



Network
of government library and
information specialists

Network

the journal for library and
information specialists

Spring 2009

Edited by Pat Bell

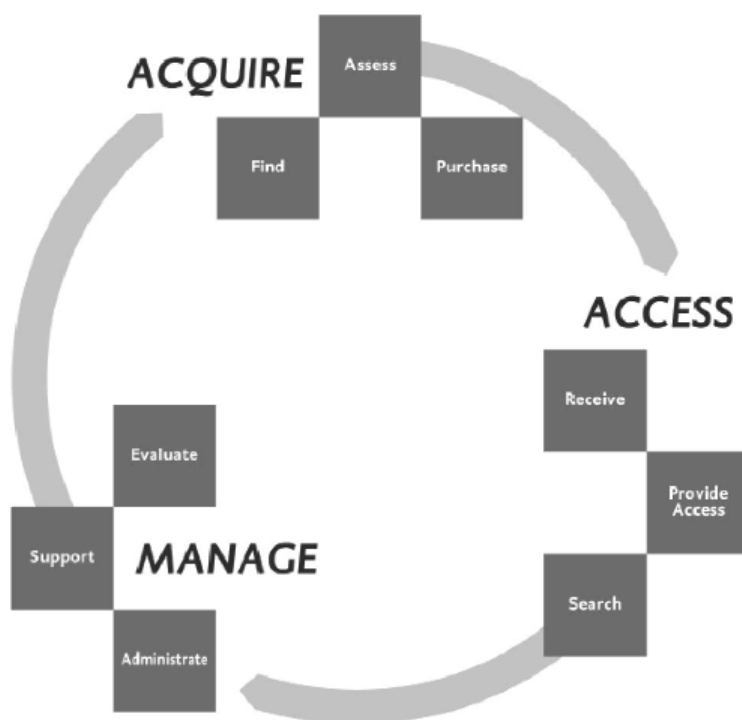
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Network: the journal for library and information specialists

Network is the journal of the Network of Government Library and Information Specialists. It is published twice a year, in the Spring and the Autumn. The views expressed in *Network* are those of the authors only, and not necessarily of NGLIS or the organisation for whom the author works.

Guidelines for writers

This journal aims to cover all subjects relating to managing information, records and knowledge in the public sector.

- The deadlines for receiving articles are mid-March for the Spring issue and mid-September for the Autumn issue.
- Articles should be emailed to the editor as an MS Word attachment.
- Diagrams and pictures to illustrate articles are welcome. Please contact the editor to discuss suitable formats.
- Authors are asked to provide a brief biography for publication with the article, and contact details.
- The copyright of individual articles remains with the authors. The issue and its typographic representation is the copyright of the Network of Government Library and Information Specialists.

Please contact the editor, who can provide more detailed guidance and advice, if you would like to write an article or review for *Network*.

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Written before the Budget, the articles in the Spring 2009 issue of *Network* - covering the credit crunch, Information matters, the changing but enduring need for information specialists and the career paths open to them - are nevertheless highly topical. Our thanks to all the authors and colleagues who have helped publish this issue.

If you have any comments about Network, please contact the editor, Pat Bell at pat.bell@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk.

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Am I ready for electronic books?

A view from the Other Side

Catriona Hunter

Office of Manpower Economics

One thing is clear, we have far too many books in our house - if you can believe it is possible to have too many books. We don't have enough bookcases, so those we do have are stuffed full, and we store hundreds of books on the stairs. Every so often they all fall down, hastened by a wobbly floorboard that shakes the pile until it becomes unstable. When we go on holiday half my suitcase is full of books. Then at the airport I am unable to resist buying several of the airport editions of recently published books.

At school I remember A level textbooks three inches thick; and in my first year at secondary school we had nine lessons a day and no lockers – so all books for the day had to be carried round. If you failed to have the right book for a lesson you were punished severely.

So I can see that there are lots of potential advantages to electronic books. We already use many of them in everyday life via the internet; for example who consults a hard copy encyclopaedia any more? E-books are space saving and would have definite advantages for taking on holiday or for students. No one would know what you were reading with an e-book; it could be *War and peace* or some trashy but enjoyable chick lit. First time authors could publish their own books and in an ideal world, books that would otherwise be out of print could still be available electronically. I have been pleasantly surprised by the look and feel of the Sony book reader, which is the only one I have had the opportunity to play with. It is unexpectedly lightweight and there is a certain appeal in being able to carry around 150 books for the weight of an average hardback, whereas at the moment I think twice about starting a big fat book that I know I am going to have to carry around for over a week.

What's stopping me then? Well, the main thing is that I really like books in their traditional format. I like to see books lined up on shelves and I like their feel and smell. I like their covers – indeed I have often thought that books should be arranged by colour and size, rather than author or subject.

The only technology I need to read a book is my glasses - and I need those to walk down the street anyway. Most importantly, I don't like reading on a screen. Even though paper and some book bindings may deteriorate over time, old books can still be read; but I wonder whether I would still be able to read books that I had paid to download today in ten or 20 years' time. Fundamentally, at the moment traditional books are still cheaper than e-books, except for out of copyright classics that can be found free of charge online.

"... the real problem that I have is the idea of not having a physical book as well."

I am not an early adopter of technology, but nor am I a Luddite. I use a mobile phone and I have an iPod – though I have never downloaded music from the Internet; all the music on my iPod has been copied from CDs. And I think this sums up the real problem that I have with the idea of e-books; it is the idea of not having a physical book as well. How would I store the e-books I had downloaded? The 150 books, which the Sony book reader is apparently capable of storing, would last me two years just for novels, never mind any reference books I might want to have with me. How would I lend a book to a friend? What happens if I drop it in the bath or get sand in it? What if I am miles from anywhere and the battery runs down? How can I have lots of textbooks open at the same time if I am writing an essay? Maybe all these questions just display my ignorance about this new technology.

Other practical considerations are that not everything I want to read is available electronically, and if it is, it is likely to be far more expensive than a paperback. And don't forget the £200 needed up front to pay for the electronic book reader in the first place. What if I carelessly left it on a train? This would mean the loss of a large collection of books, not just one easily replaced paperback.

Will e-books lead to the demise of the traditional printed book? I doubt it. The death of the book has regularly been foretold throughout the ages. Film, television and computers have all been seen as threats to reading and the book, but it has survived. Furthermore, I have only ever seen two people reading e-books on a book reader – and one of those was on Boxing Day, so the novelty may already have worn off. Of course, for all I know, many more people may be reading books on their mobile phones or MP3 players, but that's definitely not for me. Maybe I will look back on this article in a few years' time and wonder what all the fuss was about as I happily download bestsellers for a few pence. Overall, I think that e-books will take a hold as the hardware and software come down in price, but I do hope that there will always be place for the traditional format – on my stairs or elsewhere. 📖



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2009 Conference

Information Landscape

Profession : Skills : Career

Wednesday 3 June

**Church House Conference Centre, Dean's Yard, Westminster,
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NGLIS membership spans a wide spectrum of information professionals, including librarians, record managers, website managers, information architects and information managers working in policy or operational areas.

The theme of this year's conference will focus on where the information management profession can expect to be in 5 years' time. We will explore and reflect on the changes in technology, society and Government that are likely to radically re-shape the information landscape and focus on what the profession needs to do in order to seize these challenges and lead from the front.

The 2009 Conference will include workshops on key areas for development, such as information literacy, career management and web 2.0.

COST: £135.00 per person, includes a hot lunch and exhibition.
To register for the conference e-mail:
NGLIS.09@googlemail.com. Further details of workshop
choices will be sent out with the application form.

CONTACT: Lorna Goodey (2009 Conference Co-ordinator)
Telephone: 020 7276 8013
Email: NGLIS.09@googlemail.com

Information matters does matter

Peter Griffiths

CILIP President 2009

Peter Griffiths was formerly Head of Information at the Home Office

It's an exciting year in which to be President of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, and I'm pleased that the role has given me the opportunity to help take forward the agenda that is encapsulated in the title *Information matters* – the title of the document that the Knowledge Council published last autumn setting out the government's strategy for managing knowledge and information that is held in government.

