Total Recordkeeping across the Digital Continuum
The National Archives of Australia's Strategic Framework for Making, Keeping and Using Digital Records

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Today's presentation describes a journey – a recordkeeping journey taken by the National Archives of Australia that starts with the development of a concept and describes our efforts to convert that concept into reality. Back in the mid-to-late 1990s the National Archives of Australia developed a concept of how it could work with Australian government agencies to improve recordkeeping and deal with the challenge of electronic records. Today I will review what the Archives has done over the past four to five years to turn this concept into reality and, perhaps more importantly, I will describe the Archives' current strategic directions and the issues it is grappling with in its efforts to ensure that good digital recordkeeping becomes the reality in all Australian government agencies.

Broadly speaking, the Archives is steering in the same direction and using the same conceptual framework it developed in 1999–2000. Nevertheless, the implementation process has been one of continuous learning, reinvention and the exploration of new strategies. While the new recordkeeping regime articulated in 1999–2000 was informed by many years of experience, it was a very new approach to recordkeeping – one that reflected the theoretical revolution of the "records continuum" in the 1990s and the advent of AS 4390, the 1996 Australian Records Management Standard.

Just as AS 4390 was an aspirational standard rather than a reflection of actual recordkeeping practices in organisations, so too was the Archives'"e-permanence suite of modern best practice recordkeeping standards and guidelines a reflection of where the Archives thought Australian government recordkeeping needed to go. If you like, e-permanence provided an approach to recordkeeping that reflected the world of textbooks and research and development laboratories. No one had ever done recordkeeping quite in that way before, so the e-permanence suite of standards, tools and guidelines reflected how the Archives thought the new approach to recordkeeping could be implemented.

The Archives had good reasons for adopting a radical new approach to recordkeeping. It had become obvious to the

Archives that the traditional – the-'business as usual"– approaches to recordkeeping were not working. There was ample evidence that recordkeeping in Australian government agencies was becoming an endangered species and that some radical intervention was necessary if the situation were to be rectified. To the Archives, this meant taking sound recordkeeping ideas from the past and, using the conceptual roadmap provided by AS 4390, recasting them for the devolved, digital workplaces of the twenty-first century.

When the National Archives launched e-permanence in March 2000, it was acutely aware that not only was its suite of products incomplete, but also that those products were for the most part untested in the real world. But the Archives had to start somewhere and it had to do it with a big bang to shake people out of their complacency.

After the e-permanence launch, the Archives mainly focussed its energies on implementation and training. However, the organisation also very consciously devoted a slice of its resources to filling the gaps in the e-permanence suite of products and to updating and continuously improving them to ensure they remain relevant and reflect the lessons learnt from implementation.

In this presentation I will:

- provide an overview of the Archives' experience since 2000 in working with agencies to implement e-permanence;

- summarise the ongoing development and continuous improvement of the Archives' e-permanence strategic framework for digital recordkeeping across the entire records continuum; and

- conclude by examining the main issues, directions and priorities currently being addressed by the Archives in its efforts to enable total digital recordkeeping in the Australian government.

e-permanence, vintage 1999–2000

The launch of e-permanence in early 2000 represented a significant new beginning for the National Archives.

Although the Archives had been preparing for it for some years, *e-permanence* marked the point at which the NAA took on a new function and repositioned itself as a standards setter and a proactive enabler of good recordkeeping in agencies. In addition to taking on this new role, the Archives also adopted a new conceptual approach to recordkeeping. In accordance with the 1996 Australian Records Management Standard, the Archives adopted the so-called 'functional approach to recordkeeping"– what the Canadians now call–'going functional'.

This means that records are linked to the organisation's business functions, which opens doors to the new worlds of functional analysis, functional classification and the identification of recordkeeping requirements and functional requirements. The recommended process model was – and still is – the 8-step DIRKS (Designing and Implementing Record Keeping Systems) methodology for designing and implementing recordkeeping systems.

From that point on the Archives' concept of appraisal was to be very different to what it had been previously. The Archives became committed to appraising functions and activities, not records, in order to identify the need for records. Not only did the Archives' appraisal attention shift from records to functions, but also the Archives' view of what constituted 'appraisal' widened considerably. Appraisal was no longer simply a process of deciding how long to keep records'– it had become the process of deciding what records need to be made and kept, and in what form and for what purpose. Why decide how long to keep records when those records have not even been created and you have no idea what records you should be creating?

