



Records Management as Socio-Cultural Practice

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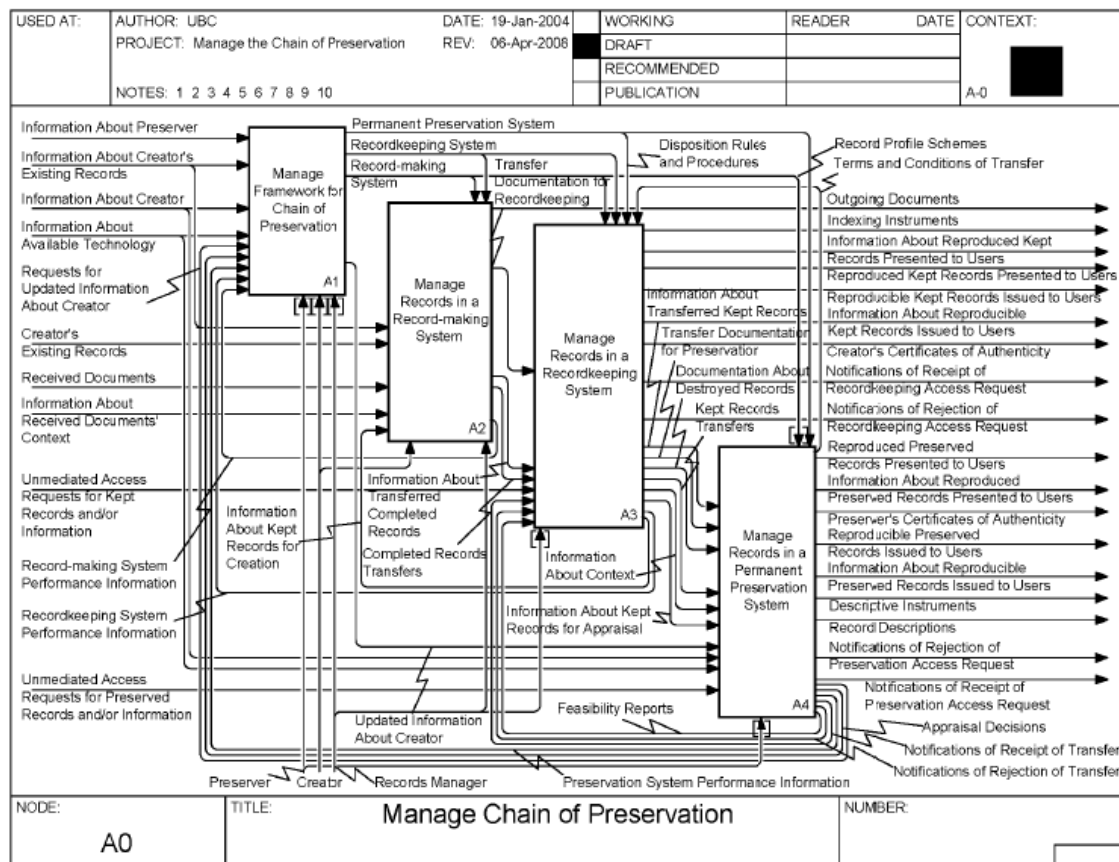
+ Presentation overview

- Records Management: Time to rethink its role?
- Centrality of the 'human factor'
- Records as genres
- Collaboration in workplace communities
- Notion of information culture
- A diagnostic tool: Information Culture Framework

+ Records Management in *Modern Times*



+ Modelling recordkeeping



InterPARES 2 Project Book, Appendix 14, 2008

+ People issues are central

- Investigation into electronic records management found out that:
 - “**People issues** are predominant, fundamental and challenging, as they concern culture, philosophical attitudes, awareness of RM issues, preferences, knowledge and skills”
 - “Records professionals may be part of the problem as well as part of the solution ... Their demands may be unrealistic or too constraining”

(McLeod et al., *AC+erm Project. Final Report*, 2010)

