

Effectiveness of Records Management in Public Service Delivery: Evidence from a Secondary Data Review

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Abstract

Effective records management is a core administrative capability because public services depend on the timely availability, authenticity, traceability, and security of information generated through government transactions. This study examines how records management contributes to public service effectiveness using secondary data only. An integrative document review was conducted using peer-reviewed studies, international standards, Indonesian legislation, and official archival policy documents. Sixteen substantive sources were purposively retained because they directly addressed records management, public-sector service delivery, accountability, transparency, or electronic records management. The material was coded thematically around service timeliness and retrieval, accuracy and evidentiary reliability, accountability and transparency, digital integration, and organizational capacity. The review shows that records management improves public service delivery primarily by reducing information-search delays, supporting consistent decisions, preserving evidence of administrative actions, strengthening access to information, and enabling continuity across organizational units. However, digitization alone does not guarantee effectiveness. Recurrent constraints include weak classification and retention controls, fragmented paper-digital workflows, limited professional capacity, inadequate infrastructure, weak management support, and incomplete compliance with archival rules. The Indonesian policy context provides a strong formal basis through Law No. 43 of 2009 on Archives, Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, and the SRIKANDI integrated electronic records system, but implementation effectiveness depends on embedding records controls into day-to-day service processes. The study concludes that records management should be treated as service infrastructure rather than a back-office administrative function.

Keywords: records management; public service delivery; archives; accountability; transparency

1. Introduction

Public service delivery is frequently evaluated through visible outputs such as processing time, accessibility, responsiveness, accuracy, and citizen satisfaction. Yet these outputs depend on less visible administrative infrastructures. One of the most important is records management: the systematic creation, capture, classification, storage, retrieval, use, retention, and disposition of records that document organizational activities. In public organizations, records are not merely historical materials. They are operational evidence used to verify identity, establish eligibility, authorize transactions, trace decisions, resolve disputes, respond to information requests, monitor performance, and demonstrate accountability.

The relationship between records management and service performance becomes especially clear when recordkeeping fails. Missing files, duplicate documents, inconsistent versions, slow retrieval, unclear retention practices, and poorly controlled digital records can delay administrative decisions and require citizens to resubmit information that government should already possess. Such failures also weaken institutional memory and make it difficult to determine who made a decision, on what basis, and under which procedure. Earlier research has therefore linked sound recordkeeping with effective service delivery, organizational accountability, transparency, and public trust (Kemoni & Ngulube, 2008; Mutula & Wamukoya, 2009; Shepherd et al., 2010).

Records management also has a governance function. Reliable records provide the evidentiary chain through which administrative actions can be reviewed internally, audited externally, challenged by citizens, or disclosed under access-to-information regimes. Casadesus de Mingo and Cerrillo-i-Martinez (2018) argue that transparency should be incorporated into the records lifecycle rather than

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treated as an activity that begins only after a request for information is received. This is important because transparency is difficult to achieve when relevant records were not properly created, captured, classified, preserved, or made retrievable in the first place.

The growth of digital government has intensified these issues. Electronic records can reduce physical storage constraints, accelerate search and retrieval, support remote access, and enable workflow integration. At the same time, digital records introduce new requirements involving metadata, access rights, version control, interoperability, migration, retention, information security, and long-term preservation. Studies of public organizations show that electronic systems can improve service delivery when implemented as part of a coherent records programme, but they may reproduce or even amplify administrative weaknesses when technology is introduced without adequate policy, professional capacity, workflow redesign, or managerial support (Putranto et al., 2018; Matlala & Ncube, 2025).

Internationally, ISO 15489-1:2016 positions records management as an organizational system involving policies, assigned responsibilities, monitoring, training, records controls, and processes for creating, capturing, and managing records across technological environments (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2016). The standard is significant for public administration because it moves records management beyond storage and filing toward a governance-oriented system in which records are managed as evidence of business activity.