In 1999 the Archives decided to use the Web as its chief means of conveying information to agencies about recordkeeping standards and guidelines. The Archives decided on this course for two reasons:

- the navigational flexibility of the Web; and

- the fact that Web publications can be more easily revised, updated and supplemented than print publications.

The Archives has always aimed to ensure that its

e-permanence products are as relevant, accurate and up-to-date as possible and it did not want to be hampered by elongated print publishing production schedules.

The main components of the *e-permanence* suite in March 2000 were:

- The DIRKS (Designing and Implementing Record Keeping Systems) Manual (exposure draft)

- *Recordkeeping Metadata Standard* (version 1.0)

- Appraisal guidelines (based on DIRKS steps A-C)

- *AGLS (Australian Government Locator Service) Metadata Standard and the Australian Governments Interactive Functions Thesaurus* (AGIFT) for online resource discovery

- *Keyword AAA Thesaurus* (licenced from New South Wales State Records) – a thesaurus of common administrative functions

- *Administrative Functions Disposal Authority*

- *Guidelines for Developing a Functions Thesaurus*

- Policy for archiving Web-based resources

Finetuning the original suite of products

The key product in

e-permanence has always been the DIRKS Manual. The Archives' main aim in developing the DIRKS Manual was to exert a positive influence on the design and implementation of recordkeeping systems. The Archives believed (and still does) that if recordkeeping were to improve, recordkeeping systems would have to be improved from the ground up. If you have poor quality systems, all your other recordkeeping efforts will probably fail.

The initial DIRKS Manual was labelled an 'exposure' draft, because in researching and writing it the Archives had very little opportunity to road test the methodology. In September 2001 – 18 months after its initial release— the Archives issued a revised and retitled DIRKS Manual that took account of early implementation experience and feedback. In order to convey a more holistic and integrated information management message, the manual was retitled *DIRKS: A Strategic Approach to Managing Business Information.*

The most notable change to *e-permanence* at this time was the incorporation of the old appraisal guidelines into the DIRKS Manual. Early implementation experience taught the Archives that agencies were often confused by the existence of two separate publications covering the same territory of DIRKS steps A-C. The Archives was also concerned that agencies were only using the appraisal guidelines to do DIRKS, whereas it was keen for them to do the whole of DIRKS, not just steps A-C.

In 2001 the Archives also issued the *Commonwealth Modified Version of Keyword AAA*, which incorporated minor variations to the New South Wales State Records' thesaurus, reflecting some differences in practice and terminology in the Australian government jurisdiction.

In the period up to December 2002 the Archives released various revisions of the'*AGLS Metadata Standard*, culminating in the publication by Standards Australia of the mature version of the AGLS Metadata Element set, AS 5044, parts 1 and 2. At the same time the Archives also

published and revised the *AGLS Commonwealth Implementation Manual*. In 2003 the Archives issued a revised edition of the *Guidelines for Developing a Functions Thesaurus*, supplementing it with a new publication, *Overview of classification tools for records management*.

Filling the gaps in e-permanence

Immediately after launching *e-permanence*, one of the Archives' main priorities was to develop and deliver training courses on the various major products in the suite. The first batch of these courses was developed during 2000–01 and the courses have since been continuously updated and maintained.

Early in 2001 the Archives issued a set of detailed guidelines on archiving Web-based resources – a 'how to' guide – to accompany the policy statement on this topic issued at the time of the *e-permanence* launch. In 2001 the Archives also issued a *Standard for the Physical Storage of Commonwealth Records*, followed in 2002 by implementation guidelines titled *Storing to the Standard*.

One of the Archives' more significant new products has been the training package *'Keep the Knowledge: Make a Record!*, which was released in 2003. The Archives' communication and training activities have always identified three key audience groups – heads of agencies and senior managers, records and information management staff, and records creators. *Keep the Knowledge: Make a Record!* assists the third of these groups by providing agencies with user-friendly and attractive training and promotional material that can be adapted for deployment and distribution to their staff.

