

August 2002

Information is Powerful When You Know What To Do With It: How My MLIS Has Prepared Me to Put Knowledge To Work

Kimberly Whalen

Follow this and additional works at: <http://jdc.jefferson.edu/scitechnews>

[Let us know how access to this document benefits you](#)

Recommended Citation

Whalen, Kimberly (2002) "Information is Powerful When You Know What To Do With It: How My MLIS Has Prepared Me to Put Knowledge To Work," *Sci-Tech News*: Vol. 56: Iss. 3, Article 5.

Available at: <http://jdc.jefferson.edu/scitechnews/vol56/iss3/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Jefferson Digital Commons. The Jefferson Digital Commons is a service of Thomas Jefferson University's [Center for Teaching and Learning \(CTL\)](#). The Commons is a showcase for Jefferson books and journals, peer-reviewed scholarly publications, unique historical collections from the University archives, and teaching tools. The Jefferson Digital Commons allows researchers and interested readers anywhere in the world to learn about and keep up to date with Jefferson scholarship. This article has been accepted for inclusion in *Sci-Tech News* by an authorized administrator of the Jefferson Digital Commons. For more information, please contact: JeffersonDigitalCommons@jefferson.edu.

Information Is Powerful When You Know What To Do With It: How My MLIS Has Prepared Me To Put Knowledge To Work

Kimberly J. Whalen

INSPEC Student Award-Engineering Division

Knowledge management became a very popular term in the late 1990s. Some believe the term will come and go just as the terms value-added, change-agents, business process re-engineering and total quality management. Others believe that the management of knowledge will be a major issue that librarians and other informational professionals will tackle for years and even decades to come.

Knowledge can be defined as two types, explicit and implicit. Explicit knowledge is documented knowledge. It is documented during standard organizational practices and can be made available through written reports, articles, books, Internet websites, etc. Implicit or tacit knowledge is more difficult to define. It is the knowledge that comes with experience, insight and intuition. Often this type of knowledge is undocumented and it is difficult to capture, retain or replicate.

Knowledge management refers to the practices and technologies that facilitate the efficient creation and exchange of knowledge. Knowledge management is not driven by technology; it is only aided by it. It is the people and process that are vital to the transformation of information to knowledge.

Knowledge management has been discussed and debated in many of my courses at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Information Sciences. Though knowledge management is most often applied to a corporate setting, the techniques can be applied to libraries and information centers. Information professionals have a wealth of resources at their disposal but it is the knowledge created by the analysis of the information that is the strength of the profession.

As a full-time student and a participant in the University of Pittsburgh's Library Reference Internship Program, I am fortunate to be exposed daily to both explicit and implicit knowledge. I gain explicit knowledge when I read articles and chapters to prepare for discussions in my Business and Economics Resources and Services or Government Information and Resources courses. I gather explicit knowledge when I read case studies for my Digital Preservation course. I gain explicit knowledge when I read the professional literature produced by the Special Libraries Association and use the data to develop a service plan and budget for my Special Library Management course. By reading *Information Outlook*, *American Libraries*, numerous articles, books, Internet websites and other docu-

ments developed by information management professionals, I am introduced to knowledge from a variety of sources.

Fortunately, I also gather implicit knowledge throughout my daily activities. Librarians and information professionals love to share useful advice about their core "go-to" ready reference resources, their favorite search engines or their most easily navigated electronic resources. I gain implicit knowledge when I work alongside an experienced librarian during my reference internship shifts and I ask them questions or for advice. I gather implicit knowledge when I help coordinate an event for the Student Chapter of the American Library Association and I have an opportunity to interact with our alumni panelists. I gain implicit knowledge when I attend a training session devoted to public speaking by the Special Libraries Association Pittsburgh Chapter. I gather implicit knowledge from other professionals by participating in discussions via the Special Libraries Association Illinois Chapter listserv and BUSLIB, the Business Librarians' listserv. I gain implicit knowledge from other students through group discussions in my Records and Information Resources Management course. By speaking with students and information professionals, participating in professional activities and by attending professional conferences, I am able to gain valuable implicit knowledge about resources, services and the library profession.

My MLIS education and my interactions with others have taught me how to better analyze and interpret information. This, in turn, has prepared me to put knowledge to work. I use this knowledge to properly conduct reference interviews and provide effective patron services. My coursework and interactions with others have taught me how to interpret patron needs and provide appropriate instructional and technical assistance. I better understand both the organization and the value of information and can articulate to others how to properly evaluate their information resources.

Without the knowledge I've gained through my MLIS education, I would be aware of the wealth of information that exists but would not have the knowledge to interpret the information or the knowledge of how to disseminate it to others. As a result of my degree, I have developed the knowledge needed to meet the needs of patrons and succeed as an information professional. My MLIS has provided me with powerful knowledge that will be put to work for years and even decades to come.