

Information Management: a consolidation of operations, analysis and strategy

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Preface

Information management is a term that has been used by a number of professions to describe all or some of the procedures in their respective disciplines. Its interpretation differs because of the varied circumstances, practices and levels of application in these disciplines. It has become further confused because of the emergence of knowledge management as a business concept.

In the business environment, the analysis of specific business processes as information systems has led to a wider recognition of information as a resource. This view has been promoted in some quarters of management education. There has been a reorientation of teaching approach from management information systems technology, to management of information in general, so that business practice reflects this as information management. This accepts that information though enhanced by technology, may be considered separately from it. Enterprises demonstrate this philosophy by building information plans into their strategic planning processes, and by establishing organisational structures to manage information. The separation of information from technology has been interpolated to include recognition of the intellectual capital in enterprises, and coining of the term knowledge management to embrace both unexpressed knowledge and recorded information.

In the computing environment, the roles of database administration and data administration have been differentiated for some time. As software development has turned increasingly to maintenance and integration of existing systems, the profile of data administration has become more prominent. Information technology managers have increasingly had to account for technology implementation within the wider information planning framework that data administration can support. Identifying an enterprise's information resources and defining them within an information repository, is a key information management practice that is a basis for quality systems.

In the library environment, librarians have designed and used computer systems to manage and disseminate print-based information, the so-called library housekeeping subsystems. As the amount of information in computer-based form has multiplied, and access to it, particularly through the Internet, has improved, they have initiated systems that deal with organisation and integration of access to information sources inside and outside libraries. They call this process information management.

Records managers and archivists are facing similar challenges in controlling information that is created and used predominantly within enterprises. Computer-produced records have intensified the need for a managed framework within which creation, distribution, retention and retrieval of business records takes place. The process is information management.

Distinctive systems for organisation and retrieval of information have long been applied in disciplines that have emphasised the subject content of what is being managed. Systems include those that manage geographic information, health records, and legal research. Each is a specific application of information management.

The divisions between each of these environments have been blurred by the application of information technology to their processes, and by the scope and utility of the resulting information systems.

Organisation of the material

This work is organised in 4 parts that emphasise what the environments have in common in order to consolidate the province of information management.

- PART A: Factors that shape the meaning of information management - the people who work in the area follow similar principles that are being enunciated by a fledgling science of information, and find that these principles are strongly influenced by the culture of an enterprise in which they are applied, and the customs of the distinctive user groups who seek information and knowledge.
- PART B: An operational approach – in applying principles, information professionals must all concern themselves with *information about information* - the organising structures, finding aids, classification and retrieval systems, that make their respective information systems useable.
- PART C: An analytical approach – in determining enterprise and user information and learning requirements, information professionals must apply techniques for assessing available information, and systematically providing information services.
- PART D: A strategic approach – in order to foster effective utilisation of information and knowledge resources, a planning framework must be fostered that aligns information services with that of an enterprise's objectives and resourcing, and works effectively within constraints imposed by the broader regulatory and business environment.

A Glossary explains information management terminology. The bibliography integrates references given throughout the text with suggested further readings listed at the end of chapters.

How to make use of this text

The work brings together both through its structure and examples, the principles that are common to the different disciplines that manage information. In so doing, it encourages a more extensive outlook on the field, and aims to enlighten both tyros and information specialists, by showing the commonality of the practices and challenges across the range of interpretations of information management.

It provides a compendium of the field, for the beginning student entering the practice or related disciplines, who needs an introduction to the concepts and applications of information management. At the same time, through examples and suggested readings, it endeavours to open the door to further study in the area. As a consequence, the work may also support more advanced courses that are able to use its structure and content as a guide and preparation for expounding further on subject matter introduced in individual chapters. In this respect, it should also benefit practicing professionals who regard themselves as information or knowledge managers, by showing the relationship of their own work to converging disciplines in the same area. It may thus help with a fresh understanding of the field, showing the concepts and practices applicable to a range of disciplines.

Undergraduate students

If you are commencing study of information management you will find this work useful for establishing concepts and giving an overview of the field as it has evolved in recent years. It provides a lead in to the principles and practice and introduces you to specialised areas that you may subsequently pursue in depth.

If you are taking a course in business or in information technology and studying some information management as part of it, you will obtain an overview of the field that enables you to understand the issues of concern to information professionals with whom you will work on entering employment.

In either case, the information resources and methods that are described in the text should provide a good springboard to improving the information skills that will assist you with continued learning throughout your career, or in other disciplines that you may pursue. This means that the work also has the objective of developing your information literacy.

Graduate students and researchers

The interdisciplinary nature of information management means that it is necessary to have a comprehension of principles and practice outside your immediate skills. Certain chapters in the work will provide this for you, and the bibliographic reviews at the end of sections should provide a lead in and support for research work in the area.

The integrative nature of the work should benefit your perspective of information management, and the work is useful as a reference for specific aspects of the field.

Teachers

The work may be used as a supporting text for an introductory course in information management from either a business perspective or an information technology perspective.

It is seen as primarily for use in introducing material that leads to a major in the area by establishing concepts, and demonstrating the main principles and practice. Material from individual chapters may be developed further in more focussed modules later in a course with the help of specialised texts. There it may be retained for reference to concepts and complementary readings.

It may be used to impart a substantial overview of the scope of information management to those who are not majoring in the area, but are subsequently expected to have some working contact with information professionals. It can therefore also be used as a support text in service modules dealing with information management required by another discipline, providing that it is supplemented by cases relevant to that discipline.

Practitioners and Information Professionals

Some parts of this text should already to be working knowledge for you. However, other parts, outside your immediate area of specialisation should introduce you to a wider range of information methods than you are presently applying. You should therefore see information problems from a wider interdisciplinary perspective.

Standards

The nature of the field is such that much standards work has been undertaken to enable data sharing between enterprises. Reference to many of the relevant standards is made. In many cases these standards have been developed nationally, but if an international standard exists, and if it has been taken up to some extent, then it has been used for examples, assuming that a national equivalent can be sought out by reference to a local concordance.

References

The work contains a lengthy bibliography. Much of the material in it is referred to more than once within different chapters. Each chapter concludes with a section on further reading. Material referred to in these sections is given full reference in the bibliography. An indication is given in the list of where each reference has been made within the text.

Reference is made to both print and electronic material. In the case of electronic material that is referenced on the Internet, every effort has been made to refer to locations that are viable. However, it is the nature of the Internet that some of the material may no longer be accessible at the time of reading. In cases like this, the reader will need to use Internet resource discovery facilities to update links to the appropriate material.

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