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Tracing Developments in Information Resource Management

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Abstract

This paper discusses the concept behind Information Resource Management from its inception. It traces the developments in the area and compares the activities to those discussed under Knowledge Management. It points out the various tools used in today's Internet environment for resource management. Web indexing considered as a tool for effective resource management on the web is also discussed.

The concept of Information as a resource is quite new, especially, noting that information and the need for information have existed for a long time now. Aslib in the late 1980s held a series of seminars on the topic of Information Resource Management (IRM). The key persons putting forth the idea were Forest W. Horton and Cornelius F. Burk. Much time elapsed even after Aslib's efforts before a formal research approach was taken to explore the area of IRM.

1 What is IRM?

It is important to define IRM and examine its scope for the proper understanding of the activities involved. There are various popular definitions, which, put together give a holistic picture. IRM is the management (planning, organization, operations and control) of the resources (human and physical) concerned with the systems support (development, enhancement and maintenance) and the servicing (processing, transformation, distribution, storage and retrieval) of information (data, text, voice, image) for an enterprise. (1).

1.1 IRM is the recognition by an organization that data and information are valuable resources and the application of the same principles of managing data and information as are used in managing physical resources such as personnel (2).

1.2 Information Resources Management (IRM) is the process within the information management arena that serves the corporate interest. IRM seeks to harness information for the benefit of the organization as a whole by exploiting, developing and optimizing information resources. The interests of the organization are usually manifested by its corporate goals and objectives. Thus, IRM is the managerial link that connects corporate information resources with the organization's goals and objectives. (3)

1.3 IRM, simply put, is the belief that information is an asset that should be managed rigorously and can contribute to the success of businesses. (4). IRM is the managing of information resources - a major strategic responsibility of both managerial end users and traditional IS management (5) (6).

There are many definitions in use for IRM, reflecting the various perspectives on the scope and impact of the information resource. One such IRM definition can be derived by breaking up the term "information resource management" into its component parts.

- Information as something told or items of knowledge
- Resource as a stock or supply that can be drawn on
- Management as the professional administration of business concerns (7)

The information management profession actually consists of a number of largely isolated parts. These include librarians, records managers, archivists, and computer information systems professionals. (8)

2 Information Resource as an asset

The area of IRM stresses upon Information as a resource just as any other resource like human resources and financial resources in organizations. Information is a resource with a final value established according to information quality criteria (novelty, reliability, precision, etc.), potential, and effectiveness of its application. (8) Information Resource Management is the engine that is driving the information economy. It is having and will continue to have a profound impact on business management, competitive advantage, and productivity. Information resource management is an integral part of corporate strategies and can be used by organizations to gain competitive advantages in their markets. IRM and the management of information resources affect all functional areas and all management levels of an organization.

3 Principles of Information Resource Management

Horton's views expressed at Aslib meetings for the first time made information and related processes and people prominent. It gave a new professionalism to the activities carried out as information resource management. The trend took a definite shape when Nick Willard (9) proposed a model based on traditional resource management principles. The model eventually became known as 'The Willard Model'.

The Willard Model identifies five key elements of IRM:

- **Identification**
The discovery of information resources and the recording of their features in an inventory
- **Ownership**
The establishment of responsibility for the upkeep of an information resource
- **Cost and Value**
Assessment of the cost of an information resource and its value to the organization
- **Development**
The further development of an existing information resource to enhance its value to the organization
- **Exploitation**
The processes which may allow a resource to generate further value through conversion into an asset or a saleable commodity

Based on the theoretical framework of Willard, Aslib held a series of other workshops to explore each of the above mentioned element. The IRM network of Aslib has concluded that the scope and definitions and activities under the denotation of Information Resource

Management is totally encompassed by Knowledge Management which is the term used in the latest context in Information arena and a natural extension of the ideas of IRM.

4 Conclusion

Knowledge Management has structural and functional basis in the IM (Information Management or IRM). The main difference is the high degree of dynamic activity involved in the KM system. To summarize in the words of Dr.Malhotra, (10) 'use of the information and control systems and compliance with pre-defined goals, objectives and best practices may not necessarily achieve long-term organizational competence. This is the world of 're-use,' 're-engineering', 're-cycling' etc, which challenges the assumptions underlying the 'accepted way of doing things.' This world needs the capability to understand the problems afresh given the changing environmental conditions. Knowledge management focuses on 'doing the right thing' instead of 'doing things right.'

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