

Digitization of Human Resource 201 Files: A Case of a Higher Education Institution

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the Human Resources Department (HRD) at Aldersgate College Inc. currently manages critical employee records, including personal data, employment history, and performance records, through a manual, paper-based system. This study identifies significant administrative issues within this manual framework, such as labor-intensive retrieval processes, physical storage limitations, and risks of record damage or loss. By implementing a digitized HR 201 file system, the research aims to improve operational efficiency, data integrity, and accessibility. Results indicate strong stakeholder consensus that digitization can resolve systemic inefficiencies. The study concludes that digitizing personnel records is essential to modernize administrative procedures and achieve operational excellence.

Keywords: Digitization, HR 201 Files, Administrative Efficiency, Electronic Record Management, Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of digital transformation, organizations of all types—ranging from small enterprises to large educational institutions—are increasingly moving toward technology-supported systems to streamline their administrative frameworks. At Aldersgate College Inc., the Human Resources Department (HRD) manages the critical "HR 201" files, which serve as the official, comprehensive repositories for every employee's professional lifecycle, including personal data, employment history, service records, and performance evaluations. These files are not merely administrative artifacts; they are essential to the institution's core operations, enabling the HRD to monitor attendance, make informed promotion decisions, and fulfill various regulatory compliance mandates. Despite the importance of this data, the current record-keeping system remains entirely manual and paper-based, with documents stored in physical locking cabinets that offer only rudimentary security and limited access.

As the institution has grown, the inherent limitations of this manual system have become increasingly pronounced and detrimental to operational efficiency. Retrieving information is currently labor-intensive, requiring HR staff to physically locate specific folders—often thick and heavy—and manually sift through hundreds of pages to verify simple details such as educational background or employment dates. This physical bottleneck often causes substantial delays, with many employees reporting wait times of several days for file retrieval, a situation worsened by access restrictions limited to office hours. Furthermore, the lack of digital infrastructure poses a significant threat to the long-term integrity of the records; historical documents are susceptible to environmental damage, misplacement, and physical deterioration, and many files have already been identified as unreadable or incomplete.

These systemic failures extend beyond administrative inconvenience, directly affecting employee morale and institutional productivity. Research data indicates a high level of dissatisfaction—approximately 71.4%—among the college's personnel, largely due to procedural delays and the recurring need for employees to resubmit documentation lost or mismanaged in paper files. This lack of transparency and speed in HR transactions stalls professional growth and administrative workflows across the entire campus. Consequently, this study proposes designing and implementing a digitized HR 201 database as a vital modernization initiative. By transitioning to an electronic system, Aldersgate College aims to eliminate the physical burdens of record-keeping, provide instantaneous and secure access to personnel data, and ensure the permanent preservation of the institution's human capital history through robust digital backups and role-based access protocols, ultimately fostering a more responsive and efficient organizational environment.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a systematic quantitative descriptive design to evaluate the transition from manual to electronic record-keeping within the Human Resources Department of Aldersgate College. The study's framework focused on developing and assessing a digitized database designed to house "HR 201" personnel files, including scanning physical documents, encoding data, and establishing a secure electronic retrieval system. To gather primary data, the researcher utilized structured survey questionnaires and conducted interviews with key stakeholders, including HR administrative staff and faculty members who regularly interact with the filing system. These instruments were designed to measure current operational efficiency, retrieval wait times, and overall user satisfaction with the manual process. The project scope was strategically limited to digitizing existing personnel records—including personal data, service records, and educational backgrounds—while intentionally excluding more complex modules such as automated payroll or performance appraisal systems to ensure a focused implementation. Data analysis used frequency and percentage distributions to quantify systemic failures and employee demand for technological intervention. Furthermore, the methodology included a risk assessment phase in which the physical condition of existing paper records was evaluated,

revealing that many files required significant restoration and verification before they could be successfully integrated into the new digital directory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is rooted in Information Management Theory and Systems Theory, which posit that an organization operates as a complex set of interrelated components that must work in harmony to achieve operational excellence. In the context of Aldersgate College, the Human Resources Department serves as a critical subsystem: the "input" consists of employee documents and data, the "process" involves storing and retrieving these records, and the "output" is the efficient management of human capital. Under current manual conditions, this system experiences "entropy," or disorder, due to the physical limitations of paper-based filing, leading to slow processing speeds and data degradation.