In Indonesia, the institutional basis is similarly explicit. Law No. 43 of 2009 on Archives states that archival administration is necessary to ensure authentic and reliable records and explicitly links comprehensive archival governance with good and clean government and improved public service quality (Republic of Indonesia, 2009a). Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services establishes the state's obligation to provide quality public services and to protect citizens from abuse of authority (Republic of Indonesia, 2009b). More recently, the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) has promoted the Integrated Dynamic Records Information System, known as SRIKANDI, to support electronic records governance across central and local government institutions (ANRI, 2026). These policy developments make records management highly relevant to contemporary public-sector reform. Despite this relevance, records management is often discussed as a specialized archival or office-administration issue rather than as a determinant of service effectiveness. Existing studies are dispersed across records management, information governance, local government, digital administration, and transparency literatures. This fragmentation makes it difficult to identify the mechanisms through which recordkeeping affects public service outcomes and the conditions under which those mechanisms operate. A secondary-data synthesis can therefore clarify not only whether records management matters, but how it matters for public service delivery.

Accordingly, this study asks two questions: (1) through what mechanisms does effective records management improve public service delivery, and (2) what organizational and technological conditions limit or enable that contribution? The article contributes by integrating archival management and public administration perspectives and by proposing a service-oriented interpretation of records management effectiveness. Rather than defining effectiveness simply as compliance with filing procedures, the study treats effective records management as the capacity to provide complete, authentic, accessible, secure, and usable evidence at the point where public-service decisions and transactions occur.

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

The study used an integrative secondary-data review. This design was selected because the research objective was to synthesize existing evidence and policy materials rather than to generate new primary data. The unit of analysis was the documented relationship between records-management practices and public-sector service outcomes. Secondary data included peer-reviewed journal articles, an international records-management standard, Indonesian legislation, and official policy information on government electronic records management.

The review was analytical rather than bibliometric. It did not attempt to estimate an average effect size because the underlying studies used heterogeneous designs, including case studies, surveys, mixed methods, conceptual analyses, and literature reviews. Instead, the evidence was synthesized by identifying recurring mechanisms, implementation constraints, and governance implications. This

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approach is consistent with document analysis, in which documents are interpreted systematically to generate meaning, develop empirical understanding, and identify patterns across sources (Bowen, 2009).

2.2 Source identification and selection

Source identification was conducted in August 2026 through targeted searches of publisher websites, journal platforms, indexing portals, and official institutional repositories. Search terms combined variants of records management, archives management, electronic records, public service delivery, accountability, transparency, local government, public sector, and digital government. Additional official searches were used to verify the Indonesian legal and institutional framework.

Sources were included when they met at least one of four substantive criteria: (1) they directly examined records management in a public-sector organization and reported implications for service delivery; (2) they linked records or information governance to transparency, accountability, access to information, or administrative integrity; (3) they examined electronic records management in public administration; or (4) they provided authoritative standards or legal requirements relevant to records management and public service. Sources focused exclusively on private-sector recordkeeping, purely historical archives without an administrative-service link, or technical storage solutions without governance relevance were excluded.

A purposive analytical corpus of 16 substantive sources was retained. The corpus included empirical evidence from Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Uganda, South Africa, England, Spain, and Indonesia, together with ISO 15489-1:2016 and Indonesian legal and institutional documents. The geographical diversity was useful for identifying recurring administrative mechanisms across different public-sector settings, although the review does not claim statistical representativeness.

Table 1. Analytical corpus used in the secondary-data review

Source	Context	Primary focus	Contribution to synthesis
Kemoni & Ngulube (2008)	Kenya	Public-sector records and service delivery	Poor recordkeeping undermines service delivery and development objectives.
Mutula & Wamukoya (2009)	East and Southern Africa	Information governance, FOI, integrity	Sound public information management supports transparency, trust, accountability, and service delivery.
Shepherd et al. (2010)	England	Local government, records management, FOI	Records management is a prerequisite for effective access to public information.
Casadesus de Mingo & Cerrillo-i-Martinez (2018)	Spain	Transparency and anti-corruption	Transparency obligations should be embedded throughout the records lifecycle.
Shonhe & Grand (2018)	Botswana	Land administration	Improved recordkeeping supported access, security, error reduction, and online services.
Putranto et al. (2018)	Indonesia	Electronic administrative records	Digitization without workflow and accountability reform produces limited benefits.
Rutta & Ndenje-Sichalwe (2022)	Tanzania	Municipal records management	Weak legal frameworks, skills, and security contributed to ineffective records practices.
Maina (2022)	Kenya	County government	Poor, paper-dominated records practices were associated with weak service delivery.
Luyombya et al. (2026)	Uganda	District archives and services	Policy, budget, professional staffing, training, and digitization were major implementation conditions.
Kashaija et al. (2024)	Tanzania	Local authorities	Weak classification, security, retention, and electronic strategies impaired governance and service delivery.
Matlala & Ncube (2025)	South Africa	Electronic records management	Skills, management support, resources, and policy remain critical to effective electronic records.
Praja et al. (2026)	Indonesia	Educational quality assurance institution	A records life-cycle assessment showed strong overall performance but remaining infrastructure, disposition, and digital gaps.
ISO 15489-1:2016	International	Records-management standard	Defines records controls, responsibilities, monitoring, training, and lifecycle processes.