It has, many will say, been a long time coming. My career spanned forty years, and of those I spent thirty-four in central government. I recall my first chief librarian telling me one day in the 1970s that I would soon come to realise that Librarians in government (and these were the days when the summit of our ambition was to reach Librarian 1, or Grade 7 in the new money) had the potential to do far more than run libraries. As she was also responsible for records management, she was primarily referring to this area; according to her, many of the opportunities that she described lay there, with its associated sense of history and permanence. Maybe despite this conversation, which I think over-simplified the close but complex relationship between archives and libraries, I became increasingly aware of the importance of information in government and wanted my work to reflect that.

Going back a quarter of a century, we thought that understanding had arrived when the government of the day launched the IT82 initiative (the clue is in the name), and the associated *Making a business of information* programme. This asked us to identify information resources that had tradable value, and to negotiate with the information publishing industry so that they could add value and generate income from our raw material. The initiative was intended both to open up government information (this being pre-Freedom of Information) and to provide information publishers with an additional revenue stream through whatever they added to our data. (I suppose this was an early form of what is now proposed as Government data mashing). At the time of IT82 (the clue is in the other half of the name) I was working in a department, the Overseas Development Administration, that had much unique information,

and we entered discussions with an online service provider in the hope that they would publish our database; but in the event I remember having to justify the outlay of what was then a considerable sum of money for the test database which we demonstrated at various events without any discernible interest by potential customers. From this we learned that it was indeed possible to make a business of government information, but only if you were a supplier rather than a government library trying to show some initiative. Some of the questions that were raised then seem to me still to be waiting for a solution, despite the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 and the needless sacrifice of hundreds of trees, hectolitres of ink and millions of electrons that have carried the discussion.

“... the public has some inkling of why information matters, but must rely on us to express that concern”

So, why is it that *Information matters*? As practitioners and others interested in government and its library and information services, you will need less telling than many others in the profession why it does. (That observation will lead me shortly to the first of a series of conclusions about how the profession takes this agenda forward). I think that the public has some inkling of why information matters, but must rely on us to express that concern. In the week of writing this article, the concern includes the launch of the ContactPoint database with the details of millions of children, and how you manage and police legitimate access to it; the news that the jobs website Monster.com has been hacked, raising concerns about potential compromise of personal data; and ongoing debate about social services in Hackney and other local authorities. The opportunity includes the interim *Digital Britain* report as well as *Information matters* and the Power of information initiative which continues to explore the potential for users to generate content using Web 2.0 and other new technologies. By the time that you read these words there will without doubt be new stories to replace (or rather supplement) these, but the current problems will not have gone away.

With the benefit of experience and hindsight, I know that the solutions to problems such as these can be developed with input from librarians, and from information and knowledge managers, but the average user of public library services is unlikely to recognise this; nor I suspect is the average public librarian fully aware of the potential application of their skills to these current problems of public administration, starting with their own local authority. This is something that I shall be telling them about over the next few months, but there is much scope for NGLIS and other organisations to join me in explaining that connection. There is scant public confidence at the moment in public sector information management, but some of that confidence can be readily restored by explanation and demonstration of improvements driven by professional skills – which is where we come back to the *Information matters* agenda.

Digital Britain

Digital Britain is a comprehensive action plan for the digital economy being developed by Lord Carter, the first Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting. The interim report, published in January 2009 identifies five objectives:

- Upgrading and modernising our digital networks
- A dynamic investment climate for UK digital content
- UK content for UK users: content of quality and scale to serve all UK citizens; in particular impartial news, comment and analysis
- Fairness and access for all: universal availability coupled with skills and information literacy
- Developing the infrastructure, skills and take-up to enable the widespread online delivery of public services and business interface with Government.

Digital Britain - the interim report is available at
http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/5631.aspx

Power of information

The power of information: an independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg was commissioned by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Hilary Armstrong, and published in June 2007. It found that by supporting the existing innovation of citizens, and facilitating greater access to information, government will be creating opportunities to empower individuals and communities to create solutions to improve their lives and make informed decisions.

In response to the review, the government established a Power of Information Taskforce. A beta version of its report was published at <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/> in February 2009 to allow comments to be incorporated before it is formally submitted.

Further papers and statements associated with the Power of information initiative can be found at
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/power_of_information.aspx

The *Information matters* agenda

The strategy document presents a high level approach together with some case studies (including activities that government librarians and information managers lead or have initiated). By the time you read this the Knowledge Council will be close to agreeing its initial programme of work to take forward the various strategic initiatives it wants to tackle in the coming business year. Strategies fail if they cannot be turned into actions, and if those actions cannot be turned into outcomes that are recognisably for the benefit of users – in this case, then, for public benefit. There are some elements that we can quite safely predict will appear in some form or another in the business plan; they include professionalism (standards, competencies, ethical considerations, and so on), leadership, training and communication, and working in partnership. In some areas we will need to point out, and to demonstrate, that we have required competencies but we may either have called them something else or have still to codify them within the Knowledge and Information Management or other Professional Skills for Government framework. (I'm thinking here of activities like information assurance, where there appears to be pressure to grow new professional functions when in fact a good number of government library and information specialists or knowledge and information management people already understand these areas of work and are successfully delivering in a number of departments).

Information matters has potential for new ways of delivering current services – the proposal for a common portal (see box) grew out of the workshop that I ran about 18 months ago for the Committee of Departmental Librarians, whilst the report considers a Central Knowledge Unit, and looks at the provision of guidance on online participation and social networking. (So far it's the library community that has been most successful in developing ways of helping departments to understand the phenomenon, and to see how their reputation is faring: there are echoes of IT82 in that commercial interest has so far failed to deliver a viable product that departments can buy to greater effect than having their library do the work.) *Information matters* looks at representation and sponsorship within departments; although LIS/KIM professionals now have much higher potential and Grade 7 or Grade 6 is no longer the pinnacle, what we need is champions at board level, champions who understand our business and understand its

20. Improved pan-government access to information held, for example, on individual departmental intranets or in libraries would maximise their value by allowing others to benefit from previous research and lessons learned from existing and past initiatives. The Knowledge Council and the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Council will explore the development of a common portal to provide a single access point to published (internally or externally) information.

Extract from *Information matters*

importance rather than champions who reluctantly took it on when they got to be the Board level IT spokesperson. It would be a fine ambition, and a good achievement, were the lead LIS / KIM practitioner in each department to be at Senior Civil Service level.

There is more. The report describes if it does not name activities such as horizon scanning and current awareness; it refers to projects such as digital continuity and pan-government enterprise search; and it looks at questions like support for Communities of Practice and where LIS / KIM teams should be brigaded within their organisations. (Although the team names have since changed, the Department for Culture Media and Sport team referred to as CIBU in the case study have recently brought the Library into the Evidence and Analysis function). In short, the problem is not so much finding any connection to the *Information matters* agenda as knowing what to leave out when seeking first priority actions.

Everything to play for

I said earlier that I would base my first conclusion on your understanding of what I have been saying in these notes. That conclusion is that there is everything to play for from the LIS / KIM professional's point of view, so we all must work together to explain, to spread the word and to demonstrate that the strategy is talking about aspects of a single profession that ranges from IT through librarianship to information, records and knowledge management. There are many partners to engage with but, as this is a once in a generation (or even two generations) opportunity that we now have, it is time for all to tell the same story – maybe from different perspectives, but the same story – and to tell it convincingly. It would be unfortunate to say the least were the skills, talents, and undoubted competence of so many colleagues to be overlooked by government strategists because they were unaware of us or did not understand what we do, or because we told differing stories about the importance of this work. The leadership for this falls naturally to government LIS and KIM specialists; it's one that I think they relish and will quickly adopt, but hesitation could well be fatal to our leadership role.