Furthermore, the study incorporates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that a successful transition to a digital database depends on the "perceived usefulness" and "perceived ease of use" among HR staff and employees. By addressing the specific pain points identified in the study—such as the 71.4% dissatisfaction rate and the multi-day wait times for file retrieval—the proposed digital framework shifts the administrative paradigm from a reactive, physical-dependent model to a proactive, data-driven one. This transition is also supported by the principles of Digital Transformation in Governance, which emphasizes that modern institutions must adopt electronic record management systems (ERMS) to ensure transparency, accountability, and the long-term preservation of institutional memory. By digitizing the HR 201 files, the institution is not merely changing its storage medium but is fundamentally re-engineering its internal systems to enhance data integrity and administrative responsiveness.

RESEARCH PARADIGM OF THE STUDY

The paradigm begins with the **Input** phase, which identifies the institution's foundational elements and existing problems. This includes the current manual HR 201 personnel files, employee service records, and personal data. It also incorporates the identified "pain points"—specifically the slow retrieval times, physical storage limitations, and the 71.4% employee dissatisfaction rate regarding current HR services. Additionally, the input includes the hardware and software requirements necessary for the transition.

The **Process** phase represents the actual intervention and research activities. This involves systematically scanning and indexing physical documents, encoding employee data into a digital directory, and establishing role-based access protocols. Methodologically, this phase also includes collecting feedback through surveys and interviews to assess the system's usability and verifying record integrity to ensure damaged or incomplete files are properly rectified before digitization.

Hence, the **Output** phase is the research's realized goal: the fully functional Digitized HR 201 Database System. This output is characterized by enhanced administrative efficiency, instantaneous file retrieval, improved data security through electronic backups, and a significant reduction in the physical burden on HR staff. The ultimate goal of this paradigm is to achieve operational excellence and higher stakeholder satisfaction through the successful modernization of Aldersgate College's human resource management practices.

Research Setting

This study conducted at Aldersgate College Inc., a higher education institution located in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. The college manages a significant volume of personnel records for its diverse faculty and administrative staff. The research focused on the **Human Resources Department (HRD)**, which serves as the central hub for employee data management. This setting was chosen because the HRD still relies on a traditional office layout in which "HR 201" files are stored in physical locking cabinets, making it an ideal environment to observe the limitations of manual record-keeping. The geographical and institutional context of Aldersgate College provides a representative example of a growing educational organization transitioning from legacy paper systems to modern, technology-driven administrative frameworks. This environment allowed the researcher to engage directly with staff and employees who navigate the daily challenges of document retrieval and storage on campus.

Data Gathering Tools

This qualitative study relied on instruments designed to elicit in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences and the physical realities of the current filing system. The primary tool used was a semi-structured interview guide, which allowed the researcher to engage in open-ended dialogues with the Human Resources administrative staff. These interviews were crucial for identifying recurring operational "pain points," such as the specific steps that lead to retrieval delays and the emotional or professional toll of manual record-keeping. To complement the interviews, the researcher utilized an observation and document audit checklist. This tool systematically assessed the physical condition of the HR 201 files, enabling the researcher to document qualitative themes such as "physical deterioration," "illegibility," and "disorganization" within the paper archives. Additionally, the researcher distributed open-ended survey questionnaires to faculty and staff members, giving them a platform to describe their personal encounters with the HR department's file request process in their own words. By triangulating narrative data from interviews and surveys with the physical evidence gathered through the document audit, the researcher developed a comprehensive understanding of the institutional need for digitization, ensuring the resulting themes reflected the constraints and requirements of the Aldersgate College community.

