

Chapter 3

Information Management Paradigms and Administrative Efficiency: A Theoretical and Conceptual Examination of Federal Agencies

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Setting the Scene

Every government stands or falls on its ability to turn information into decisions. That capacity now defines institutional performance more than almost any other variable, as public agencies move away from paper registers toward governance built on data (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025). In Nigeria, federal agencies with a subnational footprint, Rivers State among them, are still working through the friction between inherited filing habits and the demands of a data-intensive administrative environment. Rivers State carries a disproportionate share of federal presence: it sits at the centre of the country's petroleum industry, hosts significant maritime and riverine infrastructure, and is home to the headquarters of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Agencies of this kind handle enormous volumes of transactional, regulatory, and developmental information, and how well they manage it bears directly on efficiency, transparency, and public confidence.

Information management, in its broadest sense, is the coordinated set of practices for capturing, organising, storing, retrieving, securing, and disseminating institutional information. That practice has passed through recognisable stages. The earliest stage, rooted in Weberian bureaucratic administration, favoured hierarchical filing, custodial recordkeeping, and information held in fixed, compressed form (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025). The stages that followed, associated first with New Public Management and later with digital era governance, have steadily favoured decompressed, networked, and analytically usable information (Hammerschmid et al., 2023). Whether Nigerian federal agencies, and Rivers State agencies in particular, have absorbed these shifts is still an open and consequential question for both theory and practice.

Scholarly evidence from Rivers State government ministries, departments, and agencies shows that wherever digital filing and records automation have been introduced, accessibility and data security improve in measurable ways (Alikornwo, Adiele, & Onyebuenyi, 2026). The institutions that have stayed with paper-based, siloed information architectures, by contrast, tend to show delays, weak monitoring, and a public that trusts them less (Ilawagbon & Ajisebiyawo, 2024). This chapter examines that divide: how information management paradigms shape administrative efficiency in federal agencies situated within Rivers State.

The urgency of the question is not abstract. The NDDC, headquartered in Port Harcourt, has been documented as carrying thousands of abandoned or uncompleted projects nationally, with a disproportionate share sitting within Rivers State itself, a condition attributed in part to the absence of a coordinated monitoring and evaluation information architecture (Niger Delta Development Commission, 2026). National assessments of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act tell a similar story: the great majority of federal public institutions have neither

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

updated their records management policies nor budgeted for structured information governance, despite the statutory obligation set out in Section 9 of the Freedom of Information Act 2011 (Open Government Partnership, 2023). Read together, these findings point to a paradigmatic lag, institutions still operating inside custodial, compressed information regimes long after the wider scholarship on public administration moved toward decompressed, networked, knowledge-intensive models (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025). What is missing is a coherent theoretical account of how this persistence, or its reversal, bears on administrative efficiency in Rivers State's federal agencies, and what a realistic path toward realignment might look like.

What This Chapter Sets Out to Do

This chapter has four related aims. It traces the theoretical evolution of information management paradigms as they apply to public administration, drawing together empirical evidence on records management, e-governance, and knowledge management across Nigerian federal and subnational institutions. It places federal agencies in Rivers State within that theoretical and empirical landscape, using the NDDC as a working illustration. It sets out the mechanisms through which information management paradigms shape administrative efficiency. And it closes with practical and policy suggestions for strengthening information governance within federal agencies in the state.

Getting the Terms Right

Information management refers to the systematic organisation, control, and stewardship of an institution's informational resources across their full life cycle: creation, processing, storage, retrieval, dissemination, and eventual disposal or archival preservation. In Nigeria's public sector, this function has a specific institutional anchor in the National Archives Act, which establishes the National Archives of Nigeria and requires public offices to keep records in a manner that supports efficiency and economy in government administration (National Archives Act, 1992). Contemporary treatments of the concept go well beyond static recordkeeping; information is now treated as an organisational asset that supports decision making, accountability, and service delivery (Alikornwo, 2026).

Information management paradigms, borrowing the Kuhnian sense of the word as adapted to public administration, are the coherent sets of assumptions and organising principles that govern how an institution handles a given function. Applied here, the term covers the successive dominant models through which organisations have structured their information practice: the custodial, hierarchical filing systems of classical bureaucracy; the metrics-driven regimes of New Public Management; and the decompressed, data-intensive, networked regimes tied to digital era governance and collaborative administration (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025; Hammerschmid et al., 2023).