My second conclusion is that *Information matters* does matter. Never before has there been such a focus at such senior level and with such senior leadership on the areas where our skills lie. Never before have so many senior members of our professional group been engaged in cross-departmental initiatives in this area and with such high visibility. And whilst it's likely to be members of that group, and their immediate leadership teams who will be involved in the work of the Knowledge Council, Chief Technology Officer and Chief Information Officer councils, everyone in the profession (and those who work closely with us) can contribute by engaging policy makers, other

professionals – especially those such as social researchers, statisticians, lawyers who also work with and interpret government information – to explain the importance of the initiative and the essential role that LIS / KIM professionals are playing in it.

Maybe the most important point is that there is an end consumer of these skills, the public, whose interest is at the forefront of our professional values and aims, and who deserve a whole lot better than they have apparently been getting until now. That indicates that both within government and more generally we professionals need to engage, need to explain to colleagues and then train or guide them in improving the position, and need to make both our competencies and our code of ethics immediately visible to both consumers and guardians of public sector information. Then perhaps we can play our full and proper part in the effective and proper management of information.

I will be raising awareness as much as I can during my CILIP Presidency. Not only do CILIP's Groups (The Government Libraries and Information Group, of course, and others) have an interest, but the geographical branches that bring together people from across sectors, and the devolved Nations, where there are additional complexities about managing information due to their different structures and responsibilities, all need to have their awareness raised and their understanding completed. Colleagues in NGLIS and other organisations can play their part by maintaining their own awareness and sharing their knowledge with others in their organisations and in their places of work through formal events and informal "water cooler" discussions.

I'm sure that NGLIS will be contributing to the debate, and look forward to that. 🙏

Information matters: building government's capability in managing knowledge and information is available at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/services/publications/information-matters-strategy.pdf>

NGLIS contacts

For details of all NGLIS committee members and departmental representatives, visit www.nglis.org.uk/contacts.htm.



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Below are the most likely reasons to contacting us, with the appropriate contact.

To ...

Change your membership details

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You can also update your details on the NGLIS activity forum at www.activityforum.co.uk/clubs/index.cfm

Publicise events

By email in Network Online

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Get involved in organising NGLIS activities.

Get in touch with ...

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An interview with Andrew Stott

Lorna Goodey

Food Standards Agency

The chair of the Knowledge Council, Andrew Stott, spoke to Lorna Goodey of the Food Standards Agency and NGLIS, prior to the publication of the *Information matters* delivery plan which sets out a detailed action plan for implementing the recommendations of the Government's Knowledge and Information Management (GKIM) strategy published in November 2008.

NGLIS: Information Matters is an ambitious programme of work – how can the Knowledge Council deliver the agenda when individual Departments manage their budgets to their individual priorities?

AS: Yes, it is ambitious, and we're realistic that time and resources are scarce. The only way we can deliver the strategy is by aligning it with department's existing priorities. So where a department needs to do a particular KIM activity to meet its business objectives, it will lead on that particular area for government. In order to identify common concerns and aspirations we asked individual departments to tell us their "top 3" priorities for the year.

One common challenge, for example, is working collaboratively across government, but there are similar issues within departments themselves. For example, as part of its wider KIM Strategy, one central department is exploring exactly what these issues are and how they can be addressed. The department will draw on the expertise of colleagues in other departments to deliver the most effective tools, infrastructure and culture - applicable to all of government – that support better collaborative working.

The Knowledge Council is only 30 people and we can't deliver this Strategy on our own – nor would we want to. We're working hard to join up with others who are involved in KIM activities, such as Central Sponsor of Information Assurance (responsible for implementing data handling procedures) and the Chief Information Officers Council. It's worth saying too, that the strategy and delivery plan is designed to help government departments develop the frameworks and tools to raise capabilities in KIM but does not seek to duplicate or address the specifics of existing projects. So, with

Andrew Stott: biography

Andrew is UK Government Deputy Chief Information Officer based in the Cabinet Office. He is responsible for the overall direction of the Transformational Government and IT Strategies and for the Service Transformation, Identity and Data Sharing, Supplier Management and Technical Policy workstreams. He chairs the Chief Technical Officers' Council, the Knowledge Council and the ICT Collaborative Category Procurement Board, as well as being a member of the CIO Council and its Supply Management Board, the Government/Industry Strategic Supply Board, the Delivery Council, the Location Council and the Government Strategic Marketing Advisory Board. Andrew took up his current position in September 2004. He was previously Modernisation Director at the Driver, Vehicle and Operator Group in the Department for Transport.



After graduating in Mathematics and Law from the University of Cambridge Andrew has worked in a variety of public sector bodies including the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Prison Service, The Post Office and The Cabinet Office. About half his career has been in IT strategy or delivery roles, and about half in policy, finance and business delivery.

respect to Data Handling Procedures in Government, the strategy supports accounting officers in managing information risk and in meeting the actions set out in the report to improve data security.

NGLIS: What is your view of the future of the KIM profession as a specialist role in government – what opportunities or threats does it pose?

AS: The Knowledge Council's professionalism programme isn't an end in itself – it's all about building capability. We can see from the other, more established professions in government – law, finance, HR - that by building professional identity and a strong sense of community, we can achieve more.

Specifically on opportunities: If the profession speaks with one, clear voice, it

will be able to articulate the value of better knowledge and information management to senior decision makers – and get Knowledge and Information genuinely considered and treated as an asset. It will also be able to influence the skills of the people coming into the profession – by working with higher education institutions to ensure that the skills they're teaching are aligned with the needs of the profession. And it will enable us to develop a coherent "people strategy" for KIM within government – which means ensuring that everyone working within the profession has the support they need to do their job to the best of their ability and to progress their career. This might be training and development opportunities with a clear understanding of the skills they need, and networking and knowledge sharing.

Government KIM practitioners can register for access to the GKIM Network wiki (<http://gkimn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>), our virtual community, which contains a range of resources including job vacancies, and supports networking and sharing good practice across government. This is about ensuring that we have a pipeline of future KIM leaders to help us address tomorrow's challenges.

With regard to potential threats: we are determined that defining the profession more clearly should not lead to a "silo" situation where people are expected to commit to one profession for the duration of their career and believe that a permeable membrane between our profession and others will actually benefit us. We, therefore, welcome generalists who perhaps only spend a year or two working in KIM and then move on to something else just as we value those who are specialists (and perhaps have a qualification) in a particular discipline within KIM. A professions-led approach should improve the outcomes that we're generating for government and this doesn't mean becoming an exclusive entity.

NGLIS: Leadership is key – what behaviours would you expect to see at the senior level in government organisations who take information management seriously (not just in response to the Information Security breaches or the recently published draft Security Protection Framework (SPF))?

AS: Quite rightly, senior minds in government have recently been focused on managing information risk – and they will be for some time to come. Government has recognised the challenges in this area and has a clear programme of work underway to overcome them and is working hard to rebuild confidence in its ability to get this right. But the data handling review took great care not to focus exclusively on issues of risk and security. It is our responsibility as KIM leaders to ensure that our senior leaders have an awareness of the prizes that can be won by getting it right – be they public good in terms of better services to citizens, economic through the greater re-use of the public sector's information or through greater efficiency by sharing

knowledge, working collaboratively to save time and resources, learning from the successes and failure of previous experience by capturing this information and making it available.

At the moment I'm seeing senior leaders working hard to tackle information risk. Many are also seeing the possibilities of better KIM in delivering their business outcomes. It's our responsibility to make those increasingly apparent and easily understood across government. Every organisation that succeeds in KIM has a senior advocate. Leadership is critical in building the knowledge and information culture that we want to see. So I'd also expect to see senior colleagues walking the walk.

NGLIS: How do smaller organisations fit into the *Information matters* agenda?

AS: The remit for the Knowledge Council and the KIM strategy includes executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) as well as central government departments. Research carried out last summer on government collaboration found that the further away from the centre of government the more difficult it was to collaborate, so it is important that those bodies are represented. Local Government have some innovation around information management and we need to capture those experiences.

Smaller government bodies can make a contribution through the Knowledge Council, although with 30 members it is already quite big, and expanding it to give a seat to all the smaller organisations would make it unwieldy. The best course is to do what we already do for the Chief Information Officer and Chief Technology Officer Councils: look to each Knowledge Council member to bring together the knowledge and information managers in the agencies and NDPBs associated with their departmental "family" to represent their views, as well as those in the main department in Knowledge Council discussions. As well as this, hold periodic events, ideally annually for this wider community, focused on information exchange, knowledge and best-practice sharing and networking. This way, we would welcome and encourage the wider 'family' to help implement the strategy.

