

# Information Matching Bulletin

News from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner – June 2008

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## Encryption required for physical transfers using digital media

**Neil Sanson**

Most agencies have informally advised their adoption of encryption for physical transfers of data (e.g. on CD), and some have taken the opportunity to adopt encryption generally for all data transfers. This is very good progress. The remaining steps will be to update the Technical Standards Reports (TSRs), and to work out appropriate reporting.

The TSRs may only need a variation letter, or there might be sufficient changes desired to revise the document - please do contact me to discuss.

This achievement is a good news story for the agencies involved. OPC will be reporting on it, including a news release. So do advise your managers and communications people as well, when you send in the sign-off that the shift to encryption is complete.

## End of year s.104 reporting

June 30 marks the end of the 2007/08 reporting period. To those responsible for providing s.104 information matching reports to this Office, please aim to have those reports to this Office by August 20<sup>th</sup>. Where reporting can be provided earlier, that would be much appreciated.

## Technical standards reports review

Rule 4 of the Information Matching Rules (Schedule 4 of the Privacy Act 1993) requires that technical standards reports include details about the matching techniques to be used in the programme with particular reference to certain matters including the matching algorithm and the procedure for recognising matches.

We have recently begun a review of technical standards reports governing all operating matches to identify those where a more detailed description of the matching process is required. We will shortly be contacting agencies to discuss this further.

## Information matching workshops

The half day workshops are designed to give some practical background knowledge about the Privacy Act along with more detailed information about preparing an Information Matching Privacy Impact Assessment. To register interest in attending the next workshop, contact Sharon Newton on (04) 4747590 or by email to [sharon.newton@privacy.org.nz](mailto:sharon.newton@privacy.org.nz).

## Information Matching Interest Group

We are keen to receive suggestions about the topics/format of the next information matching interest group meeting (date to be advised). Think about a presentation you might present on behalf of your agency. Perhaps you have an information matching success story or cautionary tale to share? Please contact Neil or Colin with your ideas!

## Privacy Awareness Week 24-30 August 2008

Just a reminder that departments may like to promote Privacy Awareness Week in their own offices. Please contact us if you have ideas that we could help with. We look forward to hearing about your successful initiatives.

On Wednesday, 27 August 2008, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner will be hosting a day-long Privacy Issues Forum, to be held at the Intercontinental Hotel, Wellington. Programme and registration details will be available soon at [www.privacy.org.nz](http://www.privacy.org.nz).

## Data quality accuracy dimension – part 2 of 2

**Colin Trotter**

Part 1 of 2 of this article was published in last months Information Matching Bulletin (accessible at <http://www.privacy.org.nz/information-matching-bulletins/>). This article draws upon 4 related blogs written under the profile "vijikumar" which can be accessed through <http://dataqualityaccuracy.blogspot.com/>. Part 2 of 2 follows.

### “Sources of Inaccurate Data”

While innocent data entry errors at the time of input into a system are a major source of inaccurate data, they are not the only source. Flawed data entry processes, deliberate errors and system errors also contribute to inaccurate data.

Form (screen) design is cited by Vijikumar as having a lot to do with the amount of inaccurate data on databases. The use of a drop down list of valid values instead of typing in a value can eliminate spelling mistakes. Form design should always be rigorously quality tested. Help functions are also helpful to assist users in handling errors during input. Forms are also better completed by trained entry staff. However, this is less likely to happen as new internet based services are rolled out which involve consumers completing forms themselves, creating an even higher requirement for quality form design.

Deliberate errors can occur where the person providing the information purposely provides inaccurate information. Sometimes this is to obtain a personal benefit. Sometimes, the information requested may be more than people are willing to disclose, resulting in false information being provided. Data entry staff may also input incorrect data where some personal advantage might be derived.

“Data accuracy decay” is a term used by Vijikumar. Data that is accurate when initially created can become inaccurate (out of date) through time. Personal information can easily become out of date as people move, change marital status, complete new education

programmes, change phone numbers. Periodic review of “decay prone” information is required to maintain good data quality.

Vijikumar writes that data may be accurate, but if users do not understand the meaning of the data or the context within which it is presented, their interpretation and use of the data may be flawed. Having knowledge about your data is a key factor in maintaining data quality. Unfortunately, Vijikumar believes that most companies do not have good metadata (information about the information) repositories.

### “Data Quality Assurance”

A data quality assurance programme serves the purpose of maintaining high levels of data quality. In order for high levels of data quality to be achieved, Vijikumar suggests that the programme must be part of every project that creates new databases or that migrates, replicates, or integrates existing databases.

Vijikumar suggests that a team comprising expert data analysts and experienced business analysts is required to run a data quality assurance programme. The blog explains the different data quality assurance methods and activities, discusses the use of metrics as part of data quality issues management, and some different types of data analysis. Readers are provided with plenty of detailed information to help towards implementing their own data quality assurance programme, more than can be reasonably recounted here.

Information in government and business databases is heavily relied upon as the basis for decision making. Decisions based on inaccurate, incomplete, and out of date information are a recipe for disaster. Conversely, decision making based on good quality information gives confidence that appropriate outcomes will be achieved.

It is always worthwhile to ask the question, “what level of confidence do I have in the data quality of our critical databases?”

**The full article is available on the Information Matching Shared Workspace.**

## Publications

There are a number of other publications and reports available from the Privacy Commissioner that may be of interest to those involved in information matching. These are listed on the Privacy Commissioner’s website, [www.privacy.org.nz](http://www.privacy.org.nz).

## New on the website

- Details about Privacy Act law reform: <http://www.privacy.org.nz/privacy-commissioner-s-review-of-the-privacy-act/>

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