Also released in 2003 was the General Disposal Authority for source records that have been copied, converted or migrated. The main objective of this new General Disposal Authority was to give agencies some disposal guidance for source records scanned or otherwise copied into digital recordkeeping systems. Previously agencies could dispose of such source records only if they had been appraised as being of short-term temporary value.

I cannot conclude my overview of the development of *e-permanence* between 2000 and 2003 without mentioning the release of the new international records management standard AS/ISO 15489 in 2002. This new standard, which updated and superseded AS 4390, is conceptually consistent with its predecessor and the *e-permanence* suite, and has been formally endorsed by the National Archives.

Early implementations and audits

It's all very well issuing standards and guidelines, but if we are to improve recordkeeping what really matters is implementing those standards and guidelines. Indeed the

Archives knew when it launched *e-permanence* that, although the culmination of a lot of work, *e-permanence* itself was really just the end of the beginning. The Archives knew that just as it had taken many years of neglect for the state of recordkeeping to fall into disrepair, it would take many years of remedial effort to overcome the problem.

The first challenge was to convince the decision-makers that they had a problem and that the problem needed to be taken seriously. The Archives is in recordkeeping for the long haul. This is just as well, because the challenge we are addressing here defies quick fixes. In today's complex and highly diverse workplaces, it is a significant exercise to design and implement user-friendly recordkeeping systems that help users do the right thing as well as integrating seamlessly with work processes and corporate culture.

It has been important to develop tools and methodologies for assessing the state of recordkeeping in agencies so that baseline measures can be made against which subsequent improvements can be identified. How can an agency know whether its recordkeeping is up to scratch? How do you measure compliance when AS/ISO 15489 was written not as a compliance standard but as a best practice standard?[1]

Fortunately, the National Archives has been able to mobilise the professional engagement and support of the Australian National Audit Office to help address these questions. Auditors are, of course, natural allies for recordkeeping professionals. Auditors rely on having accessible, authentic and reliable records of decisions and activities in order to conduct their audits. Since 2002 the Auditor-General has conducted two audits of recordkeeping in selected Australian government agencies and is currently preparing a third audit.

These audit reports, together with the Archives' own surveys and the results of the Australian Public Service Commission's annual''State of the Service' surveys, provide a very detailed picture of the current parlous state of recordkeeping in the Australian government and the early efforts some agencies are making to implement the'*e-permanence* suite of standards and guidelines. They tell us that agencies are beginning the transition from paper to digital recordkeeping systems, although in most cases many years after the transition from paper to digital work processes.

The other clear message from these surveys and audits is the lack of integration between records and information management and information technology in the great majority of agencies. This 'stove-piped' approach to information resource management is seriously hampering

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[1] This is being addressed by Standards Australia, which launched an interim compliance standard for AS/ISO 15489 in November 2004.

the efforts of records management staff to bring about a successful transition to digital recordkeeping in their agencies. Too often, it also means that the Archives' good recordkeeping message is simply not reaching the Information Technology professionals that in most cases are responsible for managing the digital records of agencies. In view of this the Archives is now targeting its recordkeeping communic ations more directly at the Information Technology community.

Implementing functional appraisal

Implementing functions-based appraisal across the Australian government has probably been the major implementation focus since the launch of

e-permanence. Thirty agencies have been issued with functions-based records disposal authorities since 2000, while another 40 agencies are well on the way to having new RDAs. This is a considerable achievement, which represents the great majority of the larger Australian government agencies.

Implementing this new and very rigorous approach to appraisal has placed a strain on both agencies and the Archives. These strains have partly been the inevitable result of doing things differently – it takes everyone time to adjust. The Archives recognises, however, that the documentation requirements imposed upon agencies have been onerous and over the past 12 months it has begun streamlining some of these processes to make them more focussed on outcomes. Having worked with the new methodology for four years now, the Archives is in a much better position to know what documentation is essential and what can be dispensed with.

The Archives is also concerned that too much of its implementation interaction with agencies has focussed on dealing with legacy paper records. While legacy records undoubtedly need to be dealt with professionally, at least they exist in a form that can be managed. As important as legacy paper records are, they are not the Archives' main priority when dealing with agencies.

The Archives' main strategic priority is helping agencies manage the transition to good digital recordkeeping. The good news is that doing DIRKS steps A-C provides the essential foundations for managing this transition, because once an agency has completed steps A-C, it will have a business classification scheme and will have identified and documented its recordkeeping requirements. These are essential prerequisites for good digital recordkeeping.

