanzania.*
>
> *Over 98% of the donors had never donated to Epic Change before.*

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather as an example of different types of organizations that are using Social Networks to do business; sometimes without considering the full operational needs or records and information management consequences of doing so. Organizations are using Social Networks in the following ways:

- Gathering business intelligence on Social Network members' buying preferences or interests to target advertising
- Conducting background checks on applicants and seeing what type of behavior they are exhibiting
- Generating sales leads
- Communicating with customers or clients about products and services
- Raising funds
- Pushing advertising to consumers

Organizations that are choosing to use Social Networks for advertising or marketing their products are seen as being more proactive and less passive. Each organization that uses Social Networks will have to consider their options when deciding what works best.

By using Social Networks to do business, company records and information are being disseminated very rapidly. This is a positive aspect of businesses using Social Networks to do business; however, few organizations are aware of the need to protect themselves from the loss of intellectual property and their information assets by developing sensitivity classifications that set the parameters around what can be shared on a Social Network. And few companies have rules in place to direct employees prior to their using Social Networks for business.

> *"The bottom line is that just like any other type of format or media, whether a Tweet or a blog is a record or not depends on what it is and its context."*
>
> *Jesse Wilkins*
> *AIIM ERM Community Blog 7/6/10*

In a survey conducted of RIM, IT, and legal professionals in 12 vertical industries, 51.2% said that their company uses Social Networks to do business. 55.1% of the respondents said their company allows employees to access their personal accounts on Social Networks during business hours, and 85% said they believed that the rules that existed for internet usage also applied to Social Networks. 93% of the respondents indicated that their organization had a Records and Information Management Program, but with the RIM Program in place and the rule regarding internet usage, they still felt that it was not enough. The view of Social Network's impact to the RIM Program was perceived as primarily negative.

Rules need to be explicit, RIM Policies changed to call out the confidentiality of company information; employees need to be regularly reminded that records and information are company assets; and the appropriate security must be applied to protect inadvertent access or distribution. Allowing employees to use Social Networks during business hours can open the door to viruses and other types of data security attacks. Ensuring that employees know what is appropriate to be posted and by whom is critical so the "accidental" loss of intellectual property does not occur.

Organizations need to define what is a "record" and what is not; identify the confidentiality level of records and information; and what can and cannot be shared. The decision about who is authorized to speak on behalf of the organization should be made clear to all employees, temporary workers and contractors. It should be clear that the person designated to speak on behalf of the organization has been the individual provided the facts and that anyone else would likely be injecting opinion rather than facts.

Employees who are allowed to access their Social Network accounts must understand its role as a tool to the organization and for themselves personally. Information shared erroneously on a Social Network is the employee's mistake, not the Social Networks. Any information that is posted on a Social Network site about the organization or the work that they do is all but impossible to delete. The rate of dissemination via a Social Network is just short of phenomenal. Once posted, the confidentiality status of information has been jeopardized and what other individuals do with that information cannot be controlled by the owning organization.

What the research has found is that Social Networks are tools for communication and distribution. Tools are innate objects that cannot possess "good" or "bad" characteristics. The lack of controls around the management of information creates the impression of whether a Social Network is good or bad.

If organizations do not have a written policy about the value of their information assets, requirements for access and use, and who has the authority to share that information, employees will lack the knowledge necessary to determine in every situation what is the appropriate action to be taken. Social Networks do not cause a lack of policy by an organization.

In the same way, Social Networks cannot accommodate for poorly written or incomplete policies that do not address the issues of managing information whether the issue is sensitivity, ownership, protection or retention. Organizations are more likely to have policies around the use of their information technology tools than the value and protection of the information assets.

"The first step organizations need to take is they need a reality check. They need to take ownership of what is going on in social networking. Just blocking sites doesn't work. Employees always find a way around it. And letting everything though is too risky."

Ted Ritter, Analyst Nemertes Research

Finally, it is not the responsibility of the Social Network or their parent company to teach employees the requirements for protecting information and intellectual property. An information asset must have adequate and written requirements that address the following areas:

- Ownership
- Access Rights
- Retention Requirements
- Distribution

When organizations lack written requirements in the form of policy and procedures and accompanying training, employees are left to make their own judgments. Social Networks cannot make these situations better, but information distributed on a Social Network can make the lack of policy and control known outside the organization very quickly.

Responsibility of the Organization

Where do organizations start in resolving these concerns? First realize that Social Networks are tools. They are tools that have an impact on your business and on your RIM Program and requirements that should be clearly stated and written for employees.

