

Records Management Strategies for Success: the Records Management Society Conference 2005. By [Jamie Burton](#)

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Jamie Burton reports back on the Records Management Society's recent annual conference and the discussions on new strategies for successful records management.

The highest profile event in the records management calendar, the annual conference of the Records Management Society (RMS), took place this year from the 24th to the 27th April 2005. Following on from the success of last year's conference, this year's event was held once more in the superb surroundings of the Royal Bath Hotel in Bournemouth. The event allows records management professionals from around the UK (and further afield) to catch up with friends and colleagues, and the opportunity to make new contacts in the profession. Of equal importance is the chance to reflect on where the records management profession is today and where the profession is heading.

Records management has never had a higher profile within the public sector than it has today. A number of drivers have contributed to this, including eGovernment, Freedom of Information, the Electronic Social Care Record and Data Protection. Of course records management has a multitude of benefits beyond compliance, including increased effectiveness and efficiency of business processes, improved decision making and ultimately lower costs, all of which can be achieved by the more efficient management of records and information. Records management is increasingly seen as an element of Enterprise Content Management, an increasingly popular term (used by vendors in particular) to encompass various aspects of information, knowledge and content management. Records management forms the fundamental basis of all these initiatives: information, knowledge and content can all be found embedded in business records, and if these records are not managed effectively, leveraging the value from records will be far more difficult.

All of the above points were emphasised throughout the conference, and in particular during the keynote address from the Keeper of the Records of Scotland, George MacKenzie. George emphasised the importance of collaboration with other professions: records management in isolation cannot offer all the benefits outlined above. Conversely, initiatives such as knowledge management cannot succeed without the fundamental building blocks of records management.

The conference's theme was "Strategies for Success", and the conference undoubtedly lived up to this theme. The focus of a large number of sessions was the future: the future of the profession, of the discipline and in particular the future of records management within individual organisations. In particular the conference addressed the fundamentals of building business cases and strategies to address the ever-growing problems of masses of paper and electronic documents and records. Although new and emerging technologies were not high on the conference's agenda, Alan Andolsen's startling introduction to emerging technologies was a notable exception - imagine a disc with the capacity of a hundred DVDs, or a computer the size of a pen, with a rollout screen!

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The records management profession has been evolving rapidly in recent years, driving the need to question existing processes, models and standards at all levels. One of the most forward looking presentations this year was given by Gary Johnston, who introduced delegates to an alternative model for the design and implementation of records management systems. Gary discussed the concept of building quality into the design and implementation of records management systems, and proposed an alternative model to the accepted DIRKS and ISO 15489 standards. Gary claimed that this model would cause a reduction in the number of defects in the design and implementation of records management systems.

Gary is an example of the increasing number of records managers who have learnt to continually question the accepted "way of doing things", and who are experts at managing the introduction of change into organisations. The records management profession is dynamic and forward looking, and this was highly evident throughout this year's RMS conference. Planning for next year's conference, to be held in Manchester, is well under way. We hope that you will be able to join us!