New and forthcoming products and projects

Last year, after the Archives had identified that it needed to work with agencies to shift the implementation balance away from legacy paper records to managing the digital transition, it also realised that the *e-permanence* website

lacked sufficient advice and guidance that specifically addressed the challenges posed by digital formats. Many key components of *e-permanence* provide principles-based, but format non-specific advice. Consequently the Archives decided to develop more content for *e-permanence* that specifically addressed the needs of agencies negotiating the transition to digital recordkeeping.

In May 2004 Dr Peter Shergold, the Head of the Australian Public Service, launched the following four new *e-permanence* products:

- *Digital Recordkeeping: Guidelines for creating, managing and preserving digital records* (exposure draft);

- *Digital Recordkeeping self-assessment checklist;*

- *Recordkeeping and Online Security Processes: Guidelines for managing Commonwealth records created or received using authentication and encryption;* and

- *General Disposal Authority for Encrypted Records Created in Online Security Processes.*

Of these, the Digital Recordkeeping Guidelines is probably the Archives' most significant new recordkeeping publication since the DIRKS Manual. The Guidelines provide a comprehensive overview of all issues associated with making and keeping digital records and provides numerous links to related *e-permanence* products where more specific advice can be found.

The Digital Recordkeeping Guidelines update and replace a range of long-standing electronic recordkeeping advice that had been on the Archives' website since the 1990s. Like the first edition of the DIRKS Manual, the Archives is calling the Guidelines an 'exposure' draft because it is very keen to obtain feedback and suggestions from agencies about how to improve the product. The Archives is also keen to identify case studies to add to the Guidelines when they are revised during 2005.

Over the coming months a range of other digital recordkeeping research and development projects will be bearing fruit. The Archives knows that there is great demand for a set of generic specifications for records and information management systems, and a new product providing these specifications will be published before Christmas this year. This publication will draw on the Archives' own experience and the work of other jurisdictions to develop a set of functional specifications that agencies can use when customising or procuring commercial records and information management software.

The Recordkeeping Metadata Standard will be revised and expanded in tandem with the development of projects by the International Standards Organization and Standards Australia to develop standards for recordkeeping metadata. The Recordkeeping Metadata Standard will continue to be a vital companion to the

DIRKS Manual – for you cannot design and implement a recordkeeping system unless you know what metadata that system is going to capture and manage. The National Archives is also involved as an industry partner with Monash University in a three-year Australian Research Council-funded research project called 'Create Once, use Many Times: The Clever Re-use of Metadata for e-business and e-government'. This research project is exploring implementation issues associated with metadata, most particularly by developing strategies for reducing the costs of metadata deployment by identifying clever ways in which already existing metadata can be re-used rather than recreated by organisations.

In addition, a second edition of AGIFT, the *Australian Governments Interactive Functions Thesaurus*, will be issued in late 2004 in a variety of formats. This new edition will feature full scope notes for all 600 terms in the thesaurus.

NAA Digital Preservation Project

Before I conclude my address, I would like to tell you about an enormously important digital recordkeeping initiative – the Archives' Digital Preservation Project.

As I said earlier, the Archives is in recordkeeping for the long haul. The Archives aims to promote the development and implementation of good digital recordkeeping systems in agencies to ensure that essential digital evidence of government decisions and activities is created and available to those who need it for as long as it is needed. Some digital records will need to be available for a very long time – indeed, some will need to be preserved indefinitely as national archives. The major preservation challenge with digital records is overcoming the problem of the built-in obsolescence of propriety software formats.

Since 2001 the Archives has been engaged in a major research and development project to devise and implement an archival solution to this challenge. In September the Archives reached a major milestone in its digital preservation journey with the release of version 1.0 of its 'Xena' software tools. Xena (XML Electronic Normalisation of Archives) uses open source XML technology to wrap and store 'normalised' digital records originally created in proprietary data formats. The conversion of digital records to non-proprietary data formats that remain stable in archival terms ensures that authentic, secure and reliable digital records of today's and tomorrow's government activities can be made available for the use of future generations of Australians.

The Archives has also been busy building a digital repository and laboratory in its premises in Canberra, so that it can receive and preserve transfers of archival value digital records from agencies. This new facility will be operational by December 2004.

