



# **From Paper to Smart Digital BoardPacks: Transforming University of Limpopo Governance Meetings**

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# Abstract

- The use of digital technology in higher education is overwhelmingly positively assessed in most recent research literature. While some literature indicates certain challenges in this regard, in general, the emphasis was on an encouragement and promotion of digital technology in higher education.
- While we have recognised the positive potential of the use of digital technology in higher education, we were also very cautious of an instrumentalist and disembodied understanding of (digital) technology and its potential impact on higher education and our university – as a sector of education and as a body of staff, students and the entire university governance structures.



# Introduction

- The University of Limpopo governance management meetings remains a fundamental aspect of day-to-day core business of the University. This daily core business was characterised and led by tons of physical or print meetings agendas/packs dating back to 1959.
- Governance meetings were still conducted using hundreds of pages of paper and this format remained completely unchanged for years. The Office of the Registrar is entrusted with ensuring that governance meetings are scheduled, minutes are taken.
- It took time to compile, print, copy and collate, and then in the meeting, committee members end up spending more time verifying the information to hand, rather than discussing and making strategic decisions.



# What is BoardPacks?

- BoardPacks is a board portal software tool that fully digitises an established system of agendas, meeting packs, surveys and decision making that were previously paper-based.
- eShare was founded in 2004 to solve the governance issues of the newly regulated pensions industry in the UK.
- Over a decade later on, the company has grown into a successful business with clients across the world, with over 500 clients from across many different sectors and geographical locations.
- eShare delivers software solutions to help industries manage effective meetings and governance.



# Governance Meeting Transitions

- Instead of preparing and compile massive stacks of paper for each committee meetings, a digital platform is utilised to instantly create and organise meeting agenda packs for each committee meetings with a ease.
- BoardPacks was able to reduces the time we took to put a meeting agenda pack together down to a matter of minutes.
- It also allows for quicker workflows in circulating the digital agenda meeting packs to committee members.
- Committee members receive individual instant automatic meeting agenda packs notification as soon as the agenda is published on their own devices.



# Governance Meeting Transitions Cont.

- Agenda amendments last minute changes can be updated / effected and resent in a couple of clicks and accessible.
- During and after the meeting, committee members are able to electronically share, make annotations, highlight and make notes on their individual agenda.
- Members are able to share their notes and comments with other committee members to enable interactive committee meeting or securely save their notes.
- Committee members able to easily switch between documents, view past minutes and action logs during the meeting on a single platform within an agenda item.



# Governance Meeting Transitions Cont.

- They can further view their individual archived agenda search history to see their previous comments and notes if any.
- Meeting decisions are immediately loaded and instantly accessible to members.
- Electronic documents approval and signature.
- Implement new, standardised and innovative working methods for storing, retrieving and retaining records.
- Meet all South African legislative and regulatory requirements governing information and records management best practices.



# Secured Web Based Governance Records

- Users are provided with access authentication username and password to gain access.
- Random embedded security questions.
- Added SSL (Secured Socket Layer) and login details are always encrypted when traveling over the public internet.
- Encryption ensures that the data can not be read during any transmission.





# Secured Web Based Governance Records Cont.

- Administrators are able to monitor any data bridge, downloaded, saved or shared.
- Usage reports are provided to administrators and regular system security testing are performed by the supplier and reports provided.
- eShare provides 24/7 technical support service within the application.
- Routine maintenance on the servers are performed, outside normal service hours and notifications of such are shared on time.



# Implementing Electronic Archiving System.

- The requirement of the Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 2 of 2000 (hereinafter “PAIA”), The Protection of Personal Information Act No.4 of 2013 (hereinafter “POPIA”) and the Higher Education Act No.101 of 1997 places Higher Education Institutions responsibilities to ensure and provides efficient and effective records management system, which is secured, structured and easily accessible.
- It was incumbent for the University to provide sustainable records access way in line with these Acts and other National Policies that set out the requirements for proper electronic and physical records archiving system to meet compliance obligations. In order to execute the mandate spelt above, Office of the Registrar embarked on the digitilisation of all University vital.

