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A KM-Based Strategic, Global Current Awareness Service

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A KM-Based Strategic, Global Current Awareness Service

Abstract

This presentation focuses on a global current awareness service designed to meet the knowledge needs of the institution from which it originates. In so doing, it also meets the needs of journalists, researchers, faculty, students, professional practitioners, and policymakers concerned with the same issues globally. It provides the institutional links between partnering institutions that sustain the relationships for the future. This serves as a model for how libraries can become supporting pillars of their organizations by tapping into and meeting KM needs.

Keywords

Knowledge management, global awareness, institutional needs, libraries

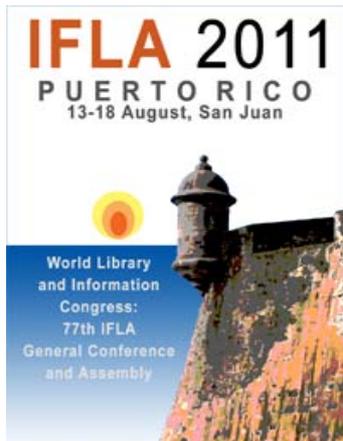
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A KM-based strategic, global current awareness service

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Meeting:

Session 184 — *Applied knowledge management: a panorama of success stories & case studies in libraries and lessons learned* — Knowledge Management Section

Abstract:

This presentation focuses on a global current awareness service designed to meet the knowledge needs of the institution from which it originates. In so doing, it also meets the needs of journalists, researchers, faculty, students, professional practitioners, and policy-makers concerned with the same issues globally. It provides the institutional links between partnering institutions that sustain the relationships for the future. This serves as a model for how libraries can become supporting pillars of their organizations by tapping into and meeting KM needs.

Knowledge Management (KM) does not have to be perceived as a technology based information collection and access issue. Nor does it have to be a “process” behind the scene of user activity—a passive role that serves the activities of others.

KM can be used, however, to enhance creatively and actively the knowledge based activities of identified user groups via new forms of technology for current awareness.

Why create a current awareness service using KM principles?

- The Internet (particularly the “deep web”) offers high quality and timely information for key research and practitioner communities
- This information is not understood or utilized adequately
- Internet knowledge producing actors/players are not well known by persons who claim interdisciplinary needs

There is a fundamental disconnect between researcher/practitioner needs and the readily available information to serve those needs. Someone or some institution needs to **report** on what is being produced and readily available in an increasingly competitive and time sensitive global environment.

ENHANCING SERENDIPITY— the true role of the library and librarian

- The librarian must now be a **REPORTER/JOURNALIST**—
 - a) Actively informing users about things they would otherwise not discover
 - b) Filtering highly useful information from an overwhelming sea of sources

The library/librarian has always been perceived as a place/person to which one turns for discovery. In the world of the Internet, this role can be diminished greatly unless pro-active services are developed. The special skills and understanding of intellectual product and producers that librarians possess need to be applied to the needs of users in “real time.” The truth is that the Internet is now the major source of information including rich and trustworthy sources. The library and its holdings, whether print or digital, are a decreasing part of the information pie from which we all feed our information hunger. This does not diminish the need for librarians. In fact, it increases the desire for skilled information professionals who can bring sense to a chaotic environment of information stuff.

WHAT IS KM?

(1) From IFLA KM Brochure

http://www.ifla.org/files/km/KM%20brochure%202010%20v3_0.pdf

Within the context of IFLA, KM is defined as: “ ... a process of creating (generating, capturing), storing (preserving, organizing, integrating), sharing (communicating), applying (implementing), and re-using (transforming) organisational knowledge to enable an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives. KM is extending the concept of “knowledge” beyond existing concepts like “memory”, “storage”, and “information.” The term “knowledge” is not limited to published information; it also covers such areas as tacit knowledge (expertise), implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge, and procedural knowledge.”

Looking at the definition of KM in this and the following slides, one wonders whether or not the following notion is true, “IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME.”

From my perspective, why take the chance. I prefer the notion, “TAKE IT TO THEM.”