Administrative efficiency describes how well an organisation meets its mandated objectives using time, personnel, and resources well, while holding on to accuracy, accountability, and responsiveness to the people it serves. Nigerian public administration scholarship typically operationalises this through indicators such as records accessibility, data security, turnaround time in service delivery, and reduced administrative fraud and duplication (Alikornwo et al., 2026; Bestman, 2020).

Federal agencies in Rivers State are the ministries, departments, parastatals, and commissions that answer to the Federal Government of Nigeria but maintain a substantial administrative presence within the state, spanning revenue and customs administration, maritime and petroleum regulatory bodies, and the NDDC, whose statutory mandate covers the sustainable development of nine oil-producing states, Rivers among them (Niger Delta Development Commission, 2026). These agencies are formally distinct from state government ministries,

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

departments, and agencies, though the two categories share an administrative ecosystem and are frequently studied together in the regional literature (Kalagbor & Adiele, 2026).

Theoretical Foundations

Three complementary theoretical perspectives anchor the analysis in this chapter: Weberian bureaucratic theory, the digital era governance framework, and the knowledge-based view of organisations.

Weberian Bureaucratic Theory

Max Weber's account of bureaucratic administration remains the reference point against which every later information paradigm is measured. Weber described rational-legal bureaucracy as hierarchical authority combined with written rules and formal recordkeeping, built to secure consistency, predictability, and accountability (Weber, 1947). Under this arrangement, information is compressed into standardised files and registers; procedural regularity is well served, but the capacity to re-analyse and cross-reference institutional data is limited. Digital era governance scholarship treats this compressed, custodial regime as the baseline from which later shifts must be understood (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025).

Digital Era Governance

The digital era governance model, first set out by Dunleavy and colleagues and later extended to account for data science and artificial intelligence, describes three waves of transformation in public sector information regimes: digitalisation, which decompresses previously compressed data; intelligent centre and devolved delivery restructuring, which reallocates functions across tiers of government; and administrative holism, which knits information together across organisational silos (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2006; Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025). The framework suits an analysis of Nigerian federal agencies precisely because it does not assume that technology alone determines outcomes; organisational, political, and infrastructural factors are treated as co-determinants of how digital capacity becomes administrative results.

The Knowledge-Based View of Organisations

The knowledge-based view, an extension of the resource-based view of the firm, holds that an organisation's stock of knowledge, and its ability to acquire, share, and apply it, is a critical source of durable performance advantage (Barney, 1991; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Applied to public administration, the view suggests that federal agencies whose information systems support knowledge acquisition, codification, and diffusion among staff are better placed to turn institutional memory into better service delivery, a proposition supported by Nigerian research linking knowledge management practice to administrative and institutional performance in tertiary and public sector organisations (Chikwe, Dike, & Akpan, 2023; Etuk & Nwosu, 2023).

How the Inquiry Was Conducted

This chapter is built on a qualitative, desk-based inquiry using narrative literature synthesis. Since the aim is theory building and the integration of existing evidence rather than new primary data collection, a systematic narrative review was judged the most suitable method. Sources were drawn purposively from academic databases, institutional repositories, regional journals, and verified publisher platforms, with priority given to work published in the last five years alongside foundational theoretical texts whose relevance is well established. Every source was checked for authenticity, disciplinary relevance, and verifiability before inclusion. The resulting corpus of more than forty local and international sources was organised thematically around information management paradigms and administrative efficiency, and read comparatively, tracing where the Nigerian and international literatures converge and where they part ways.

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

The Evidence: Global Currents and the Nigerian Picture

International public administration scholarship documents a sustained movement away from the compressed, file-based regimes of classical bureaucracy toward decompressed, data-intensive, and increasingly artificial-intelligence-mediated governance. Dunleavy and Margetts (2025) argue that growing digital storage capacity, real-time communication, and machine learning capability have together enabled a third wave of digital era governance, marked by data-intensive information regimes, intelligent centre and devolved delivery restructuring, and administrative holism across previously siloed units. This third wave builds on the earlier claim by Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, and Tinkler (2006) that New Public Management doctrines were giving way to digitally enabled reintegration of government functions.