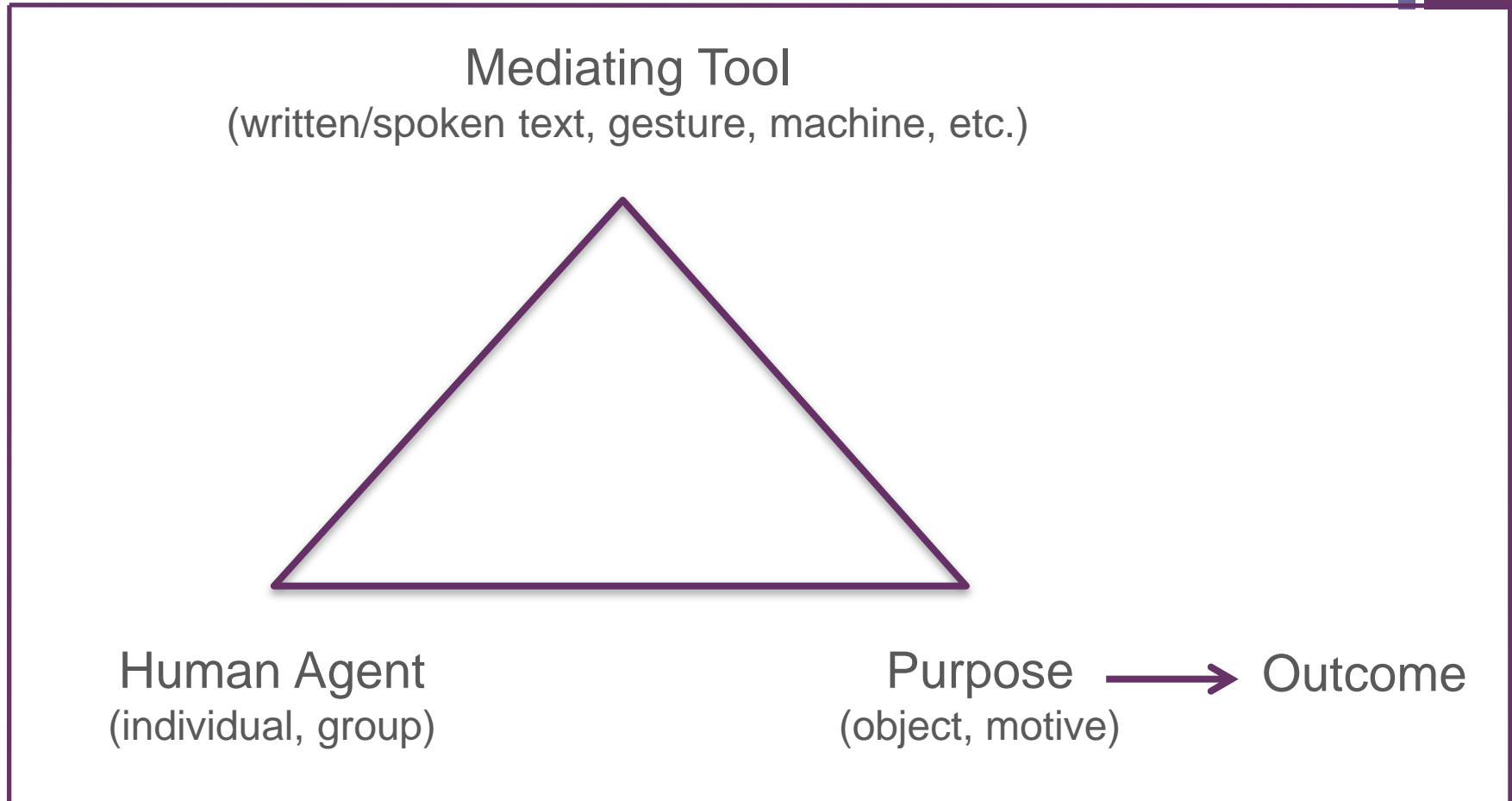
+ Records as genres

- “Records are the very substance of organizations, their fact-making mechanisms” (Schryer, 1993)
- “A *genre of organizational communication* is a typified communicative action invoked in response to a recurrent situation” (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992)
- Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) focuses on:
 - Regularities of **activities** that shape, and are shaped by, the form and substance of everyday writing and speaking

+ How records (cultural tools) mediate social action

- Human activities are complex, situated phenomena, which are always **mediated** by *culturally constructed tools* (or genres)
- These cultural tools (incl. written records, face-to-face meetings, electronic systems) allow **collaboration** by mediating our actions and motives

+ Communities as 'activity systems'



+ The workplace as discourse community

- Each community establishes *conventions of discourse* as ways of “**acting together**”
- “What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have, *how to participate in the actions of a community*” (Miller, 1984)
- Recordkeeping as a **social practice** that supports community-building
- Official and unofficial genres provide insight into workplace **culture(s)**

+ What is information culture?