(2) From the Asian Development Bank (ADB)

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/Presentations/Knowledge-Management-and-Learning/managing-knowledge-at-work.pdf>

- **Knowledge management is the fusion of information management and organizational learning.**
- **Knowledge management is the explicit and systematic management of processes enabling vital individual and collective knowledge resources to be identified, created, stored, shared, and used for benefit.**
- **It is the provision of the right knowledge to the right people at the right time, in such ways that people can apply it to improve organizational performance.**

(3) **Guiding Principles** – from the ADB

<http://www.adb.org/Knowledge-Management/knowledge-framework.asp>

Fostering a knowledge-supportive environment

The framework promotes staff contribution to knowledge activities and encourages staff to be a knowledge worker.

Ensuring results orientation and continued improvement

The framework works to sharpen the results of knowledge management initiatives.

Enhancing operational relevance

Operational strategies will drive ADB's approaches to knowledge management and guide the business processes and planning of administrative and information technology support.

- 1. What KM principles are involved in your case study?**
- 2. Who benefits from your initiative and why?**
- 3. Is this effort valued?**
- 4. If so, do you have measurable outcomes or evidence?**

In the process of conveying this case study, I will answer the four questions that each member of the panel has been asked to address.

IWS News Bureau

The IWS News Bureau helps members of the ILR community keep up with the latest in workplace information, trends, reports, and statistics by disseminating the IWS Documented News Service. Under the directorship of Stuart Basefsky, the news service offers the latest information related to ILR disciplines, as it becomes available, for the purposes of research, understanding, and debate. The news service is unique in that it provides the original source documentation, via links, behind the news and research of the day. **Postings are selected to meet the research needs and interests of our faculty, staff, and students, but are useful to anyone interested in workplace-related issues.** It is a free service, published on a daily and weekly basis, with an option to receive posted links through email. A section devoted to international postings is also available.

Being intimately aware of the research needs of faculty, staff, and students at the ILR School, it made sense to start a current awareness service that served them well. In fact, early versions of this serviced started via e-mail in 1994.

FAQs

- **Why was the IWS News Bureau started?**

The IWS News Bureau was developed to solve a key public policy issue: how to disseminate workplace-related studies, reports, and data issued by government bodies (international, federal, state, and local) so that they reach interested faculty, researchers, practitioners, students, journalists, and the general public while the content is still current.

In fact, the changing information climate made this service a necessity. I noticed back in 1994 that fewer people were coming to the reference desk for assistance. However, I knew that they still needed help. I also knew the types of questions they needed to have answered. My attitude was, “Why wait for them to come to me? I will send them the information they should be asking for.” In other words, I will pose their questions for them and answer at the same time.

I started sending e-mail links with content indicators such as abstracts, contents, tables, figures, maps, charts and more. Often as many as ten e-mails were sent daily to the entire faculty. They tolerated this because one or two of the e-mails proved extremely useful to them daily. Ultimately, this led to the creation of the news service.

A secondary goal was to inform the faculty about what their colleagues were researching. The news service contains only information of interest to researchers at the ILR School. This helped create a larger community of interest and a sense of intellectual camaraderie.

Why is this a public policy issue?

- A. Governments issue mandates and provide funding to collect data and produce reports that address specific needs for an identified audience. Once the report is written and produced, there is rarely a mandate to disseminate it more broadly; storing a document on a shelf or posting it on a website does not mean that people will find it, so the potential utility of the information is greatly limited. When knowledge and understanding are limited, the public is not served well.

Understanding who values the information and why is key to the knowledge management analysis. In this instance, the target audience from an outreach perspective is huge and unpredictable in all its facets. What is known is that the information has a broad appeal.

- B. Having recognized this deficiency, the IWS News Bureau attempts to create relations with international intergovernmental agencies, foreign governments, and U.S. entities in order to distribute their intellectual content.
- C. The IWS News Bureau has expanded the project to include associations, labor unions, commercial organizations, academic institutions, and any other reputable producer of workplace-related information.

This news service now serves an unusual function. It binds partnering institutions in a sustainable manner. Let me explain.