Current and future strategic issues and directions

In summary, the emphasis of the National Archives of Australia is on total digital recordkeeping across the entire records continuum. The Archives aims to build on its early implementation experience with *e-permanence* to help agencies accomplish their transition from paper to digital recordkeeping systems. This will require even greater levels of proactive engagement between the Archives and agencies, vendors and industry partners. The Archives aims to develop a model of interacting with agencies that is more sophisticated than its current 'one size fits all' approach to agencies – the Archives recognises that different types of agencies require different types of interaction.

The Archives will continue to pursue its world-leading digital preservation work in cooperation with its partners in other jurisdictions through the Digital Recordkeeping Initiative and with Standards Australia. Over the next 12 months the Archives will analyse the needs of agencies for access to tools such as Xena to help them manage and preserve digital records that are of long-term, but not archival, value.

Final thoughts

In conclusion, the Archives' aim is to assist agencies to manage their records and information assets holistically and to engage with the digital challenge across professional and disciplinary boundaries. The Archives wants to learn from the agencies that are getting it right and to promote their lessons and experiences for the benefit of all.

We all have to be knowledgeable and confident in facing the technical challenges of the digital era, but without losing sight of fundamental records and information management principles. For if you forget these principles, you will find yourself at the mercy of pushy software vendors who will try to tell you that their products will solve all your problems. While good software is essential for good digital recordkeeping, software is only a small part of the overall equation.

You still have to know what records your organisation needs to do its business and to be accountable, and you need to know how you are going to identify, capture and manage these records over time. Simply keeping everything in a huge unmanaged data store is no better than getting rid of everything after a designated time period. The government and the people of Australia expect a more sophisticated approach to digital recordkeeping than that, so treat some of the claims made by hardware and software vendors with great scepticism.

Achieving good recordkeeping outcomes is all about change management. The major changes will in fact be social and cultural changes rather than technological. Ultimately records systems are social systems. They have to work from a technical perspective – that is, the system

has to make it easy for users to do the right thing—but more importantly users should be encouraged to make and keep good records through good training and by peer and management pressure. While there may be many paths to recordkeeping nirvana, it remains the Archives' paramount professional responsibility to foster the kind of social and cultural environment in which total digital recordkeeping can become the norm rather than the exception.

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Gestión total de registros en la evolución digital continua

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El marco estratégico del Archivo Nacional de Australia para la creación, conservación y uso de los registros digitales

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Esta ponencia tratará sobre:

- *La campaña de "E-permanence"*, 1999/2000
- ¿Qué ha ocurrido desde el año 2000?
  - Mejorando y rellenando los huecos
  - Primeras implementaciones y auditorías
  - Evaluación funcional
- Direcciones y cuestiones estratégicas actuales y futuras
  - Apoyar las implementaciones experimentadas
  - Estrategia de conservación digital
  - Trabajar para la gestión total de registros digitales

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La campaña de "e-permanence"

- El ANA se reposiciona como un facilitador activo para la buena gestión de registros en los organismos, proporcionando normas y orientaciones
- Da respuesta a las malas prácticas de gestión de registros y al reto digital
- Marco conceptual basado en AS 4390 (1996)
  - Enfoque funcional de la gestión de registros
  - Metodología "DIRKS"
  - Nuevo enfoque en la evaluación

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Componentes principales en la *e-permanence* en el 2000

- Manual DIRKS (borrador)
- Norma de metadatos en la gestión de registros (versión 1.0)
- Orientaciones para la evaluación basadas en los pasos A-C del DIRKS
- Norma de metadatos AGLS
- Tesauro de palabras clave AAA / Autoridades a disposición de las funciones administrativas
- Orientaciones para el desarrollo de un tesauro de funciones
- Políticas de actuación para el archivo de recursos Web

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Mejorando el grupo original de productos

- Los productos necesitaban probarse en la realidad y mejorarse continuamente utilizando mecanismos de retroalimentación
- Se revisó y renombró el Manual DIRKS por "Un enfoque estratégico para la gestión de información para la empresa " (2001)
  - Se incorporan orientaciones para la evaluación
- Se revisan las AGLS lo que conduce a la creación de AS 5044 (2002)
  - Se publican los manuales para la implementación de AGLS
- Se modifica la versión de las palabras clave AAA (2001)
- Nueva edición de las orientaciones para el tesauro de funciones (2003)