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Law No. 43/2009	Indonesia	Archives governance	Links reliable records and integrated archival governance with good government and public-service quality.
Law No. 25/2009	Indonesia	Public-service governance	Defines legal obligations for quality, accountable public service.
ANRI SRIKANDI policy/service information	Indonesia	Integrated electronic records	Supports standardized electronic dynamic-records management across government institutions.

2.3 Data extraction and analysis

Each source was read for information about records practices, reported service consequences, enabling conditions, and governance implications. A structured extraction matrix recorded the organizational context, records format, principal records-management problem or intervention, observed or argued service effect, and recommendations. Evidence was then coded iteratively.

Five cross-cutting themes emerged: (1) retrieval speed and service timeliness; (2) accuracy, authenticity, and decision consistency; (3) accountability, transparency, and rights protection; (4) digital integration and service continuity; and (5) organizational capability and compliance. These themes were used to organize the results. Because the source designs were heterogeneous, findings are interpreted as convergent secondary evidence rather than as causal estimates. Particular care was taken not to convert descriptive associations in the source studies into unsupported causal claims.

3. Results

3.1 Records accessibility and retrieval are immediate service-performance mechanisms

The strongest recurring mechanism is operational accessibility. Public services often require staff to locate prior applications, correspondence, approvals, land records, personnel records, case histories, supporting documents, or transaction evidence before a decision can be completed. When records are poorly classified, stored inconsistently, or dispersed across units, retrieval time becomes service waiting time. The literature from local and county governments repeatedly associates missing or difficult-to-retrieve files with delayed processing and weak service performance (Kemoni & Ngulube, 2008; Maina, 2022; Kashaia et al., 2024).

Evidence from Botswana is particularly instructive because it links records-management improvements with practical service changes. Shonhe and Grand (2018) report that initiatives at a land board contributed to easier access to records, improved security, reduction of errors, and online services. These outcomes suggest that the service value of records management is produced not by archiving in the abstract, but by reducing the transaction costs of locating, verifying, and transferring information through administrative workflows.

This mechanism also explains why filing systems remain important in digital environments. Electronic search can substantially accelerate retrieval, but only when records are consistently captured, described with usable metadata, classified, and connected to business processes. A digital repository containing poorly named, duplicated, or incomplete files may remain difficult to use. Thus, service timeliness depends on information architecture as much as on storage medium.

3.2 Effective records support accuracy, authenticity, and consistent administrative decisions

A second theme concerns evidentiary quality. Public decisions must often be based on records that are complete, accurate, authentic, and sufficiently reliable to support action. ISO 15489 emphasizes controls over the creation, capture, and management of records precisely because the evidentiary value of a record cannot be assumed merely from its existence (ISO, 2016). In service settings, unreliable records can produce inconsistent decisions, duplicate requests for documentation, incorrect entitlements, disputed transactions, and weak audit trails.

The secondary evidence indicates that records effectiveness should therefore include more than the ability to retrieve a file. Retrieval of an obsolete version, an unsigned document, an incomplete case record, or a file without provenance may accelerate the wrong decision. Electronic systems make this issue especially salient because copies can proliferate rapidly and business actions may occur across multiple applications. Matlala and Ncube (2025) identify continuing weaknesses in electronic records programmes related to skills, management support, resources, and compliance, while Putranto et al. (2018) show that digitization can remain superficial when administrative practice continues to depend

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on parallel paper procedures.