NGLIS: Has your perception of the information profession in Government changed since you began chairing the Knowledge Council?

If you look at corporate functions like IT, HR and finance, they're acknowledged as professions in their own right, whereas KIM was seen as a number of small disciplines and professions, some very mature like librarians with a defined structure and framework, and other less so.

The creation of the Knowledge Council gives KIM a voice that has been missing and is now recognised as a cohesive corporate function and core

business service influencing board level decisions.

It has brought together high calibre people from across government with a range of professions and skills. They advocate building a community and culture that encourages KIM practitioners to think of themselves as part of a single profession, multi-skilled and able to apply those skills to a variety of roles.

NGLIS: Do you think we will eventually be a paperless government?

AS: For the last 20 years or so, a lot of technologies deployed in government and other enterprises have tended to mirror the way we have traditionally worked with paper. So there is a great reliance on email and in some ways we use it like we used it to write letters. Clearly, once you digitise information it is easier to pass around, secure and account for but before we see the paperless office we must see an improvement in the creation and storage of information, for example: images scanned, stored and retrievable now; in the future, in digital formats, then rich digital formats.

One other aspect of the paperless government is “the green IT strategy”. It should be a disincentive to print a document out – we must move beyond the e-mail model to collaboration with tighter restrictions on printing.

NGLIS: What challenges for managing information are future technologies bringing and what do you propose is the best way to control or tackle this?

AS: The main challenge is how we now use the new developing web 2.0 technologies to move on to a second generation of technology support - supporting a much flatter culture of knowledge and information sharing. It will mean moving away from email into genuine collaborative working tools, discussion groups, wikis, blogs and so on, which are all different variants on a more participative style. Some interesting work is around searching across government departments. The internet and use of search engines has led to a culture where people expect to search across a wide network of information. So we need to work across departmental boundaries more than ever before and as such, we are currently piloting, Civil Pages, a secure civil service site that is both a directory and collaboration tool. The site aims to enable people to find other people in government who might have relevant experience or skills, make it easier to contact them and work across departments and agencies in a secure environment for example, sharing drafts of documents, arranging meetings - basically communicating well and generally working well together.

The future problems won't be quite like the past problems but we need search technologies that can make that link and pick out the pages that are

relevant. Furthermore, we need to work on greater mobile technologies that improve the public servants' technology at the frontline - allowing them to act there and then on the data they're receiving. This ultimately enables them to make an immediate promise of action to the citizen that can be fulfilled. Also, we need to really look at how we link up government more securely, We're already making a substantial investment in Government Connect that will extend the idea of a secure network out to local authorities. This is a key part of how we implement the data handling review. However, other elements will be to move to the next generation of Public Service network which is much more about the authentication of the individual and what services they are enabled to access in their role, and much less about reflecting in the network the old departmental boundaries. Increasingly the really difficult public service challenges are those which require multi-agency intervention.

The benefits of getting this right are, however, huge. For government it's about serving citizens better and doing so at a lower cost. Plus good information management drives evidence based policy development which is increasingly important. And for the citizen it is about placing information in their hands resulting in more personalised services and greater choice.👤

As well as Andrew Stott, Network would like to thank Mel Hide and Amalie Kjaergaard of The National Archives who arranged and helped prepare this interview for publication.

Crunch time: information provision at the FSA Information Centre

Mark Faulkner

Financial Services Authority

Mark is Team Leader for the Information Centre at the Financial Services Authority, a post he has been in for two years. Previously, he managed the legal library at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Needless to say, things have been a tad busy over the last year.

Thinking back to what the Information Centre team has done and how we have tackled the situation, I am struck by just how much fire-fighting we have carried out in meeting demands. The number of enquiries has not increased per se, but they have become more complicated. More so than any other time, our supervisors in the Financial Services Authority require their information and data in real time, from sources we either do not subscribe or have limited access to; they want more information, not less, tailored but broad enough to cover all eventualities.

This has really stretched the team (and our budget - both limited in resources at the best of times). The Information Centre is a team of four, serving a customer-base of approximately 2,500. It is little wonder that fighting fires is my overriding memory of the year just passed. The same too for our colleagues in the Consumer Contact Centre: they saw their calls from members of the public increase by 5000, from approximately 17,000 – 23,000 in August / September 2008. And their enquirers are more emotional too.

New services to meet new demand

With all the immediate and urgent demand we have had to meet, my initial feeling is almost shame that maybe we haven't been more revolutionary in finding the time to find ways to meet that demand more efficiently. Yet in fact, the Information Centre has brought in or is developing several new services to support our FSA colleagues.

The team has ensured that it is contactable outside normal office hours.

About the Financial Services Authority

The FSA is a statutory body set up under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. The Act sets out our four statutory objectives which are supported by a set of principles of good regulation which we must have regard to when discharging our functions:

- market confidence: maintaining confidence in the financial system;
- public awareness: promoting public understanding of the financial system;
- consumer protection: securing the appropriate degree of protection for consumers; and
- the reduction of financial crime: reducing the extent to which it is possible for a business to be used for a purpose connected with financial crime.

The FSA has set out its aims under three broad headings:

- promoting efficient orderly and fair markets;
- helping retail consumers achieve a fair deal; and
- improving our business capability and effectiveness

The FSA is a company financed by the financial services industry, charging fees to all authorised firms that carry out activities the FSA regulates with a Board appointed by the Treasury.

Around September / October 2008 we started hearing horror stories of supervisors sleeping at their desks overnight. The Information Centre employed a team Blackberry meaning that colleagues can e-mail or telephone enquiries at any time, and we routinely check this in evenings and at weekends.

The situation has demanded a major overview of our online subscriptions. Colleagues are not traders but real time information is still a desire in some sectors, particularly for news and commentary. There would be nothing more embarrassing should anything be missed. In particular, extra Bloomberg requirements and expertise has been requested - an additional half a dozen Bloomberg terminals needing to be purchased for the newly formed Prudential Risk Department, which works on areas such as credit risk and market liquidity. It has been a steep learning curve for all concerned, though our account managers come into their own in the support they provide. Since

October last year the Information Centre and Bloomberg have worked closely together to provide monthly training sessions for all staff.

The rating agencies we subscribe to: Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's have all been vigorously utilised. So much so, that the demand for Moody's reports has more than doubled, rocketing past the allocated number of reports we can download as part of our subscription. This has been the trend for other online sources too, including Standard & Poor's for additional structured finance modules we otherwise did not subscribe to; extended allocation to Dun & Bradstreet for company reports, and requesting access to additional entitlements in Reuters Knowledge Investment Management for broker reports. All of these situations have required careful negotiation with our suppliers in trying to keep our costs down in the expectation that we can have all of these additional services for nothing - a tall order, but one which will see some development in the early months of 2009.

One project that is currently at an early discussion and scoping stage is development of a portal to be made available via the FSA's intranet. The plan is to provide essential information relating to each of the major banks, for example, shares, FTSE Index performance, news, commentary and directorships to the whole of the FSA. Currently, we are in discussion with two potential providers, online aggregators InfoDesk and Alacra, who will channel our online content meeting the above requirements to FSA departments. Draft pages have been provided by the two aggregator services and presented to senior managers, who in February 2009 gave approval and funding for the go-ahead for a six-month trial of the two services. We are now assessing our online subscriptions and talking to suppliers about our needs, working out how much this is likely to cost as a majority of our subscriptions are limited access. Focus groups with key Information Centre users will be held (at time of writing planned for April 2009) so we can establish specifically what sort of information is required. This is an exciting project and one that I am not aware has been carried out elsewhere in other government departments, although if my research into this has missed you out, then please do get in touch so that we may share experiences.

