National Archives of the Netherlands
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

IT governance of Dutch municipalities
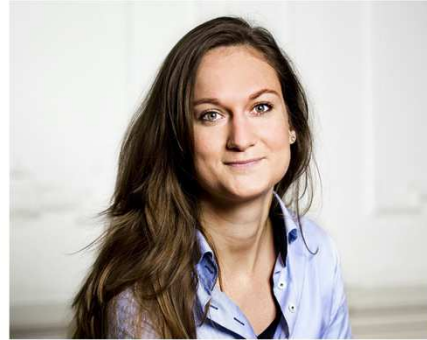
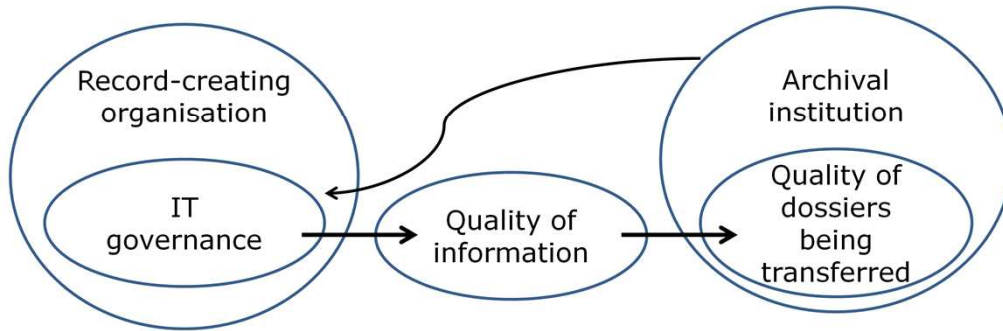2017-09-14

In this presentation, the results from research conducted with two Dutch municipalities are presented. This research was conducted by interviewing civil servants to gain insight in their information management by zooming in on how these civil servant perceive (the characteristics of) IT governance.

IT governance within record creating organisations is important and challenging > this influences the quality of information > this influences the work of archival institutions, which therefor have an interest in the IT governance within record-creating organisations
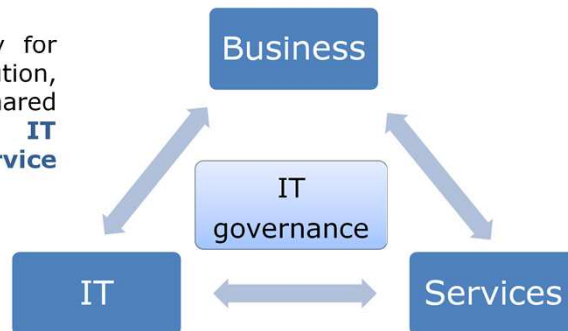
IT governance
From a business-IT alignment perspective

The decision right and accountability framework to encourage desirable behaviour in using IT (Weill and Ross, 2004).

It includes 'how the authority for resources, risk, conflict resolution, and responsibility for IT is shared among **business partners**, **IT management**, and **service providers** (Luftman, 2003).

Business

IT governance

IT   Services

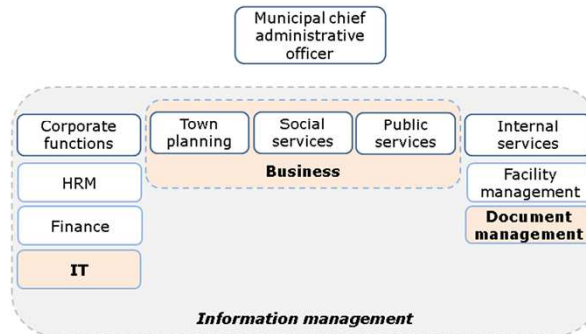IT governance of Dutch municipalities| 2017   4

In this definition, two things are important:

- It governance is about Decision making power, Accountability, Authority and Shared responsibility
- From a business It perspective, three organisation segments or units are central:
  - The business
  - IT
 - Document management as an internal service provider

On this slide, an oversimplified organisation chart of an average Dutch municipality is shown.

- The organisation chart of a Dutch archive-creating municipalities, visualises the fact that **IT, business and document management can be recognised as three separated organisation units**.

- Unlike the clear separation of these organisation units, information flows freely through all these segments. Information management and the value of information does not stop at the lines drawn between these units. This stresses the importance of organisation-wide cooperation and clarifies the challenges relating the **governance of IT**.

IT governance of Dutch municipalities

Why is IT governance important for successful information management?
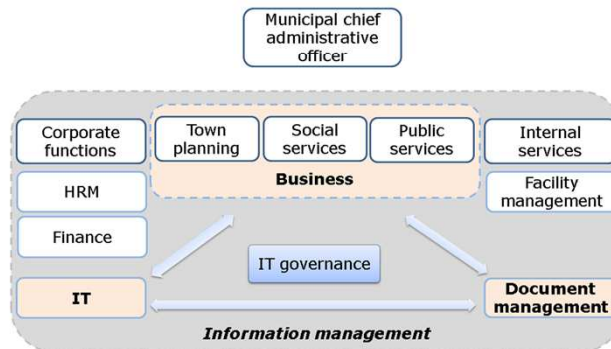
Cooperation and open communication between all three is **important**, **because all three units have an interest in information management**.