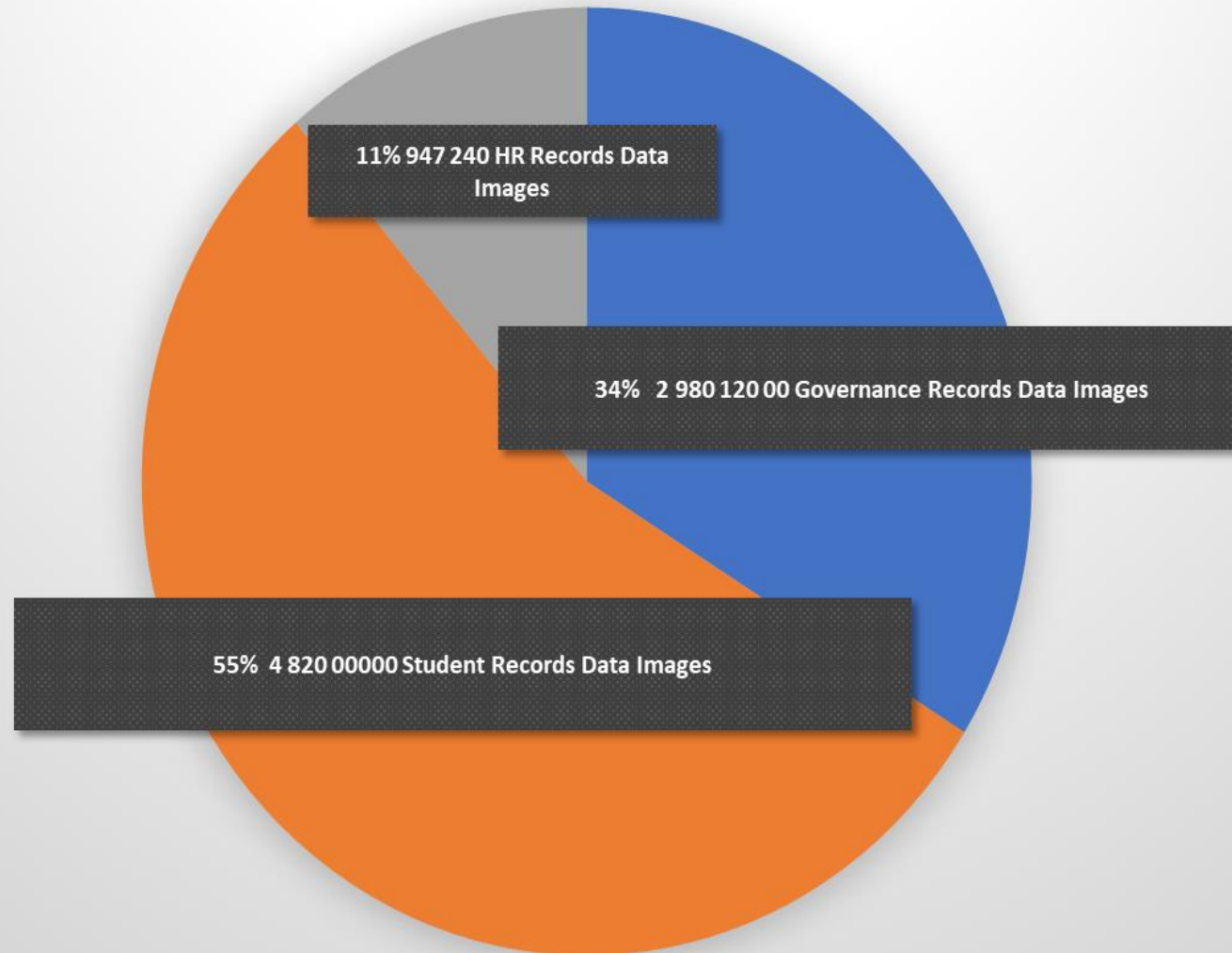


# Implementing Electronic Archiving System Cont.

- The implementation of this project has thus far resulted in a wider improved electronic records archiving system, which ensure that the University complies with South Africa's legislative such as Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and other regulatory records management best practices requirements to meet compliance obligations.
- This ongoing project has further proven to be more beneficial by improving records request submission turnaround time, improved records accessibility and audited records security controls.
- Provide a high-quality records management best practices and ensures that our records in all formats are easily identified, stored, managed, preserved and legally disposed to meet compliance obligations.



# Electronic Records Archived Accessible Image Percentages



# The Vital Records Disaster Recovery (DRP) Plan

- Physical digitised records are stored at a secured off-site storage facility and an annual storage fee is payable.
- University electronic records data is also stored on Metrofile records servers both in Polokwane and Gauteng.
- To beef up our records recovery plan, a functional, secured in- house records server was procured and is operational at the University ICT Department, our data backup systems are fully replicated, synchronising and backing up all data in real time.
- ICT provided the office with a dedicated staff member to monitor its functionality, and Metrofile provide server upgrade.





A wooden sign with the words "Thank you!" written in a black, cursive font. The sign is placed on a wooden surface. In the background, there are several bright green, serrated leaves, possibly from a young plant or tree. The overall scene is bright and natural.

Thank  
you!