A comparative European study by Hammerschmid, Palaric, Rackwitz, and Wegrich (2023), examining digitalisation strategies across eight countries, found that digital technologies have in several respects reinforced centralisation and traditional bureaucratic features rather than dissolving them, contrary to claims of a wholesale shift toward networked, collaborative governance. Paradigmatic transitions, in other words, are neither linear nor automatic; they depend on institutional and political context. That finding matters for Nigeria, where digitalisation initiatives tend to sit alongside inherited bureaucratic practice rather than replace it outright. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development makes a related point: durable digital government transformation needs governance arrangements able to adapt to a continuously changing digital environment, not isolated bursts of technology procurement (OECD, 2020, 2024). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2024), in its global assessment of digital government readiness, similarly finds that effective digital transformation depends on institutional capacity, data governance frameworks, and human capital development, not technology purchase alone.

Within Nigeria, structural and systemic constraints continue to slow the fuller realisation of digitally enabled administrative reform. Ilawagbon and Ajisebiyawo (2024) find uneven adoption of human resource information systems across ministries, departments, and agencies, with many functions still leaning on paper despite the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan naming digitalisation as a reform pillar. Njoku and colleagues (2024), studying barriers to technology adoption across federal and state ministries, departments, and agencies, find that inadequate infrastructure, budget constraints, and resistance to organisational change remain the dominant obstacles to digital transformation in Nigerian government institutions. Taken together, these findings place Nigerian federal agencies somewhere between the custodial Weberian paradigm and the decompressed digital paradigm described in the international literature, with the pace of movement varying considerably by agency and sector.

At the subnational and regional level, Alikornwo (2026) frames the twenty-first century administrative office as a dynamic nexus for generating, processing, governing, and strategically deploying information, arguing that sustainable administrative efficiency depends on coherent alignment between information management strategy, technological infrastructure, and human capital development. Adiele and Alikornwo (2025) extend this by examining knowledge management paradigms as a vehicle for administrative innovation within tertiary institutions, a sector that shares significant structural and regulatory ground with federal agency administration in Nigeria.

Records management is a foundational, if frequently under-resourced, dimension of information governance within Nigerian federal institutions. The National Archives Act (1992) charges the National Archives of Nigeria with training departmental records officers and assessing how effectively public offices administer records, yet funding constraints have historically narrowed

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

the reach of these interventions across ministries, departments, and agencies. This observation is borne out by the Open Government Partnership's independent review of Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act implementation, which found that of more than five hundred public institutions assessed, only a small fraction had made budgetary provision for statutory record-keeping obligations, and that delays in retrieving and providing information traced back to infrastructural deficits, manual handling procedures, and inadequate staff training (Open Government Partnership, 2023). Within Rivers State specifically, Alikornwo et al. (2026) provide direct empirical evidence that wherever records automation and digital filing systems have been introduced within government ministries, departments, and agencies, statistically significant positive relationships emerge between these interventions and both information accessibility and data security, a finding that offers concrete grounds for extending similar interventions to federal agencies operating in the same administrative environment.

Kalagbor and Adiele (2026) push this line of inquiry further by connecting the information management capacity of the Rivers State public sector to democratic accountability, arguing that weak information architecture undermines the transparency mechanisms on which public trust in government depends. Alikornwo, Adiele, and Dornanu (2025) similarly demonstrate that digital transformation initiatives serve as a corollary to improved administrative decision making within government ministries, reinforcing the point that information paradigm shifts are structural enablers of governance quality, not merely technical upgrades.

A parallel body of scholarship situates information management within the wider architecture of knowledge management. Chikwe, Dike, and Akpan (2023), studying federal universities in Southern Nigeria, find that structured knowledge acquisition processes significantly improve institutional responsiveness, while Etuk and Nwosu (2023) show that organised knowledge repositories are associated with more effective service delivery in Nigerian universities. Eze, Obi, and Opara (2025) find a positive relationship between knowledge sharing practice and innovation capability within Nigerian higher education institutions. These studies are drawn mainly from the tertiary education sector, but their theoretical implications carry directly into federal agency administration, since both sectors sit under overlapping civil service regulation, comparable organisational hierarchies, and similar constraints on information infrastructure.