The implication is that records management contributes to service quality through information reliability. Classification, metadata, version control, access rules, retention schedules, and documented disposition are not only archival controls. They are mechanisms for ensuring that public servants act on the correct evidence.

3.3 Records management strengthens accountability, transparency, and protection of administrative rights

A third theme is the governance value of records. Public accountability requires the capacity to reconstruct administrative action: what was decided, by whom, when, on what evidence, under which authority, and with what outcome. When such evidence is unavailable, oversight bodies and citizens cannot effectively assess whether procedures were followed. Mutula and Wamukoya (2009) connect public-sector information management with freedom of information, democratic integrity, transparency, and trust. Shepherd et al. (2010) similarly show that freedom-of-information obligations depend on effective records and information governance at the local-government level.

Casadesus de Mingo and Cerrillo-i-Martinez (2018) extend this logic by arguing for transparency by design. Their central implication is that transparency should be planned at the point records are created and managed, including access conditions and lifecycle controls, rather than treated only as a disclosure response. This shifts records management from a passive repository function toward an active integrity system.

The governance and service dimensions are mutually reinforcing. Citizens seeking licences, benefits, certificates, land decisions, or administrative remedies depend on records both for the original transaction and for any later complaint or appeal. Reliable records therefore protect institutional accountability and individual rights simultaneously. In Indonesia, Law No. 43 of 2009 explicitly frames archives as reliable evidence and connects archival governance with good and clean government and higher-quality public services (Republic of Indonesia, 2009a). This legal framing confirms that records management is part of the accountability architecture of public administration rather than an isolated technical function.

3.4 Digital records can improve continuity and integration, but digitization is not equivalent to effective records management

The fourth theme concerns digital transformation. Electronic records systems can reduce dependence on physical file movement, allow simultaneous or remote access, support workflow tracking, and facilitate information sharing across units. These capabilities can shorten processing chains and strengthen service continuity. They are especially relevant in decentralized government, where public services frequently require interaction between front offices, technical units, managers, and external institutions.

However, the evidence consistently warns against technological determinism. Putranto et al. (2018) show that electronic records management may be understood too narrowly as digitization even when day-to-day administrative processes continue to rely on physical signatures and parallel paper records. Matlala and Ncube (2025) similarly find that electronic records are important for service delivery, while persistent deficits in skills, policy, resources, and management support prevent programmes from becoming fully effective. The recurring problem is therefore not absence of technology alone, but weak institutionalization of electronic recordkeeping.

Indonesia's SRIKANDI initiative is significant in this regard because it aims to provide an integrated dynamic-records environment for central and local government. ANRI describes the service as supporting proper electronic records governance, standardized implementation, and accountable and transparent government (ANRI, 2026). The policy direction addresses fragmentation by establishing a common records infrastructure. Yet the international evidence indicates that platform adoption should be assessed through actual records capture, metadata quality, user competence, retrieval performance, interoperability, security, and lifecycle compliance rather than through installation or login statistics alone.

3.5 Organizational capability determines whether records systems translate into service effectiveness

The fifth and most consistent implementation theme is organizational capability. Across the reviewed

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cases, weaknesses in records management are associated with limited professional staffing, insufficient training, inadequate storage and technological infrastructure, poor security, weak policy implementation, and low managerial prioritization. Rutta and Ndenje-Sichalwe (2022) identify gaps in legal and regulatory frameworks, staff skills, and security measures in a Tanzanian municipal setting. Kashaija et al. (2024) similarly report problems involving file control, electronic-records strategies, classification, retention, and security. Luyombya et al. (2026) highlight policy, budgets, archivist staffing, training, and digitization as necessary improvements in Ugandan local government.

These findings indicate that records-management effectiveness is a socio-technical capability. Technology, people, rules, and workflows must operate together. A technically advanced system may remain ineffective if users bypass it, managers do not enforce controls, retention rules are absent, or records staff are excluded from digital transformation decisions. Conversely, well-designed procedures can improve service even before full digitization by strengthening classification, file tracking, access rules, and accountability.

Recent Indonesian evidence also points to the importance of the full records lifecycle. Praja et al. (2026) report high overall effectiveness in an educational quality-assurance institution, but identify comparatively greater room for improvement in records disposition and disposal, infrastructure, and digital records management. The result is important because it illustrates that even an organization assessed as effective can retain lifecycle bottlenecks that affect long-term reliability and institutional accountability.