Several institutional partnerships exist with the ILR School. For example, we partner with the International Labour Organization (ILO); the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound); the University College Dublin (UCB); the ESCP Europe (European School of Management) in Paris; and more.

These partnerships were often founded on faculty interests, student intern programs, teaching exchanges and the existence and philosophy of the news service.

When faculty and students lose interest, what sustains the relationship?

This news service does. It does so by disseminating the intellectual products of these respective institutions globally. Each institution sees increasing use of their working papers, reports, documentation and more as a result of this service. In other words, the institutions find value in what is produced by the news service. This is enough to keep them as partners irrespective of faculty and student interest. In fact, the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) includes reference to the news service in all instances.

What sets the IWS News Service apart from other resources?

- The IWS Documented News Service provides original source documentation, via links, behind the news and research of the day. Instead of relying on journalists' selections, analyses, and interpretations, users of the service have ready access to the full-text documents used by the journalists themselves. This is why the service is called the IWS Documented News Service: one actually has access to the documents in question.

How are the items selected?

- Postings are selected to meet the research needs and interests of the faculty, staff, and students of the ILR School. These interests are so broad, however, that the information included can be useful to anyone interested in workplace-related information.

Communicating with the local research community is essential. In part, researcher interests lead the selection of material. However, the knowledge of the librarian can also direct the researcher. Researchers rarely understand the variety of information players available to enhance the fulfillment of their needs. For example, associations, government agencies, parallel disciplines, and more. Selecting only the most useful of these materials is important. A good current awareness service filters out only the best or most interesting or provocative items.

What is the best way to use the News Service?

- Most people sign up to receive our Weekly Bulletin via email. This service can save valuable time by eliminating the need to monitor all of the many websites that provide workplace-related information, and delivery straight to your inbox means you don't have to remember to check the News Bureau's websites. Anyone needing cutting edge, timely information with relevant content indicators should consider signing up for the Daily Postings.

This news service is a measurable success.

- Just like any news service, it is measured by the number of subscribers
 - **Approximately 2,000 subscribers from every continent**
- It is also measured by its influence and secondary uses
 - **Used by the Washington Post, NY Times, International Labour Organization, European Union, legislative policy-makers, and more....**

The number of subscribers would be much higher if a self-subscribing application was used. However, I am only interested in serious users. Therefore, it is required that any user request the subscription.

Among the subscribers are consulting firms, publishers, and others who use this service to enhance the content of their own commercial services.

Is there a charge for the News Service?

- No. The IWS Documented News Service is a free service of the Institute for Workplace Studies. To subscribe, contact Stuart Basefsky - smb6@cornell.edu - and specify in the subject line, whether you would like to receive the Daily Postings, the Weekly Bulletin, or both.

Via Email

- **Daily Postings**—an email service providing 3-10 postings daily, Monday-Friday, with content indicators
- **Weekly Bulletin**—one email per week that includes all of the daily postings, with titles and links to full-text documentation

Via the Web

- [Daily Postings Website](#)—a place to find the postings of each day with title, links, and content indicators
- [Weekly Bulletin Website](#)—a place to find the Weekly Bulletin with its titles and links
- [International Postings Website](#)—a subset of postings with an international focus

If one clicks on the blue items above, they will be taken to individual web sites where each posting appears and remains archived for serendipitous use via Google and other search engines. These also have a “deep web” function since each is actually a database of all postings which can be used by researchers to locate something they think they remember seeing.

In addition, the news service is available on LinkedIn and Facebook and it also can be retrieved via RSS feeds.

Regardless of these social network technologies, the key to the success of this service is “push” e-mail. It goes back to the original notion of, “Why wait for them to come to me? I will send them the information they should be asking for.” In other words, I will pose their questions for them and answer at the same time.

There is no substitute for being in the daily and/or weekly consciousness of the people who need the information. It is important to be actively visible.

In my opinion, knowledge management requires ACTIVE knowledge managers like someone who runs a news or current awareness service.

NOTE: The users often send they own content to be included in the postings. How is that for effectiveness?