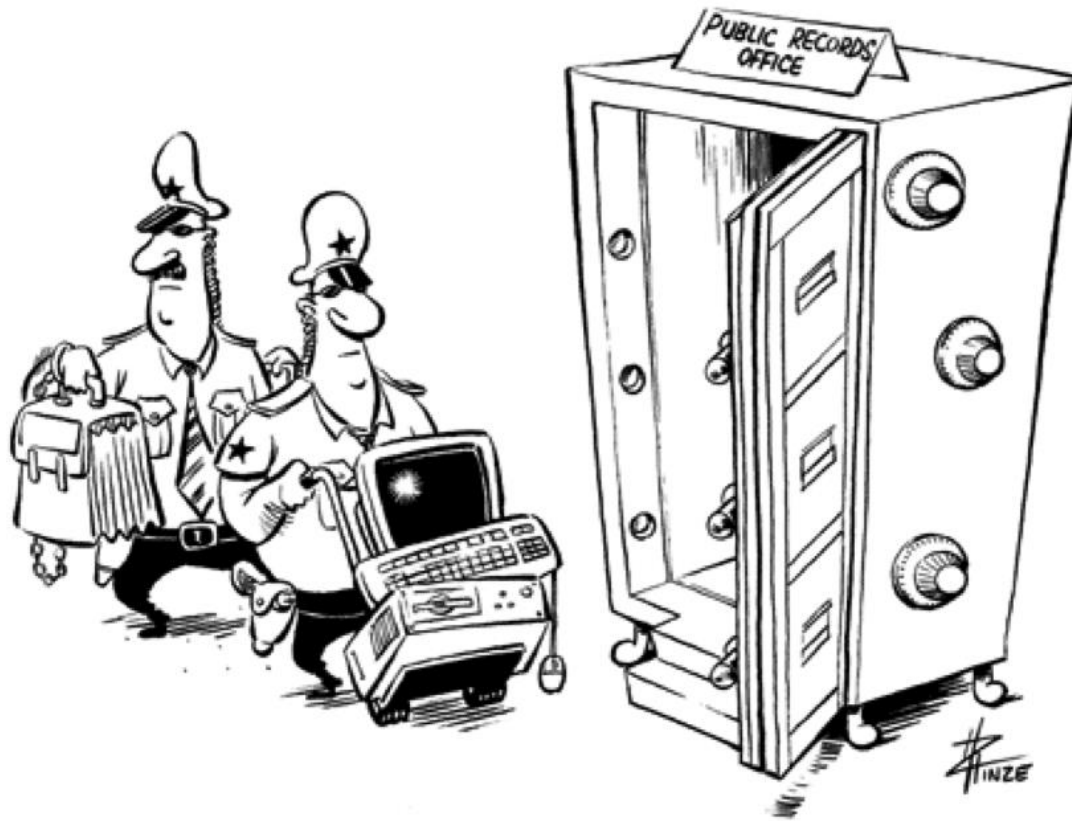
- “The *values* accorded to information, and *attitudes* towards it, specifically within organizational contexts”
- Every organization has an information culture, no matter where in the world it is located, what capability and capacity it has, and what its mission and functions are

+ From one extreme ...