Table 2. Synthesis of records-management mechanisms and public-service outcomes

Dimension	Records-management mechanism	Expected service contribution	Typical failure mode
Retrievability and accessibility	Classification, indexing, file tracking, metadata, search	Shorter information-search time; fewer lost or duplicated cases; faster processing	Poor classification; fragmented storage; missing files
Reliability and authenticity	Capture controls, version control, provenance, authorization	More consistent decisions; reduced errors; defensible transactions	Obsolete versions; incomplete records; uncontrolled copies
Accountability and transparency	Audit trails, retention, access rules, disclosure readiness	Stronger oversight; complaint handling; rights protection; public trust	Missing evidence; inappropriate disposal; weak access governance
Digital integration	Electronic workflows, shared systems, remote access, interoperability	Continuity across units; online services; reduced physical file movement	Parallel paper-digital processes; siloed systems; weak metadata
Organizational capability	Policy, professional staff, training, infrastructure, management support	Sustained compliance and reliable service performance	Skills gaps; low prioritization; inadequate security and resources

4. Discussion

4.1 Records management as public-service infrastructure

The synthesis supports a conceptual shift: records management should be treated as public-service infrastructure. In conventional organizational charts, records units may appear as support functions positioned behind visible service counters. Functionally, however, records systems shape the speed and reliability with which frontline and back-office staff can act. The relationship is comparable to other enabling infrastructures such as identity systems, payment systems, or inter-agency data exchange. When records infrastructure is weak, service processes accumulate friction through searching, checking, reproducing, reconciling, and reconstructing information.

This perspective also refines the meaning of effectiveness. An archives unit can comply with internal procedures yet still contribute little to public service if records are not available at the moment of administrative need. Conversely, a fast retrieval system is not fully effective if the records retrieved are incomplete, insecure, or unauthenticated. Effectiveness is therefore multidimensional. At minimum, it includes retrievability, reliability, security, lifecycle control, accessibility under lawful conditions, and integration with business processes.

The reviewed evidence suggests a mechanism-based model: records-management capacity affects information availability and evidentiary quality; these intermediate conditions affect transaction speed,

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decision consistency, reviewability, and continuity; and those service-process characteristics contribute to broader outcomes such as responsiveness, accountability, transparency, and citizen trust. The evidence is strongest for the intermediate mechanisms and less direct for citizen-level outcomes. This distinction is important because many studies infer improved public satisfaction from administrative improvements without directly measuring citizens' experiences. Future research should test the full pathway rather than assuming that better recordkeeping automatically produces higher satisfaction.

4.2 Why digital transformation succeeds or fails

The review also explains why digital-records reforms produce uneven results. Digital systems have clear functional advantages, but their effectiveness depends on whether recordkeeping requirements are designed into the service workflow. If staff create records outside the official system, fail to attach meaningful metadata, maintain parallel unofficial copies, or print electronic documents for manual processing, the organization retains the costs of both paper and digital administration. In such circumstances, digitization changes the medium without changing the governance of evidence.

A more appropriate implementation principle is digital recordkeeping by design. Service-process redesign should specify what record must be created at each decision point, which metadata are required, who is authorized to access or alter the record, how the record moves between units, how long it must be retained, what triggers disposition, and how the action remains auditable. This is consistent with ISO 15489's emphasis on records requirements, controls, assigned responsibilities, monitoring, and training (ISO, 2016). It also aligns with transparency-by-design arguments that access and disclosure requirements should be incorporated throughout the record lifecycle (Casadesus de Mingo & Cerrillo-i-Martinez, 2018).

For Indonesia, SRIKANDI creates an opportunity to institutionalize this approach across government. However, implementation evaluation should go beyond adoption. Useful performance indicators would include the proportion of service transactions fully captured in the official records system, median retrieval time, proportion of records with complete mandatory metadata, frequency of duplicate or misfiled records, compliance with retention schedules, unresolved access-control incidents, proportion of workflows operating without parallel manual files, and user competency. These indicators connect records management directly with administrative performance.