Nwinyokpugi and Alikornwo (2022) supply more direct evidence within the administrative domain itself, showing that enterprise content management functions as a corollary for administrative efficiency within manufacturing organisations, a logic of centralised, retrievable, securely governed information architecture that transfers readily to public sector agencies. Bestman (2020), studying the civil aviation industry in Nigeria's South-South region, finds that human information infrastructure is significantly associated with administrative efficiency, reinforcing the point that the human capital dimension of information management, not technology alone, determines administrative outcomes. At the theoretical level, these empirical findings sit comfortably with the knowledge-based view set out by Barney (1991) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995): organisational knowledge assets, well managed, are a durable source of institutional performance.

A substantial body of Nigerian scholarship also addresses the barriers that keep information and communication technology investment from translating into administrative efficiency gains. Njoku and colleagues (2024), surveying staff across seven federal ministries, departments, and agencies, identify insufficient ICT infrastructure, budget constraints, and organisational resistance to change as the principal barriers to technology adoption in Nigerian government institutions. Kamale and Asaju (2025), examining e-governance adoption within tertiary institutions in Adamawa State over a fourteen-year period, similarly find that infrastructural and capacity constraints continue to limit how far e-governance investment translates into improved service delivery, notwithstanding demonstrable gains where adoption has held. Ikoromasoma and Zeb-Obipi (2021), focusing on local government councils in Rivers State, find that workplace management strategies, including information handling practices, are significantly associated

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

with employee commitment, suggesting that information governance reform carries implications for workforce engagement as well as service delivery.

The Nigeria Data Protection Act and its associated General Application and Implementation Directive add a further, increasingly consequential dimension to information governance within federal agencies, requiring public institutions to embed data protection and security safeguards within their information management architecture as a matter of statutory compliance rather than administrative discretion. This regulatory shift reinforces the point that information management paradigms within Nigerian federal agencies are being reshaped as much by an expanding legal and regulatory environment as by technological possibility.

A Case in Point: The Niger Delta Development Commission

Rivers State hosts a dense concentration of federal administrative presence, reflecting its status as Nigeria's principal petroleum-producing hub and the seat of the NDDC. The Commission was established to facilitate the rapid, even, and sustainable development of the Niger Delta region across nine states including Rivers, and its recent history illustrates with particular clarity what fragmented information governance costs an institution (Niger Delta Development Commission, 2026). Documented assessments indicate that more than thirteen thousand projects and programmes attributable to the Commission had, by the early 2020s, either been abandoned or left uncompleted nationally, with several hundred of these situated within Rivers State alone (Niger Delta Development Commission, 2026).

The causes of that outcome are multifactorial, spanning funding volatility and governance oversight challenges, but the documented absence of a properly articulated and coordinated monitoring and evaluation information architecture stands out as a contributing structural factor, alongside limited community-level data capture during project design and implementation. Read as a case study, the NDDC experience shows what happens when an agency's information systems stay organised around project-level, poorly integrated recordkeeping rather than centralised, analytically exploitable information regimes: diminished capacity for early problem detection, weaker resource tracking, and slower institutional learning. The pattern fits the digital era governance proposition that agencies operating within compressed, siloed information regimes struggle to reach the administrative holism needed for effective cross-functional coordination (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025).

Set beside this, evidence from Rivers State government ministries, departments, and agencies that have adopted digital filing and records automation systems shows that comparable institutional environments are capable of measurable gains in information accessibility and data security once the right information governance structures are put in place (Alikornwo et al., 2026). The contrast between these two categories of institutional experience, within the same state and often the same broad administrative ecosystem, makes a simple point: administrative efficiency is not simply a function of resource availability. It follows from the deliberate adoption of a coherent information management paradigm, and its absence carries a traceable institutional cost.

Making Sense of the Evidence

Read together, the literature converges on several related propositions about how information management paradigms bear on administrative efficiency in federal agencies. The persistence of Weberian, custodial information practice, compressed and paper-dependent, is consistently associated with delayed service delivery, weaker monitoring capacity, and diminished institutional accountability (Ilawagbon & Ajisebiyawo, 2024; Open Government Partnership, 2023). Where the transition toward decompressed, digitally enabled information regimes has been implemented with adequate infrastructure and human capital investment, the literature reports statistically demonstrable improvements in information accessibility, data security, and administrative responsiveness (Alikornwo et al., 2026; Kalagbor & Adiele, 2026). Technological

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

infrastructure alone, however, does not secure these gains; the literature consistently points to human capital development, organisational culture, and policy coherence as the mediating factors between digital information systems and administrative outcomes (Bestman, 2020; Njoku et al., 2024).