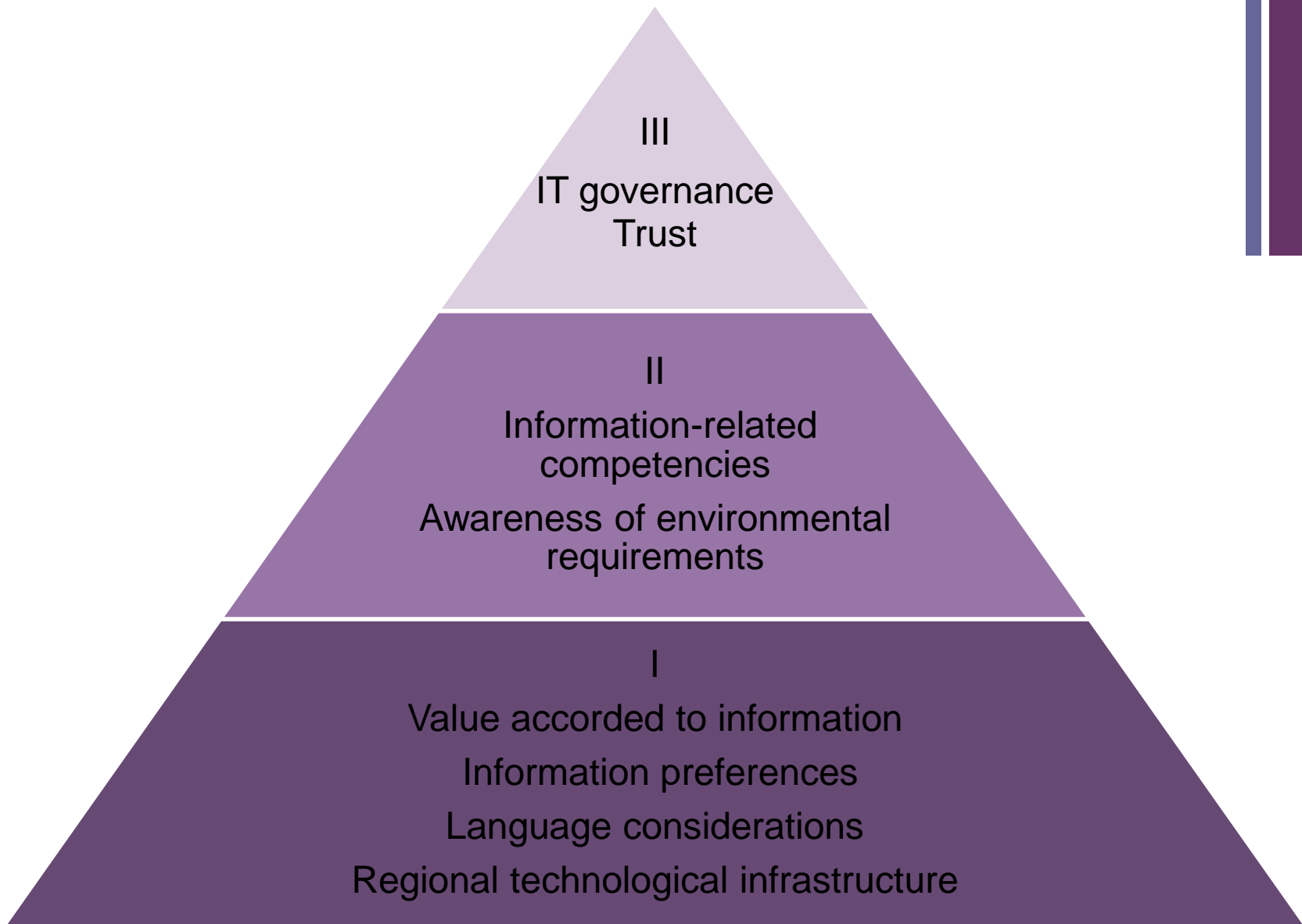




... to another



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Information Culture Framework (Oliver & Foscarini, 2014)

+ Level 1: The fundamentals

(hard to change but essential to identify)

- Value accorded to information
 - Respect for records
- Information preferences
 - Preferred information sources (explicit vs. implicit; formal vs. informal)
 - Willingness to share information
- Language
 - Shared terms
 - Archival jargon
- National/regional technological infrastructure

+ Level 2: Awareness & understanding

(can be changed through action)

- Information-related competencies
 - Information and digital literacy skills
 - Formal and ongoing training
- Legislative/regulatory awareness

+ Level 3: The tip of the pyramid

(can be changed after tackling levels 1 & 2)

- Corporate information technology governance
 - Includes IT policies and procedures, overall information architecture, security considerations
- User trust in recordkeeping systems
 - Finding out what people *think* about the systems and processes adopted by the organization to manage information

+ What can you do with it?

- Assess your organization's information culture by:
 - Identifying key cultural features (official genres, workarounds, infrastructure, 'private' language)
- Use RM to build *relationships* and more cohesive *communities*
 - *Involve users* in system design and implementation
 - Offer *appropriate training opportunities*
 - Be prepared to *adapt* RM ideas and tools to the organizational environment
- Ultimate goal: **To achieve a *good fit* between RM and people**



Tusen Takk

+ Have a great conference!

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