1. Before using Social Networks for business activities or allowing employees to access their Social Networks' accounts (most people have more than one Social Network account and profile), update your RIM policy. Make sure your policy addresses information value and ownership. Establish explicit rules for using electronic communication tools and for sharing <u>any</u> information

beyond the organization. Define the sensitivity classes for the organization's information and what classes can be shared. Begin the practice of marking documents with the appropriate sensitivity class.

2. Update your RIM training course to include more than retention and storage. RIM training should explain the sensitivity classes, security requirements, ownership, and sharing rights in addition to retention and storage practices.

3. Define and apply strict access controls to proprietary or restricted information. Controls protect the organization from unauthorized disclosure and demonstrate due diligence when defending the organization in a court of law.

4. Define what a record is and what it is not; what is available to the public and what is confidential or restricted; and what is accessible and what is not. The burden of control for protecting information has always been the responsibility of the organization. Using Social Networks does not change this fact.

    If an employee posts organizational information on the Internet, specifically on a Social Network, it is not the Social Network's fault. Neither is it the Social Network's fault if people post personal information.   The organization and the individual retain the control and responsibility for what is said and shared on a Social Network.

5. Develop a robust Records Retention Schedule (RRS) and apply the retention requirements on a consistent, regular, and repeatable basis to both hard copy and electronic records and information. If obsolete information has been properly deleted and disposed, it will not be available for employees to share on a Social Network. Strict compliance to the rules of a RRS also demonstrate due diligence and reasonableness as well as help an organization to control costs associated with creating, storing and managing information.

If organizations do not take these foundational steps, they take the chance of increasing their risk of information loss on Social Networks. Once information is posted on a Social Network, it is a matter of seconds before it may be in the "hands" of potentially thousands of other people. Just as in the as in the case of using any other electronic communication tool, once information has been sent/posted there is no way to control what a recipient does with that information.   RIM professionals have been telling their organizations this fact for years.   Now is the time for organizations to hear this message and take the steps to protect their information and potentially their reputation.

SECTION 5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS ARISING WITH SOCIAL NETWORKS

This research paper does not pretend to list or discuss all the legal considerations that may exist today surrounding the use of Social Networks, but rather to identify some of the issues that RIM or IT professionals can discuss with legal counsel in order to design the best practices and solutions for their organization.

Legal considerations to be discussed for better information management include, but are not limited to:

- Privacy considerations
- Advertising claims
- Client confidentiality
- Employment matters
- Retention of information

RIM professionals have been telling employees and organizations for years, be careful what you post or say. Assume your mother and father will read what you post. Now you can assume that your grandmother and/or grandfather may be reading what you are posting also.

"Don't do anything online that you would not do offline. Rules apply to behavior not the means."

Therese Miller, Of Counsel
Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP

eDiscovery Challenges

During the interview with Therese Miller, she stated that eDiscovery teams are faced with challenges associated with organizations and individuals use of Social Networks.   Some of the challenges include:

- Associating information with its owner,
- Dynamic environments of Social Networks,
- Public-ness of data,
- Use of your profile against you,
- Verification of claims, and (VALIDITY)
- Rules of data collection for discovery.

These challenges are emphasized by the passing of time. In many cases, much time has passed before a matter is brought before a judge.   The information may have been changed and/or deleted, making it harder for counsel to identify, collect and process what may be relevant to a case.

 On the other hand, attorneys who need to verify claims for insurance or workers' compensations claims now routinely check Social Network sites for claimant's postings. Several accounts have been recorded where work injury claims made by individuals for workers' compensation were checked by investigators going onto Social Networking sites and have found photos of the individual engaged in physical activities and sports. Some of the photos were never taken by the individual filing the claim, but rather the photos were taken by friends.

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We have no control over what other people will post. Assume that if you are a party to a claim you will need to avoid situations that may held against you in a court of law. If there are photos, they will more than likely be posted.

Information on Social Networks is being used by attorneys and argued about in courtrooms during eDiscovery and trial. A solid approach for minimizing the likelihood of information needing to be produced for trial is a robust RIM program that is monitored for compliance.

SECTION 6. CONCLUSION

A word to the wise – assume your mom, dad or grandparents will read what you are writing, because they are! Write professionally. Be honest and stick to the facts. Do not take a stand on a particular issue until you are sure that you have heard both, or all, sides of the issue. What you say today may be repeated or found 20 or 30+ years from now and held against you.