In order to provide for an environment in which this segmented process is optimal, it is important that civil servants understand their own **role** and that of their co-workers in other segments of the organisation. They also need to understand the **interests and values** of their co-workers to have a big enough grasp of other perspectives on information management present in the organisation.

So, how then are the business, IT and document management involved?

- It is generally the **business** where information is created, for example in processes where policy is developed.
- It is often **document management** that takes care of the correct organisation and structuring of this information in document management systems (DMSs), as a preparation for the planned transfer to the archival institution.
- **IT** in its turn, creates the right circumstances for hard- and software to enable this process to function properly.

The diverse character of digital information

To make the former slide a bit more concrete, it is important to realise that information - in the contemporary digital age we find ourselfves in - is created through and stored in a wide variety of **IT**-applications, that are used by the **business**.

- Take e-mail for example, playing an important role in internal and external communication in all sorts of primary processes. Often, very valuable information about decision making is communicated through e-mail and as a consequence stored in e-mailapplications.

- A challenge that **document management** faces, is to organize all this information that is spread accross the organisation and different applications, into a complete dossier, with the right metadata added. This further poses a challenge to **IT**, for example when it concerns the extraction of all the data from these applications.
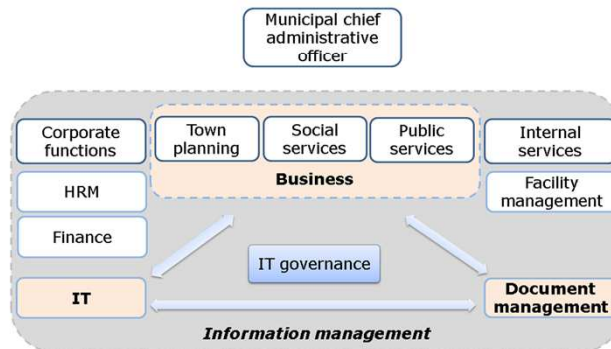
Overall:

• Decision making authority is not equally spread among the business segments. And from a business-IT alignment perspective, it should be.

• Understanding of the role, interests and values of other units proves difficult. The three units have different agenda's, which asks for active and open communication between the units.

IT governance of Dutch municipalities

**What makes IT governance challenging for municipalities?**
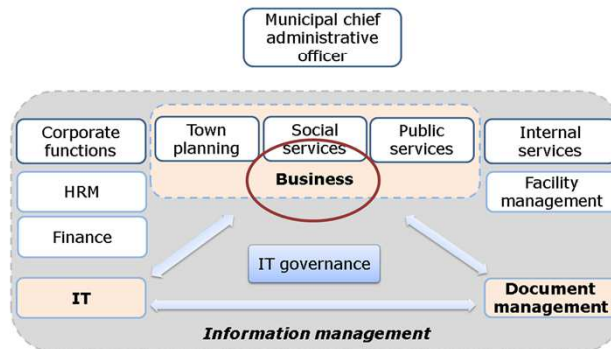
Business

- In both municipalities, the business is divided between those that adopt change and digitalization and those that defy it. The business partly lacks willingness for desirable use of IT (such as DMSs).

- The business lacks a sense of responsibility needed for improving the quality of information. Civil servants from the business often don't seem pre-ocupied with the seconday use of information. This is understandable, as for being able to do their jobs properly, it is essential to them that they have the needed data at their disposal. What happens to these data and how they're made available to the rest of the organisation however, is not top of the business' mind.
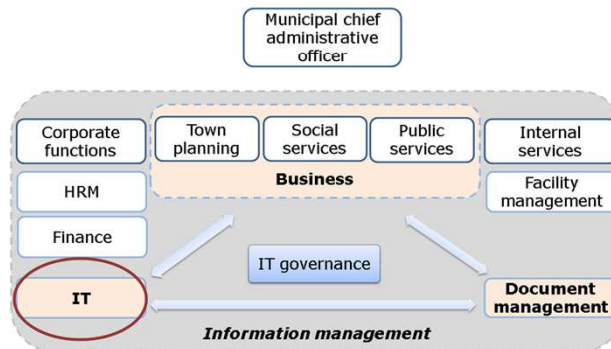
IT

- IT Is often not sufficiently involved, even when planned change contains an information component or concerns the potential purchase or implementation of an IT-system. This could result in the purchase of an IT-system that does not fit well into the existing IT-architecture or that has an overlap in functionality with existing IT-applications.

- It proves difficult for IT to explain the added value of IT to decision makers, especially to the business. This complicates the acquirement of the desired authority in strategic decision making and of the needed funding.