Moving into 2009, the Information Centre will continue to be under the pressure it is now accustomed to (at what precise point we became accustomed, I couldn't possibly say). There is something about the information professional's mentality, isn't there, that just gets on and does what it is supposed to, while looking out for more ways of helping those in need. There will be plenty of challenges ahead but there cannot be a more exciting time to be working in and developing an information service to a demanding but grateful audience. 🍷

The "credit crunch": a bibliography

Mark Faulkner

Mark describes some of the books and internet sites that have been the most used at the FSA Information Centre in recent months.

Books

The crunch: how greed and incompetence sparked the credit crisis by Alex Brummer, Random House Business Books, January 2009, ISBN-13: 978-1847940094

Award-winning journalist Alex Brummer painstakingly traces the course of the credit crisis from its origins in the US "subprime" market to its explosion on to the international scene.

The origin of financial crises: central banks, credit bubbles and the efficient market fallacy by George Cooper, Harriman House Publishing, August 2008, ISBN-13: 978-1905641857

A compelling analysis of the forces behind today's economic crisis.

The subprime solution: how today's global financial crisis happened, and what to do about it by R Shiller, Princeton University Press, July 2008, ISBN-13: 978-0691139296

This powerful book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how we got into the subprime mess - and how we can get out.

When markets collide: investment strategies for the age of global economic change by Mohamed El-Erian, McGraw-Hill Professional, July 2008, ISBN-13: 978-0071592819

Never before have investors and policy makers been beset by so many conflicting messages about the economy and the markets. While most pundits dismiss the conflicts as "noise" in the system, Mohamed A. El-Erian, avers that conflicting messages signal deep, structural changes and realignments that are radically redefining the investment game.

The ascent of money: a financial history of the world, Niall Ferguson, Allen Lane October 2008, ISBN-13: 978-1846141065

Niall Ferguson shows that finance is the foundation of human progress, that financial history is the essential back-story behind all history. The evolution of credit and debt was as important as any technological innovation in the rise of civilization, from ancient Babylon to the silver mines of Bolivia.

And a curve ball (or even bell curve) that is just as relevant...

The black swan: the impact of the highly improbable by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Penguin, February 2008, ISBN-13: 978-0141034591

Why are all forecasters con-artists? Why should you never run for a train or read a newspaper? Black swans are the random events that underlie our lives, from bestsellers to world disasters. Their impact is huge; they're impossible to predict; yet after they happen we always try to rationalise them. A rallying cry to ignore the "experts", *The black swan* shows us how to stop trying to predict everything – and take advantage of uncertainty.

Internet

Moneydeclared: from the UK's financial watchdog (FSA)
(<http://www.moneydeclared.fsa.gov.uk/>)

Moneydeclared is the FSA web site for worried consumers and is straight talking in informing you of the best products and services on offer.

BBC News: the downturn
(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/business/2008/downturn/default.stm)

All the news on one web site. Also includes helpful guides on how to cope, an extremely detailed chronology of the crisis, plus Robert Peston's blog.

Bloomberg.com
(<http://www.bloomberg.com/>)

The Bloomberg web site provides a lot of free information without you having to subscribe to the full service. Up to the minute news, shares for the Americas, Asia and Europe, plus links to Bloomberg Radio and Podcasts are all on offer.

Financial Times
(<http://www.ft.com/home/uk>)

The FSA's Information Centre subscribed to Premium access following the FT's removal from third party news vendors, since when over 600 colleagues have created personal logins. 🗑️

"Twice bless'd": how mentoring can foster your career

Jan Parry and Sue Smith

Home Office and HM Revenue and Customs

Jan has recently changed the Home Office library into a single enquiry point for information legislation, records management and library services and now manages communications on Transformational Government and the new Home Office Intranet. Sue is a knowledge worker in HM Revenue and Customs.

Mentoring can bring rewards for mentor and mentee. Jan reflects on how informal mentors - Kate McNicholl and Sheila Pantry - encouraged her at the start of a successful and varied career. Sue provides some tips and resources to get you started.

I sat on my commuter train to London and thought about how it all began...

In September 1986 I returned to the civil service in a new role as a part time Administrative Officer in the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate Library at the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) in Bootle.

Sheila Pantry OBE BA FCLIP comments:

"One of the joys of being an information manager is that sometimes someone appears on the "radar screen" who seems to have the potential to make a really effective information professional. Jan answered our advert for part time clerical work, and it was apparent that here was a person with much long term ability waiting to flower."

I had been warned that the library was very quiet and that the people were "different". It wasn't and they weren't! I thoroughly enjoyed it from day one. Dealing with enquiries from all types of people, recording journal receipt on Kardex systems, shelving journals and reports, and searching the computerised catalogue was all new to me and I enjoyed coming into work every day.

Kate McNichol (now Force Records Manager for Merseyside Police):

I'm not sure I would have even recognised that what I was doing was mentoring – in my eyes that was something that information professionals did who had a lot more experience than I had at the

Top Tips for Mentoring

- **Choose the right person** Sometimes the match of mentor and mentee might not be right. If you don't make a connection after two or three attempts accept it and move on.
- **Communicate** – Listening is vital to the success of the relationship. You can't help your mentee develop and grow if you don't listen carefully to the person you are mentoring. Ask questions to assess strengths and areas for development and keep in touch to maintain momentum.
- **Critical Friend** – Mentors should challenge and explore issues with mentees to enable them to work through options, address uncomfortable issues and to reach for high personal goals in a friendly and supportive environment, whilst giving constructive feedback.
- **Sharing Experience** - Mentors need to share experience to provide advice and guidance to their mentee. This needs to be balanced with empowering your mentee to find an appropriate route forward with their own issues that they feel comfortable with.
- **Set goals and guidelines** – Be clear with your mentee from the outset about how your relationship will work. Set out parameters and agree ground rules. Ensure that the goal setting comes from the mentee and that they are realistic and achievable.
- **Take notes** – Agree with your mentee about how you will chart and record progress. Simple notes are often all that is needed to enable the mentee to monitor their progress and growth.
- **Confidentiality** – Agreement from the outset that what is said between you and your mentee is confidential except in very special circumstances.
- **Be honest about mistakes** – Both mentor and mentee should share failures as well as successes. Reviewing something that hasn't gone well can provide powerful learning. It demonstrates barriers can be overcome and this will strengthen your relationship.
- **Help build networks** – The mentor will be an important gateway to the mentee to help them make introductions to new contacts and people that can help them on their development journey.
- **Help in understanding how the organisation works** – The mentor should share knowledge of people within your organisation and explain how an organisation or social system works, guiding the mentee through it.

time (4 years). The truth was that the demand for the library's services was growing; there were only the two of us and I didn't have any hang-ups about what was and was not "professional" work.

I did not consider myself ambitious but wanted to get promotion to earn more money. The Librarian, Kate McNichol, told me that promotion to Assistant Librarian could only be obtained by having a degree or Post Graduate qualification. Spookily, about a week later there was an advertisement for part-time degree courses in Librarianship & Information Management at Liverpool Polytechnic (now Liverpool John Moores University). I discussed this with Kate who was very supportive and I decided to apply. The Head of HSE Library & Information, Sheila Pantry, who was also Chair of the Circle of State Librarians (now NGLIS) at the time, was also extremely supportive.

Sheila:

"Regular contact with Jan made Kate and I urge her to take some qualifications that would enable her to have a fulfilling career with opportunities and challenges."

For personal reasons I could not apply right away but, after returning from Maternity Leave (a second daughter) in 1988, a degree was back on my agenda. This time I asked if I could take unpaid leave for three years to do the full time degree course. Sheila supported this wholeheartedly and Kate helped me prepare for a completely different life of studying. It was very hard living on my husband's salary (£10K per annum) and my grant (1.5K per annum) with two children to look after and I had to be very strict with our money and my time - coming home after lectures and seminars, looking after my toddler daughter in the afternoons then studying every evening and on a Sunday. Kate and Sheila did not neglect me. Kate kept in touch regularly, was always willing to listen and was always supportive, and encouraging in times of doubt. Sheila was always interested in my progress. They supported me by allowing me free use of the HSE library facilities and I was able to return to work during the holidays.

