

**The Archives of the Episcopal Church  
Regarding Document Management Systems  
04-04-2014**

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**1. The particular questions asked were: *If you use such a [document management] system, and if so, which system...?***

The DFMS uses Microsoft's SharePoint software for very limited use for key employee-wide document sharing. The Archives manages this tool (called ERIC: Employee Resources Information Center) for the Church Center to maintain up-to-date employee information such as policies, forms, procedures, contact lists, and HR resources. We do not use it for storing or managing the files of individuals or departments unless they are widely pertinent to other staff members. We also have been known to use it for some file sharing with remote staff, but on a very limited basis.

We use this system because it was very cheap for us – we received a version of it as an add-on to our Windows NT contract with Microsoft. You may not, have this high-end suite. SharePoint is not widely liked, but if you use it for limited and targeted purposes, it can do the job.

**A second question, ... *and how [do] you like it?* Suggests a broader interest in the usefulness of document management systems in a small organization.**

There are many document management solutions in the marketplace. Some have a long standing history, but are expensive. Some are new and untested; some need to be installed locally, while others are stored in the cloud. Even with the very largest systems (like SharePoint), the key question is always: *what problem(s) am I especially interested in solving with this software?*

Without knowing *the specific business need and information requirements* of a diocese, advice on selecting a document management system is generic at best. At the DFMS, we developed a very clear idea (after some extended negotiation and discussion) of what we initially needed to be accomplished and what our priority was – thus “ERIC” was born. Below are some of the needs and criteria we considered. The asterisked items indicated the priorities we focused on solving using the SharePoint application.

Information business needs:

- Search and locate documents\*
- Reducing document duplication and version control\*
- File retention and destruction/record copy identification
- Data storage concerns\*
- Email accumulation
- Staff mobility and remote access to data\*
- E-discovery for legal demands
- Data privacy and security

Work flow and process improvements:

- Collaborative work\*
- Automated version control\*
- Manage document scanning
- Centralize access levels through permission structures\*

Business factors influencing a decision:

- Cost and return on investment to the organization vs. input of time\*
- Match of software to the highest priorities\*
- Training for administrators and users\*
- Compatibility with your current system and ease of maintenance\*
- Clear definitions of ownership of data, if using a cloud solution
- Export out of the system retaining data structures with low migration costs\*

For a fuller list of questions we ask for selecting software systems, we created a series of questions that one can ask vendors about their products, which is part of the Executive Council's [Policy for the Selection of Software for The Episcopal Church](#).

Any preparation to move to a document management system requires the creation of an organized filing system, or you will find that it will be used as a dumping ground for documents. We can recommend articles that might be helpful for you when thinking through how to organize your electronic files, whether you go with a document management software, or decide to improve you current directories "by hand."

### **Some Comments on Systems**

We have researched systems aimed at large organizations. These systems are powerful, but are generally expensive, have a steep learning curves and require organizations to have a strong IT departments. Smaller organizations are turning more and more to cloud based solutions, but there are trade-offs in terms of data migration and retention by the cloud vendor of data that has not been thoroughly purged.

At this time the Archives has not implemented a document management system for all business records. Our direct experience of the solutions is limited, but we can share some thoughts on commons systems.

**Microsoft's SharePoint:** SharePoint was originally built as a collaboration platform, over the years it has developed into a document management system. It can be organized in a hierarchical structure, has version control and can be accessed anywhere through the web. There are some records management capabilities built in, though many organizations purchase add-ons (often very expensive) for enhanced governance and long term storage. A local installation requires substantial knowledge of Windows and Microsoft products, and we have found its needs attention on a regular basis. Even for our light-weight implementation (ERIC) we did training and hired a consultant to fully understand how best structure the site. One department at 815 began using it for document management (without input from Archives), but found it sluggish and confusing. Archives has not tested a migration of content out, but reports we hear from the field are not great. Purchase price for not-for-profits may be greatly discounted, but supporting it may be expensive.

**Microsoft 365:** This is Microsoft's cloud offering that uses SharePoint as its document management foundation. We have not looked at it thoroughly, though it is being championed by the DFMS's Microsoft-trained staff. Costs for small organizations are low.

**Google Apps:** This is an integration of Gmail, Google Docs and Google Drive. Its document management capabilities are very lightweight but easy to learn. It does offer "archiving" for email for an extra fee. There is a built in export function, but we have not tested it. Many small not-for-profits are using Google Apps, but we are wary of its limited functionality, and the ownership and security issues of using this cloud service. You can find a useful comparison between 365 and Google Apps: <http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/the-enterprise-cloud/google-apps-v-office-365-head-to-head-comparison-of-features/>

**Alfresco:** This is an open-source, enterprise content management system. The most robust version is only available if you purchase (expensive) their support services, and at the moment it requires a local installation. There is a "Community" version that is free to use, but we do not recommend it if you do not have a strong IT staff conversant in open-source development. They offer an open-source competition to Microsoft 365 and Google Apps at a reasonable price. In theory, because it is open source, it should be easier to migrate data if necessary than proprietary systems like SharePoint or 365.

**Box.net:** This cloud document management system is becoming popular. It was recently implemented by Episcopal Relief and Development. First reports are it is easy to use and the costs are comparatively reasonable. At this point we have not tested its data migration and archiving capabilities.

#### **Reviews:**

Here are some links to reviews and descriptions of proprietary systems. None are comprehensive or completely neutral. They are often written by IT people, not content specialists. These turn-key systems are often easier to use but generally offer less flexibility than the larger systems.

Thumbnail reviews of some top players:

<http://www.project-consult.de/files/Gartner%20Magic%20Quadrant%20for%20Enterprise%20Content%20Management%202013.pdf>

Reviews of midlevel document management systems:

<http://document-management-software-review.toptenreviews.com/>

A long list of specialized applications:

<http://www.capterra.com/document-management-software/>