IT governance of Dutch municipalities

What makes IT governance challenging for municipalities?
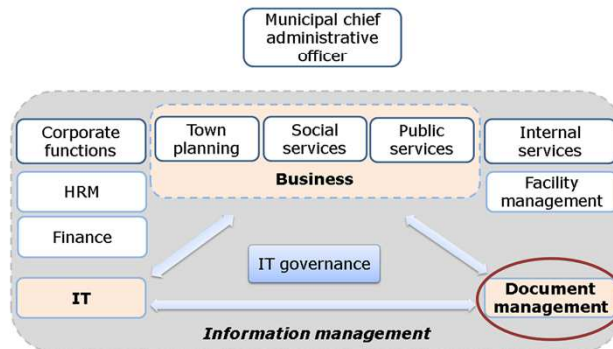
Document management services

• Is placed with the responsibility of preparing the information for transfer to the archival institution, but finds itself mediating between the business, IT and the decision making management team. As the business and IT often do not speak the same language, document management repeatedly tries to translate between them and to point out common ground.

• It further proves difficult for document management to explain the importance of the quality of information to the business. This makes explaining the importance of successful information management challenging.

IT governance of Dutch municipalities

What makes IT governance challenging for municipalities?

Recap:
1. Parts of the **business** lack willingness and a sense of responsibility
2. Often, **IT** is not involved and its added value is poorly recognized
3. Explaining the importance of quality of information is a challenge for **document management**

IT governance of Dutch
municipalities | 2017

12

Conclusions:
1. There is no overall willingness and sense of responsibility from the **business**
2. **IT** is often not involved and its added value is poorly recognized
3. Explaining the importance of quality of information is a challenge for **document management**

How does IT governance influence the quality of information? <u>Cooperation</u> between the three units is essential.

For example, for information to be **available and findable** to the right <u>stakeholders</u> (civil servants, citizens, management, journalists, historians or researchers in general), information must be structured in a way that is logical to these stakeholders.

- The **business** for example needs to carefully think of the right labeling and make sure that information is stored in an IT-application that is accessible to others, instead of using their personal drives.
- **IT** in its turn, needs to make sure that applications are interoperable and that applications are sufficiently user friendly and actually are used by the business.
- **Document management** is often the actor that checks whether dossiers in the DMS, combining information that is stored in different IT-applications, are complete and are made available to those stakeholders.

Relations with the archival institution

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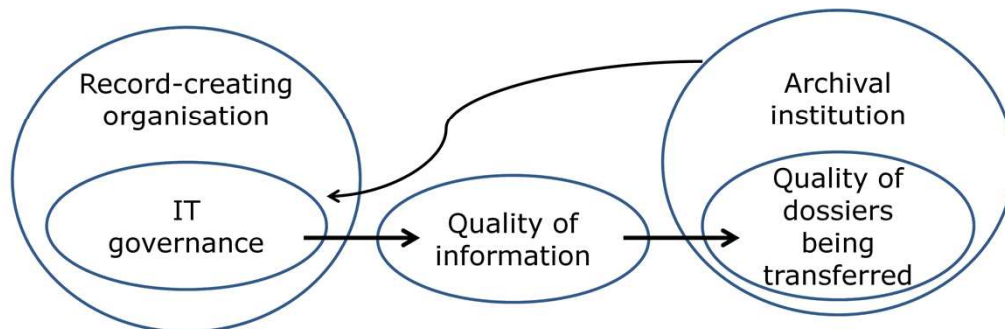
Part of the information that is created by record creating organisations, is eventually being transferred to an archival institution. So when the quality of their information is poor, so will the quality of the information that will be stored at the archival institution for the long term be poor.

In practice, what often happens when information is ready for transfer, is that the archival institution in cooperation with the record creator tries to apply the quality criteria to the information long after it's been created. However, by the time the creation of the information lies far in the past, applying the quality criteria becomes rather complex and inefficient.

Much more efficient would it be, when the archival institution and the record-creating organisation zoom in on IT governance and together make structural improvements, for example by implementing by design solutions. This leads to a situation in which information meets those criteria from the moment it is being created. From the archival institution's point of view, it is therefor fruitful to have a successful conversation with record creating organisations to know their concerns, restraints and the difficulties they face. With knowledge of how the record creator internally cooperates, the archival institution can try and help make sure that IT governance influences the quality of information management optimally.

Conclusions

1. When the quality of the information - created by a record creating organisation - is poor, so will the quality of the information stored at the archival institution be poor
2. Applying the quality criteria to information long after its creation is challenging and inefficient
3. The archival institution and the business, IT and document management of a record creator need to implement by design solutions together
4. Which stresses the importance for the archival institution to understand IT governance of the record creator

Summary:

1. When the quality of the information - created by a record creating organisation - is poor, so will the quality of the information stored at the archival institution be poor

2. Applying the quality criteria to information long after its creation is challenging and inefficient

3. The archival institution and the business, IT and document management of a record creator need to implement by design solutions together

4. Which stresses the importance for the archival institution to understand IT governance of the record creator