Sheila:

These blocks of work convinced both Kate and I that Jan should be continually encouraged to be involved in a variety of tasks in the information services to give Jan an overview of the range of work.

Their support, along with my husband's, was invaluable in order to get through the cynicism of some of my administrative colleagues, the snobbery of some professionals about the "poacher turned game keeper", my unsupportive parents, and my own lack of confidence.

Surprisingly, or maybe not, during University I discovered myself and realised

I could do things that I had never previously thought about. After graduation in 1991 I secured a permanent position on promotion to Assistant Librarian at the Department of Health in London. I moved my husband and daughters down to Kingston upon Thames for a new life in the South.

I would never have imagined I would get this far in my career and use my transferable professional skills to manage projects and programmes, implement briefing, press and parliamentary question systems, attend meetings at No 10 Downing Street, speak at International conferences, organise conferences for the Home Secretary and, of course, be a proud Chair of NGLIS.

Kate:

Sharing knowledge and expertise and encouraging others to follow their dreams can have the most wonderful (and unexpected) consequences for both parties.

Later in my career, I have had a more formal mentoring relationship, but I did not find this as effective as the more informal support that Kate and Sheila provided. I have also had people who elected themselves as my mentor and I used to end up feeling very negative about myself. On these occasions I had to disengage myself from the mentoring! I've kept in touch with Kate and Sheila throughout and will always regard as mentors and friends and I hope I have done them proud.

Resources

Books

The mentoring pocketbook by G Alfred, B Garvey and R Smith, Management Pocketbooks, 1998.

Everyone needs a mentor by D Clutterbuck, Institute of Personnel Management, 2nd Edition, 1991

Mentoring in action by D Megginson and D Clutterbuck, Kogan Page, 1995


Websites

MindTools: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_72.htm

MentorSET: <http://www.mentorset.org.uk/pages/mentoring.htm>

The Coaching & Mentoring Network: <http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/>

Committee of Departmental Librarians

CDL Guideline 14 is about mentoring, and the CDL maintains a list of people willing to mentor. Both can be found on the Government Knowledge and Information Management Network (GKIMN) wiki in the Librarians Community pages. 

Making NICE guidance easier to find using a corporate taxonomy

Marion Spring

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

Marion is Senior Information Specialist at NICE, where her responsibilities include the development of the corporate taxonomy. She has previously been a knowledge manager at a Public Health Observatory and web services manager at an acute hospital trust.

This paper (and Michael Warner's, which follows) are adapted from talks given to a Network in the North discussion forum on controlled vocabularies, held in Sheffield last October.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) provides national guidance on promoting good health and preventing and treating ill health producing guidance in three areas of health: clinical practice, health technologies and public health.

A main route for accessing guidance documents is through the NICE website; therefore guidance needs to be easily searched and reliably retrieved by both professionals (predominantly the NHS) and the public.

NICE has an information framework to ensure information is managed effectively, organised in a way that can easily be shared with other organisations, and in compliance with Government standards. This provides a basis to structure and index guidance on the website to improve its accessibility; key work includes a corporate taxonomy and

Types of controlled vocabulary

Taxonomies provide a hierarchical browsing structure allowing the user to navigate from general to more specific subjects; **thesauri** have synonym and related term relationships as well, helping searchers to find the most appropriate terms for their needs. The NICE taxonomy combines taxonomy and thesaurus features to support navigation and searching.

The NICE taxonomy provides easy navigation

NICE guidance by topic

Want to read our guidance on a topic?

To find out more about guidance NICE has published or is developing on a specific health topic, choose from the list below.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Blood and immune system | ■ Injuries, accidents and wounds |
| ■ Cancer | ■ Mental health and behavioural conditions |
| ■ Cardiovascular | ■ Mouth and dental |
| ■ Central nervous system | ■ Musculoskeletal |
| ■ Diagnostic procedures | ■ Public health |
| ■ Digestive system | ■ Respiratory |
| ■ Ear and nose | ■ Skin |
| ■ Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic | ■ Surgical procedures |
| ■ Eye | ■ Therapeutic procedures |
| ■ Gynaecology, pregnancy and birth | ■ Urogenital |
| ■ Infectious diseases | |

The illness and conditions facet of the taxonomy provides a browsing structure for the website, as shown here.

The taxonomy is polyhierarchical - that is some terms appear under more than one heading: users can find skin cancer, for example, by looking under Cancer or Skin.

metadata for the website. Seventeen metadata elements have been developed and the taxonomy is used to index the subject metadata field.

Developing the taxonomy

We established a taxonomy development group, established a project plan and contracted a consultant to conduct background research and make recommendations for a foundation taxonomy, including the basic structure. Other considerations at the planning stage included selecting appropriate thesaurus/taxonomy management software; implementing the indexing both retrospectively and in the future; and developing processes for updating the taxonomy.

Key Features

The taxonomy is organized into seven facets including diseases, illness and conditions, treatments and procedures, public health, settings, population groups and health specialities. The terms are arranged in hierarchical order with up to 4 sub-levels; the illness and conditions facet provides a browsing structure to the website (see picture above). After selecting top level headings such as Cardiovascular conditions the user can browse sub-headings such as angina, heart failure or hypertension.

Synonyms to support search

The taxonomy includes synonyms to make it easier for searchers to retrieve full results, including proprietary names such as tamiflu, for the generic name oseltamivir.

Search results

You searched for: **tamiflu**

■ Influenza (prophylaxis) - amantadine, oseltamivir and zanamivir

Description: The summary of the published technology appraisal on Influenza (prophylaxis) - amantadine, oseltamivir and zanamivir. It links to the published guidance and key documents.

The taxonomy is poly-hierarchical; this means that a term can appear in more than one place, facilitating users to reach the same information through a variety of routes. It contains synonym relationships for improved retrieval. For example the terms sexually transmitted diseases, venereal diseases, STDs, STIs and VD are all included as synonyms or non-preferred terms of sexually transmitted infections; similarly drug brand names are included as synonyms of their respective generic names.

The NICE Taxonomy is a classification scheme providing a consistent language across NICE to support website navigation and the efficient search and retrieval of information. It is not intended to represent clinical knowledge, but rather to represent the body of guidance that has been published.

Improvements

The taxonomy has improved the searchability of the NICE website by providing subject indexing terms for guidance documents, as they are indexed with at least one term for topic, setting, population and health/medical speciality (where appropriate). Synonyms ensure a standardised vocabulary and help non-technical users retrieve guidance, while improving the accuracy of search results. As guidance is arranged according to a hierarchical taxonomy it is possible to guide the user from broad to more specific subjects providing a browsing structure. 📄

For more on the NICE website development, see http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutnice/nicewebsitedevelopment/nice_website_development.jsp.

Contact: Marion.Spring@nice.org.uk

Tagging made easy: a Ministry of Defence case study

Michael Warner

Ministry of Defence

Michael is metadata policy and taxonomy adviser at the Ministry of Defence. He is a member of the Public Sector Information Domain Steering Group and the Metadata and Vocabulary Working Group and chair of Taxonomy in the Public Sector Working Group.

The Local Government Association may have recently included "taxonomy" in a list of jargon terms that should be avoided to communicate effectively, yet taxonomies, as part of a metadata framework, are crucial for information discovery, better interoperability, management of resources and determining the provenance and authentication for a resource.

At the Ministry of Defence, the UK Defence Terminology, which is the umbrella name for the agreed UK Defence Taxonomy and the UK Defence Thesaurus, provides the controlled values for the metadata element's subject category, describing folder content, and keywords for the documents being stored. However, to be effective, the Terminology must be used consistently and accurately.

The MoD is just too large for labelling (indexing) to be done centrally. The standard working environment is SharePoint, and this is the point at which the department is improving metadata entry. Additionally, it is incumbent on every user of SharePoint and content management and electronic document and record management systems (EDRMS) to assign the minimum set of metadata to a resource. Unfortunately some vendors don't aid this labelling process. The EDRMS rolled out required the user to select the metadata from one of 47 elements and sub elements which meant scrolling down three screen pages! Users had no idea which metadata fields to populate, nor the rationale behind them. Not surprisingly, the quality of indexing suffered.