Statistical Treatment of Data

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive design; the data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. This process involved a multi-stage approach in which the researcher first became familiar with the data from interviews and open-ended survey responses, then generated initial codes. These codes were then grouped into broader, meaningful themes that captured the core experiences of the stakeholders, such as "Systemic Inefficiency," "Risk of Data Loss," and "Organizational Readiness for Change." Rather than focusing on numerical correlations, this analysis aimed to provide a rich, narrative description of the specific "bottlenecks" within the manual HR 201 system and shared perceptions of the need for digitization. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher triangulated the data by comparing themes from staff interviews with the observed physical condition of the records. This thematic approach allowed the study to go beyond simple statistics, offering a deeper understanding of how the manual filing system affected the professional lives of employees at Aldersgate College.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The qualitative analysis revealed several critical themes regarding the transition from a manual to a digitized record-keeping system at Aldersgate College. The primary theme identified was **Systemic Operational Inefficiency**, in which participants consistently described manual retrieval of HR 201 files as a significant bottleneck. Interview narratives showed that the physical search for documents often spanned several days, a delay primarily attributed to the "unorganized" state of legacy paper files and the lack of a centralized digital index. This inefficiency was further evidenced by the **Risk of Data Integrity and Loss**, as the document audit uncovered a substantial number of records that were physically damaged, unreadable, or incomplete. These findings align with Systems Theory, suggesting that the manual "process" component of the HR system had reached a state of entropy and required technological intervention to restore administrative order.

A second major theme emerged concerning **Dissatisfaction and Organizational Readiness**. Open-ended survey responses highlighted a pervasive sense of frustration among faculty and staff, who often felt burdened by having to resubmit lost or misplaced credentials. This high level of dissatisfaction, however, translated into a strong **Pro-Digitization Sentiment**, with employees expressing an overwhelming readiness to adopt an electronic database. This mirrors the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), as the perceived usefulness of a digital system was viewed as a direct solution to the professional stress caused by manual delays.

In discussing these findings, it is evident that implementing the digitized HR 201 database directly addressed the identified themes. By converting physical archives into a searchable electronic directory, the "Time-to-Retrieve" dropped from days to seconds, effectively eliminating operational bottlenecks. The study concluded that digitization did more than just save time; it enhanced institutional transparency and accountability. However, the researcher also noted that the transition period revealed **Change Management Challenges**, such as the need for staff training and the importance of thorough risk assessments before migration. Ultimately, the results confirm that for a growing institution like Aldersgate College, digital transformation is not merely a technical upgrade but a fundamental requirement for maintaining the security and accessibility of its human capital history.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The successful transition from a manual to a digital system requires more than just technological implementation; it necessitates a commitment to long-term institutional governance and personnel support. First, the Human Resources Department should fully adopt the digitized database for all new hires while continuing to back-scan legacy files to ensure a complete transition to a paperless environment. To sustain this, the institution should establish a **standardized digital filing protocol**, providing clear guidelines on naming conventions, indexing, and mandatory document verification to prevent the recurrence of the "incomplete records" theme identified in the study.

Furthermore, the study recommends **regular technical training and capacity building** for HR administrative staff. Because the qualitative data suggested that technical hurdles could cause administrative delays, ongoing workshops on database management and electronic security will empower staff and reduce resistance to the new system. In parallel, the Information Technology (IT) Department should implement a robust data backup and recovery policy, including cloud-based storage or off-site servers, to mitigate the risk of data loss—a primary stakeholder concern.

Lastly, to keep the system responsive to the college community's needs, the administration should implement a **periodic feedback mechanism** where faculty and staff can report usability issues or suggest new features. This participative approach, rooted in the Technology Acceptance Model, will foster a culture of transparency and continuous improvement. By prioritizing these steps, Aldersgate College can ensure that its digital transformation is not only efficient but also sustainable and secure for the future.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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