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Rellenando los huecos en la *e-permanence*

- Se desarrollaron y llevaron a cabo varios cursos de formación
- Orientaciones para el archivo de los recursos Web (2001)
- Norma para el almacenamiento, 2001; Orientaciones para la implementación, 2002
- Material de formación: *Keep the knowledge: Make a record!* (2003)
- Autoridades generales para los registros fuente que hayan sido copiados, convertidos o que provengan de migraciones (2003)
- AS 4390 remmplazada por AS/ISO 15489 (2002)

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Primeras implementaciones y auditorías

- Está bien crear normas y orientaciones pero la prueba real es cuando se implementan para lograr una mejora en la gestión de registros
- Auditorías y encuestas para conocer el estado del servicio
  - Los organismos sólo están empezando a afrontar la transición de papel a los sistemas de gestión de registros digitales
  - Falta de integración con las tecnologías de la información y la gestión de información
- Necesidad de evaluación conforme con los marcos de referencia y metodologías– nuevas Normas de Australia conformes con las normas ISO 15489

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Implementando la evaluación funcional

- Salieron a la luz 30 autoridades basadas en funciones
- Otros 40 organismos están en trámites de tener RDAs
- Los procesos son necesariamente rigurosos, pero estamos optimizándolos para que sean menos onerosos y más orientados a los resultados. Los registros en papel del patrimonio no son la principal prioridad estratégica.
- Siguiendo los pasos A-C del DIRKS se sientan las bases para lograr la transición a una gestión de registros digitales efectiva (tener un esquema de clasificación de negocios y conocer los requisitos para la gestión de registros)

Nuestro último grupo de productos, 2004

- Gestión de registros digitales: Orientaciones para la creación, gestión y conservación de registros digitales
- Lista para la auto-evaluación de la gestión de registros digitales
- Orientaciones para la autentificación (procesos de seguridad en línea para la gestión de registros)
- Autoridades generales para los registros encriptados

Próximos productos/proyectos actuales, 2004/05

- Especificaciones genéricas para registros y sistemas de gestión de información
- Norma revisada de metadatos para la gestión de registros
- Tesaurus de funciones interactivo gubernamental australiano, 2ª edición (con notas de alcance) – en varios formatos
- Proyecto de investigación sobre el re-uso inteligente de metadatos de la Universidad de Monash

Estrategia de conservación digital del ANA

- Utiliza tecnología de código libre XML para presentar y conservar los registros digitales "normalizados" creados en formatos de datos propietarios – proyecto comenzado en 2001
- Formatos de datos para archivo normalizados recomendados para usar con los con registros digitales que requieran poder ser conservados y accesibles a largo plazo (produciendo originales para una conservación digital fiable, inviolable y duradera)
- Herramientas Xena version 1.0 para la normalización de registros digitales, lanzadas en septiembre de 2004
- Repositorio / laboratorio digital del ANA en diciembre

Direcciones y cuestiones estratégicas actuales y futuras

- Necesidad de cambiar el enfoque desde la evaluación de los registros del patrimonio a la gestión de la transición digital
- Necesidad de un enfoque más sofisticado que el actual para ayudar a los organismos
- Énfasis en la gestión total de registros digitales – apoyar implementaciones experimentadas
- Compromisos más activos con los organismos y los distribuidores
- Análisis de las necesidades de los organismos para las herramientas de Xena
- Colaboración inter-jurisdiccional, por ejemplo la iniciativa de gestión de registros digitales y las Normas de Australia

Pensamientos Finales

- Piensa y actúa holísticamente– no vivas en un gueto de registros en papel, comprometete con el reto digital más allá de las fronteras profesionales y de la disciplina.
- El simple uso de programas informáticos no resuelve los problemas
  - Hay que conocer qué registros se necesitan y cómo van a capturarse y gestionarse a lo largo del tiempo
- Todo se resume en la gestión del cambio (muchos caminos llevan al nirvana)
- Los sistemas de registros son sistemas sociales- anima a tus compañeros y gestiona la presión facilitando que las personas hagan lo correcto

La odisea continúa

iluminando

el **pasado**

guiando el

futuro