So the UK Defence Terminology team developed a solution to not only ease the labelling process and improve quality, but also to enable users to quickly select from some 20,000 keywords available in the UK Defence Thesaurus.

Users saving to a folder now generate a metadata summary template (Illustrated opposite). The template can be customised enabling a business to

The meta-engine summary template generated when users save to a folder. Only mandatory fields are displayed, and some, such as Author, Business owner and (file) Name are auto-populated.

meta-engine
meta-Engine: 20050622 R New document with text v1-0

Save and Close | Delete | Check Out | Version History | Discuss | Edit in Microsoft Office Word

Summary | Source | Content | Security | FOI

Name * 20050622 R New document with text v1-0 .doc

Title New document with text

UK Protective Marking * RESTRICTED

Subject Category * Information architecture, Metadata

Subject Keywords Information management

Author (Originator) * Collins, Peter Mr

Created (Originated) * 6/22/2005

Business Owner * Director General Information

Status Draft

Document Version 1.0

Fileplan ID DGInfo-6-3-1_IX_Information Architecture

* indicates a required field

add metadata fields. Tabs are used to display the metadata elements in logical groupings. Security protective marking remains a manual input.

The subject category is inherited from the administrator's one time association with the relevant taxonomy term(s) to describe the folder content. The taxonomy subject and or the thesaurus keyword is easily populated from either a short default list of terms based on previous user entries, or else the keyword is readily accessible via a search button (Illustrated below). It is

The detailed view of the UK Defence Taxonomy is easily accessed through the buttons on the auto-summary template. It provides a view of the hierarchy and scope notes of the terms, allowing users to navigate to and select the most appropriate terms for the files they save.

metaEngine
UK Defence Taxonomy

A description of the UK Defence Taxonomy and its uses.

Search for Subjects containing Find

Search Results | Browse | Favourites

- Operations and operational training
- Organisations their role and history
- People categories
- Personnel
- Procurement
- Research science and technology
- Safety environment and fire
 - Accidents incidents and their management
 - Fire and fire safety
 - Safety
 - SEF policy and management
- Sustainable development and environment
- Security and intelligence
- Support services
- Timelines
- Training and education

Accidents incidents and their management
Unplanned events which have led to, or could lead to, death, injury, illness or a dangerous event. (ISP 442)

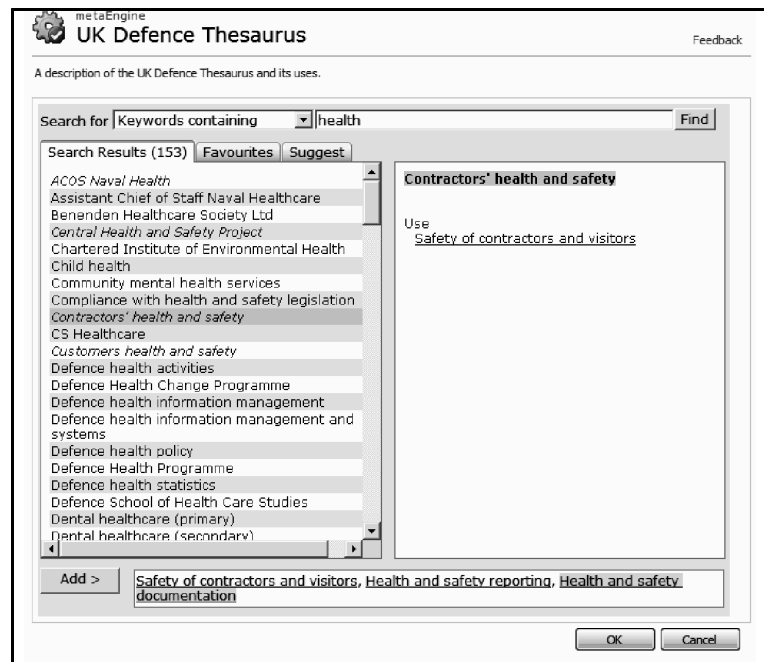
Broader
Safety environment and fire

Narrower
[Accident and incident management](#)
[Accident and incident reporting](#)
[Aviation accidents and incidents](#)
[Industrial and commercial accidents and incidents](#)
[Maritime accidents and incidents](#)
[Munitions accidents and incidents](#)
[Nuclear accidents](#)
[Transport accidents \(public\)](#)

Remove < Accidents incidents and their management

OK Cancel

Users can look for keywords that either start with or contain a particular word. Non-preferred terms are displayed in italics. If the user selects a non-preferred term, the preferred keyword is assigned as the metadata value.



also possible to navigate to other terms using the relationships that appear in the detailed view. The taxonomy is easy to search, and contains synonyms, or non-preferred terms, of the keywords (Illustrated above).

The software solution is a business configurable enhancement that simplifies and automates metadata entry. It is also able to exploit enterprise data sources, such as directories and project systems. Users are able to select column values from the Outlook address book and can pick departments from an organisation hierarchy. The solution also presents short lists of appropriate metadata values depending on the SharePoint site or document library. Statistical evidence indicates not only the thesaurus terms used but also which person labelled the content. This helps to inform the Defence Terminology team, who can then further develop the controlled vocabulary to meet business needs.

This solution has been well received across the Department. A typical quote from MoD staff is:

“Before meta-engine, this was a cumbersome process for publishers as keywords had to be copied and pasted from separate web pages. Now publishers can easily search or browse for terms and select as required.”

The labelling solution therefore reduces the time it takes for users to assign metadata, improves the quality, search results, and potential for document re-use. So invest for the future and add metadata the easier way! 🗣️

For further information, contact Michael.Warner503@mod.uk

The cult of the amateur and the information professional

Karen Lewis

Department of Health

Karen is based in the Knowledge and Information team at the Department of Health, where she has been working on a wide range of KIM initiatives since 2002. Prior to this she worked in various incarnations of what is now Communities and Local Government and a spell at the Cabinet Office setting up Policy Hub.

In her review of *The cult of the amateur*, Karen argues that there is still a place for the information professional amid the Web 2.0 explosion of user-generated content.

In *The cult of the amateur*, Andrew Keen argues that we are moving towards a world in which professional and expert skills are increasingly undervalued and dismissed; everyone, with a bit of reading up on “Wikipedia” and watching a video clip on “YouTube”, thinks they can become their own expert. Even worse, Keen sees a world where majority opinion counts more than a scientific fact and vested interests manipulate user spaces such as “MySpace”. For him the Web 2.0 world is one of chaos, where free market forces and mob rule together are contributing to our economic and cultural destruction. His views may appear alarmist and extreme and the first edition of his book was subject to protest and derision from many quarters but I feel anyone reading with an open mind, whilst questioning some of his claims, will come away with the feeling that others resonate uncomfortably. Given the undoubted element of truth in his vision, how is Web 2.0 impacting on the world of information, and on our role in that world?

A new twist to information overload

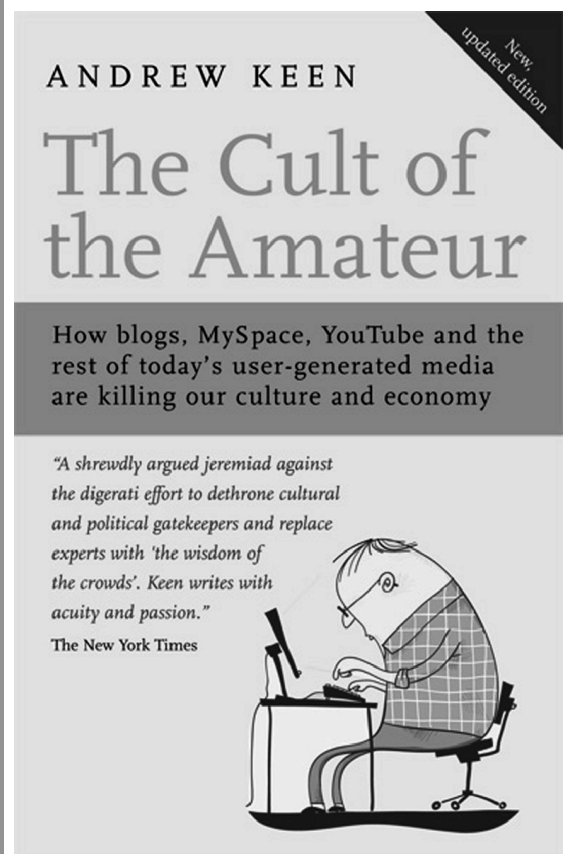
Even before the arrival of blogs and wikis, the internet had already made its mark on the sheer volume of information generated in today’s world. Developments such as access to online databases and catalogues and the growing availability of e-journals mean we already had vast amounts of information available. Web 2.0 has exacerbated the problem of “information overload”; now that everyone is a potential “publisher” there is even more

information “noise” to contend with.