4.3 Implications for public administration and organizational governance

Three implications follow for public administration. First, records-management policy should be integrated into service standards and business-process management. Public-service reform frequently focuses on simplifying procedures, reducing processing time, and digitizing citizen interfaces. These reforms can be undermined if the underlying records environment remains fragmented. Records officers and archivists should therefore participate in process mapping, digital-service design, and information-governance decisions from the beginning rather than after systems are procured.

Second, management accountability for records should extend beyond the records unit. The evidence repeatedly shows that records programmes fail when responsibility is implicitly delegated to specialist staff while operational units continue to create, store, and exchange records inconsistently. Effective records governance requires clear responsibilities for record creation, capture, classification, access, transfer, retention, and disposition across all units. Senior management must also treat records risks as operational and governance risks, not only archival concerns.

Third, public organizations should distinguish digitization from digital continuity. Scanning paper records can improve access, but durable digital governance requires preservation planning, migration, security, metadata, system interoperability, and retention controls. Without these elements, digital records may become inaccessible or unreliable over time, creating a new form of administrative fragility.

4.4 Policy implications for Indonesia

Indonesia already has a strong formal basis for linking archives and service quality. Law No. 43 of 2009 requires reliable archival governance and explicitly associates it with good government and improved public services, while Law No. 25 of 2009 establishes the legal framework for accountable public-service provision (Republic of Indonesia, 2009a, 2009b). The policy challenge is therefore less about recognizing the importance of records and more about translating legal requirements into measurable service-process controls.

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A practical approach would be to integrate records indicators into public-service monitoring. For high-volume administrative services, agencies could map the records required at each service stage and establish service-level targets for retrieval, verification, capture, and transfer. Internal audits could examine whether completed service transactions have complete evidentiary records and whether complaints can be reconstructed from the official record. Where SRIKANDI is used, audit criteria should examine whether the application is embedded in the workflow and not merely used as a correspondence layer around manual processes.

Capacity development is equally important. The reviewed literature repeatedly identifies staff competence as a limiting factor, including in electronic environments. Training should therefore be differentiated by role: frontline staff need practical capture and retrieval skills; managers need responsibility and risk awareness; information-technology staff need records, metadata, retention, and preservation requirements; and records professionals need sufficient involvement in system design and governance.

4.5 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it is a purposive integrative review rather than a systematic review with exhaustive database coverage, so the source set cannot be treated as a complete representation of global research. Second, the evidence base is geographically concentrated in public-sector studies from Africa together with selected European and Indonesian sources. This reflects the strong records-management literature in those contexts but limits generalization. Third, the included studies use heterogeneous methods and outcome definitions, which prevents quantitative aggregation. Fourth, many studies assess organizational practices from the perspective of employees and records personnel rather than measuring citizen-level service outcomes directly.

These limitations point to a research agenda. Future studies should test records-management effectiveness using measurable public-service outcomes, such as processing time, error rates, repeat-document requests, complaint resolution time, successful information retrieval, audit exceptions, and citizen satisfaction. Quasi-experimental or longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable for evaluating digital records reforms before and after implementation.

5. Conclusion

This secondary-data review shows that effective records management is a substantive determinant of public-service capability. Its contribution operates through specific administrative mechanisms: making information retrievable when needed, preserving reliable evidence for decisions, enabling traceability and accountability, supporting lawful access to information, and maintaining continuity across organizational units and technological systems. These mechanisms influence the timeliness, accuracy, consistency, and reviewability of public services.

The evidence also shows that digitization is necessary but insufficient. Electronic records systems improve service only when they are supported by classification, metadata, access controls, retention and disposition rules, professional competence, infrastructure, managerial commitment, and integration with business processes. Otherwise, organizations risk creating parallel paper-digital systems that preserve administrative delays while adding technological complexity.

For public administration, the central implication is that records management should not be treated as a peripheral back-office activity. It is part of the operational and accountability infrastructure through which government converts information into lawful and timely decisions. In Indonesia, existing archival and public-service legislation and the development of SRIKANDI provide a strong institutional platform. The next step is to evaluate records management through service-oriented performance indicators and to embed recordkeeping requirements directly into public-service workflows. When records are complete, authentic, accessible, secure, and usable at the point of decision, records management becomes a practical instrument for improving both administrative effectiveness and public accountability.

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