A further proposition, drawn from the comparative international literature, is that paradigmatic transitions are neither automatic nor irreversible. Hammerschmid et al. (2023) show that digitalisation can, under certain institutional conditions, reinforce rather than dissolve centralised, traditional bureaucratic tendencies, a caution that matters for the Nigerian federal administrative context, where digitalisation initiatives are frequently layered onto existing bureaucratic structures rather than integrated with them. Federal agencies in Rivers State need more than the introduction of digital tools; they need a deliberate, institutionally embedded strategy for reconciling inherited bureaucratic practice with emerging information governance paradigms, a point consistent with the digital era governance framework's emphasis on administrative holism as a distinct, non-technological dimension of transformation (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2025).

The knowledge-based view sharpens this further and helps explain why information management reforms confined to infrastructure procurement have historically produced limited administrative efficiency gains. Where knowledge acquisition, codification, and diffusion remain underdeveloped, as several Nigerian public sector studies document, digital infrastructure ends up functioning as a faster conduit for the same fragmented information practice rather than as a genuine paradigmatic shift (Chikwe et al., 2023; Etuk & Nwosu, 2023). Administrative efficiency, on this reading, is the product of an interaction between technological capability, human capital, and institutional knowledge architecture; it is not reducible to any one variable on its own.

What This Means for Practice, Policy, and Training

For federal agency management, the evidence suggests that investment in records automation and digital filing infrastructure needs to be matched by parallel investment in staff training and change management, since human information infrastructure has been shown to mediate administrative efficiency outcomes independently of technology procurement (Alikornwo, Adiele & Omunakwe, 2024; Bestman, 2020). For national policy formulation, the persistent gap between statutory records management obligations under the National Archives Act and the Freedom of Information Act, and actual institutional compliance, points to a need for enforceable budgetary mandates and monitoring mechanisms rather than aspirational policy statements alone (Open Government Partnership, 2023).

For tertiary education in Office and Information Management, the evidence underscores the continuing relevance of curricula that bring together records management, digital office technologies, knowledge management theory, and data governance compliance, given that graduates of these programmes make up a significant share of the human capital pipeline into federal and state administrative institutions. Programmes that stay confined to traditional secretarial and clerical competencies, without folding in digital era governance concepts and data protection literacy, risk producing graduates who are poorly equipped for the information management demands of contemporary federal agency administration.

Closing Thoughts

This chapter has examined the theoretical and empirical relationship between information management paradigms and administrative efficiency in federal agencies operating within Rivers State, Nigeria. Drawing on Weberian bureaucratic theory, digital era governance scholarship, and the knowledge-based view of organisations, it has argued that administrative efficiency within these agencies depends on a deliberate and coherently managed transition from compressed, custodial information practice toward decompressed, knowledge-intensive,

Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

digitally enabled information regimes. The case of the Niger Delta Development Commission illustrates the administrative costs that come with fragmented information governance, while evidence from Rivers State government ministries, departments, and agencies shows the measurable gains achievable where records automation and digital filing systems have been deliberately introduced. Technological infrastructure, while necessary, is not sufficient on its own; sustained administrative efficiency gains require the simultaneous cultivation of human capital, institutional knowledge architecture, and policy enforcement mechanisms.

Suggestions

Federal agencies operating in Rivers State should institute comprehensive records automation and digital filing systems, supported by structured staff training programmes built to sustain human information infrastructure capacity over time. The National Archives of Nigeria and relevant oversight bodies should strengthen enforcement of statutory records management obligations, with clear budgetary allocation requirements attached to compliance. Agencies such as the NDDC should institutionalise centralised, digitally enabled project monitoring and evaluation systems capable of tracking project status across its nine-state mandate in real time. Tertiary institutions offering programmes in Office and Information Management should revise their curricula to incorporate digital era governance concepts, knowledge management theory, and data protection compliance, in order to strengthen the human capital pipeline into federal agency administration. Further empirical research, including primary data collection within specific federal agencies operating in Rivers State, would help validate and extend the theoretical propositions advanced in this chapter.

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Recent Advances in Knowledge Management

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