Social Networks are communication and distribution tools where the environment as well as the content on the site is constantly changing and evolving. Remember that what you post can be saved by other individuals and may not "disappear" with age. Social Networks are being used by people from age 5-to-95 and all around the world.

Now, more than ever, organizations choosing to use Social Networks for business need strong RIM programs and rules for managing their information assets. The traditional records and information management program elements of retention, classification, security and privacy must have clearly stated rules. Employees need to be trained, reminded and held accountable for how they manage the organization's information assets. It is the organization's property; it is the organization's responsibility.

Social Networks are communication and distribution mechanisms. They are not responsible for an organization's lack of having policy and procedures; nor are they responsible for the lack of enforcement. Validity and/or origination of comments or postings are often hard to prove.

If we, the RIM professionals, do not establish the rules, classify the information, restrict access and train employees, we will find more and more of our corporate knowledge available on Social Networking sites.

EPILOGUE

Since the close of the timeframe of this research paper, more news about Social Networks has become public from changes in the focus of some Social Network sites to WikiLeaks, the theft and misuse of organizational information. My local newspaper's headline of December 16, 2010, stated "With 550 million friends, why not?" The article was about Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, being chosen as Time magazine's 2010 "Person of the Year." He is the second youngest recipient, at the age of 26, to receive this honor, second only to Charles Lindbergh who was 25 years old when so designated. While he is receiving this prestigious honor, more organizational data is being leaked or stolen by less than honorable individuals.

It is befitting to honor a person who has revolutionized the tools, or means by which we communicate and relate to one another, as well as market our products and services, provide educational materials and recruit employees. The changing of the tools and their openness and availability is an honorable trait of all Social Networks.

"If information is available from the internet it is not secure. It is that simple."

Norman K. Weiner,
VP of Technology,
Kaizen InfoSource LLC

In December 2010, Proctor and Gamble made the decision to stop advertising on soap operas and to take that advertising budget and apply all of it to advertising on Social Networks. That means there will be a lot of information about Proctor and Gamble's products and its company that is very public.

Social Networks cannot be responsible for humans who act less than honorably. Social Networks cannot control the behavior of individuals who take organizational information and post it to the Social Network sites or allow organizational information that is confidential to be leaked to the public.

Regardless of their size, organizations are still responsible for establishing the rules, educating employees, and developing the security to protect their information assets. They must first take a "Reality Check" and understand how Social Networks can be used and impact the organization, not just to push products to consumers, but how records and information that belong to the organization is now "out there." Take the steps to protect these information assets by establishing the rules that govern that information management; delete obsolete information (obsolete information if shared publically can still have significant consequences); and educate employees, temporary workers and contractors about the value and requirements of managing the organization's information assets.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Streck is the President and CEO of Kaizen InfoSource LLC. Helen's expertise in records and information management has its foundation in a career that spans over 25 years. Helen joined Kaizen InfoSource to lead and apply its unique industry focus to guide clients in aspects of records and information management consistent with good corporate practices, ARMA's Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles, records and information management compliance programs, program strategy development, development and implementation of litigation hold protocols, electronic discovery response plans and data privacy initiatives, and selection and implementation technologies to support these services. Helen's experience includes designing corporate level records and information management programs to meet regulatory, legal and company requirements for a variety of industries. In this capacity, she has crafted record governance strategies for diverse organizations and built concrete, actionable steps for implementation across a broad spectrum of organizations and countries.

Helen is active in ARMA International, where she is currently serving as the Pacific Region Manager. She has served as a Trustee on the board of its Educational Foundation and as a past international board member for ARMA International. She has developed and delivered several courses on business strategies, ARMA's Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles, and Records and Information Management Programs. In addition, she has published articles in various professional newsletters, served as a past contributor for the former Infonomics Magazine, the official magazine of the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM), and is currently a blogger for the AIIM ERM Community page.

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The ARMA International Educational Foundation is the non-profit, (501(c)3, affiliate of ARMA International, the primary professional association for the records and information profession in the world.

Mission

The ARMA International Educational Foundation supports education and research initiatives that promote the advancement of both information managers and the information management profession. Recorded information is the lifeblood of the modern organization, but rarely is it treated as a critical asset, primarily because there is little quality research to create the comprehensive body of knowledge required to support information management as a profession. The AIEF purpose is to answer that need by soliciting funds for this research and then providing a vehicle through which conclusions can be tested, documented and communicated to the information management community.

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