The real difference though is not so much the increased quantity of information now available. The reliability and quality of the information we source is key. We know, when we use more traditional sources such as formally published books and journals, or peer reviewed grey literature, we are able to provide a reasonable provenance for the validity and currency of the information we find. The shift from hard copy to the Web did not fundamentally alter this position; it was still possible to distinguish the authoritative and expert source from the rest.

This is less the case with the proliferation of content in Web 2.0 applications. Keen views most of this content as “vanity publishing”. His take on the amateur is not the one which springs most readily to mind for me – the keen and knowledgeable gardener, enthusiastic tap dancer, or others similarly engaged in a range of wholesome and innocent activities. Nor is he harking back to the Eighteenth century, when gentlemen amateurs played a significant role in advancing many branches of the sciences. His amateurs are more akin to the barbarians at the gate. Indeed he quotes from a recent US article equating our current cultural state as akin to that of ancient Rome, shortly before its final fall in the fifth century.

Vanity publishing, or something worse. Keen has some worrying examples of how Web 2.0 can be abused to confuse and skew debate: “splogs”, a combination of spam and blogs, designed to look like the real thing but actually a method of advertising; and “flogs”, apparently independent blogs that actually represent the view of a sponsor. However, the blogosphere cannot be dismissed as just so much “noise”. The government is itself using Web 2.0 tools to interact with citizens. The growth in “online democracy” gives everyone a voice and impacts on policy making. Take a slightly more benign view of the amateur than Keen allows and this can only be a good thing. Besides, as well as the voices of the amateurs and the vested interests,



The cult of the amateur: how blogs, MySpace, YouTube and the rest of today's media generated media are killing our culture and assaulting our economy by Andrew Keen is published in paperback by Nicholas Brealey Publishing, priced £9.99.

many researchers and academics also use their blogs to share their latest thinking. Ignore all blogs and we risk missing a significant development from an authoritative source who hasn't yet formally "published".

Identifying reliable information

Nor can we, or should we, wash our hands of the issue and say simply that it is the role of our users to analyse and evaluate the information we provide and use it accordingly, that they are the subject experts. It is part of our subject expertise, as information professionals, to provide reliable and reputable information. Looking through Keen's sceptical eye at the information waste tip otherwise known as the Web, this could be one of our biggest selling points in the future. In a world where anyone can publish and there is no validation and evaluation at source our information literacy could be the significant value we add to the service we offer our colleagues in the future.

Our ability to help our users by sourcing good quality, reliable information with accuracy and speed should be exploited and promoted. As a profession we would be confident in asserting this value but we need to make sure our colleagues are aware of the continued, if not greater, benefit of this skill in the future. This touches on another area of concern for Keen, the threat to the role of the professional in a self service (for both the creation and consumption of content) Web 2.0 world. We need to work with users who feel they can get all the answers they need via Google or Wikipedia, and may question our role, particularly in these difficult times.

Developing information literacy

In reality the average searching and information literacy skills in our organisations appear to be low, so we should capitalise on one of our professional strengths, ... by firstly ensuring it is one of our strengths! It is a crucial area for good quality staff training and setting standards for internal peer review and quality assurance. We are then well positioned to source information, or advise or train our colleagues, depending on our role. As an example, a number of departments such as the Ministry of Defence and Department of Health include training on searching the web within their services. The value of this training is not just in educating colleagues in finding useful sites, but advising on the limitations of search engines, accessing the "deep web" and helping them to develop their own IT literacy skills. Whilst training our colleagues may seem counter intuitive, in that we appear to be increasing their ability to manage without us, arguably it can work to our advantage. If they are more aware of the complexities of finding what they really need as opposed to what appears to be available they should be more willing to turn to us when their requirements are difficult.

They will also be more likely to take advantage of the alert services which some Libraries offer to help manage their information overload.

Taxonomies

Whilst Web 2.0 is contributing to the increased chaos on the web in some respects the Web world is finally catching up with libraries! How often did we hear about metadata five or six years ago, when we were all assured that all powerful search engines would be able to sift through all that unstructured, untagged data and “learn” what we were looking for. Now, there is a growing appreciation that a little application of the library sciences of classification and cataloguing, would actually make searching more efficient and effective. Of course, Web 2.0 has led to the growth of folksonomies and cloud tags but these are complementary to those sciences. A “corporate taxonomy” provides longevity and continuity of standard terms, enabling connections to be made through time. The folksonomy provides a lateral cut, using the current terms/expressions, recognised by the users themselves, some of which are ephemeral and fade away, others informing later iterations of the corporate taxonomy when they have proved their staying power.

“... we need to continue updating and applying our skills in a new environment”

One impact of the first iteration of the Web was to our apparent detriment, yet we repositioned ourselves- embedding our skills in the business, in web teams, in knowledge management. To do so, we needed to update and apply our skills in a new environment. The development of Web 2.0 requires that we continue the process. It does mean we need to maintain our profile as a service within our organisations and maximise our unique selling points. This may result in us exploiting Web 2.0 features to our own ends to inform and work with our users in collaborative spaces or maximising our visibility through a Facebook type directory as I am sure some of us already are. We are already using these tools to network and share amongst ourselves; I am sure most of us are now members of the Government Knowledge and Information Management Network wiki and can see the benefits of these new ways of working. We have proved able to adapt and evolve as a profession – we will need to adapt and absorb Web 2.0 to our advantage where we can. 📍

Creative writing competition: give us a song

Consider yourself the next Bob Dylan, a living reincarnation of WS Gilbert or Cole Porter? Now is your chance to prove it, and you could win £50 worth of book tokens for your efforts.



Network
of government library and
information specialists

Sing a song of information specialism

To enter, take the tune of any well-known song - rock, pop, opera, sea shanty, nursery rhyme, the choice is yours - and rewrite the words, so that they feature any aspect of information, knowledge, library or records management. Your entry should include no more than 12 lines of the song.

Please send your entry by email to pat.bell@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk, including your contact details and the name of the tune your song uses, by 1 September 2009. We will award a prize of £35 of book tokens for the winning entry, £15 for the runner-up, and both entries will be printed in the Autumn edition of *Network*.

The small print

The competition is open to all members of NGLIS. The entries will be judged by the *Network* Editorial Board, and their decision shall be final.

Limerick competition: adjudication

The limerick competition set in the Autumn 2008 edition of *Network* attracted a record number of entries, and we enjoyed reading them all. The editor apologises to those who were misled by the advertising into thinking all the limericks had to begin "There was a young person from Kew", although we did admire the ingenuity of Martin Etheridge who came up with three verses full of rhymes with the word Kew (we did offer him and others the chance to submit new entries after explaining the rules).

The winning entries are printed overleaf. 📄

Limerick competition: the winning entries

... and the winners, in reverse order, are ...

... in third place

A Dewey-eyed maid of Dunkerque
Sought Librarian's Congress at work
She was searching in Bliss
For a hug and a kiss
But the facets just sent her berserk

Katharine Schopflin

Parliament

... in second place

Some foolish young parliamentarians
Forgot to first ask the librarians
They passed many acts
Without knowing the facts
Now they've been overrun by barbarians

Maewyn Cumming

DEFRA

... The winning entry

The Minister had cause to rue,
The information source he turned to,
"I have been slated,
But the facts that I stated
Were in Wiki so they must be true."

Katharine Schopflin

Parliament