

SOME PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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The Context

Information Management = managing information in operational and strategic processes

Information Resources Management = managing and exploiting information as a strategic resource related to, but **not** the same as information systems (or information technology) management

Intelligence Systems = refining and analysis of information for management **action**.

MkIS = market intelligence systems: covers competitor analysis, customers and markets

Typical Issues

Organisational	Ownership, evaluation, fragmentation, isolation from processes, politics
Informational	Integrating external/internal, lack of categorisation, mixed meanings
Systems	User interface, multiple databases, retrieval, usability
Human	Processing capability, overload, incentives to share

Ten Key Principles

- 1. Identify responsibilities.** Decide who owns and is responsible for managing and sharing information assets. Also have someone to co-ordinate information management effectively.
- 2. Conduct an information audit.** Identify current information entities, their users, use and importance. Identify sources, cost and value.
- 3. Link to management processes.** Make sure that key decision and business process are supported with high leverage information. Assess each process for its information needs.
- 4. Systematic scanning.** Systematically scan your business environment. Provide selective and tailored dissemination of vital signs to key executives. This goes beyond daily abstracting.
- 5. Mix hard/soft, internal/external.** True patterns and insights emerge when internal and external data is juxtaposed, when hard data is evaluated against qualitative analysis.
- 6. Optimise information purchases.** By treating consultancy, market research, publications, on-line services etc. as separate purchases many organisations are confusing media with content.
- 7. Introduce information processes.** Good information management involves 'mining', classifying, synthesising and refining - combining the crafts of the information scientist, librarian and business analysts. Yet many organisations do not integrate these disciplines.
- 8. Exploit technology convergence.** Telecommunications, office systems, publishing, documentation are converging. Exploit this convergence through open networking.
- 9. Develop an Information Strategy.** Not to be confused with an information systems strategy.
- 10. Develop a sharing culture.** Understand your information politics. Attention to the cultural dimension of information is essential for exploiting its value.

The Information Resource Model (Aslib IRM Network - Willard)

Identification	What information is there? How is it identified and coded?
Ownership	Who is responsible for different information entities and co-ordination?
Cost and Value	A basis for making judgements on purchase and use
Development	Increasing its value (see '10 ways' overleaf) or stimulating demand.
Exploitation	Proactive maximisation of value for money

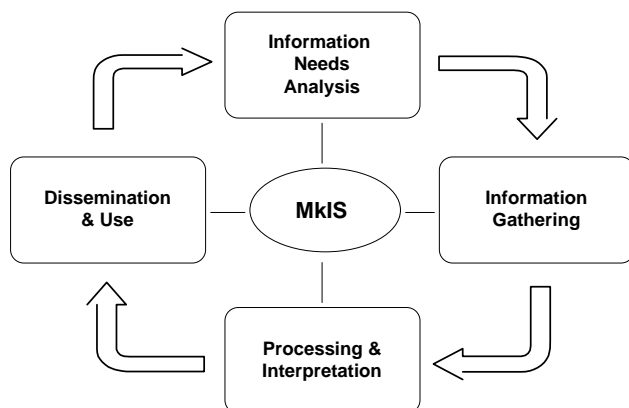
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Ten Ways to Add Value to Information

TIMELINESS:	Currency. Information is perishable. Different information has different half lives ('sell by dates'). Some degrades rapidly.
ACCESSIBILITY:	Easy to find and retrieve - no long-winded searches, good 'hits'
USABILITY:	Ease of use; can manipulate to suit application
UTILITY:	Is suited and usable for multiple applications
QUALITY:	Accurate, reliable, credible, validated
CUSTOMISED:	Filtered, targeted, appropriate style and format; needs minimum processing for specified application
MEDIUM:	Appropriate for portability and ongoing use
REPACKAGING:	Reformatted to match onward use
FLEXIBILITY:	Easy to process; can be used in different ways
REUSABILITY:	Can be reused; ideally extra use should refine its quality; the more people that can access and use, the better.

Obviously there are trade-offs e.g. customised implies low volume but higher value; reusability the opposite. As in other fields the trick is to make it appear unique to the user, but make to make maximum use of generic or core elements. Computerised management aids this process.

The Intelligence Cycle



1. Identify needs of key users. Focus on the *activity* they do and the *decisions* they make. Use typical market research techniques.
2. Use computerised information feeds, CD-ROMs and any available source in a targeted way.
3. Use computer conferencing (e.g. Lotus Notes) to get good *human* interpretation.
4. Exploit desk top publishing and computer networks to reach the appropriate audience quickly.

Further Reading

Aslib Information, Vol 21, No. 5, May 1993, and Managing Information, May 1994 - feature articles on information resources management (IRM)

Infomap: A complete guide to discovering corporate information resources, C.F.Burke and F.W.Horton, Prentice Hall (1988).

Practical Information Policies - How to manage information flows, Liz Orna, Gower (1990)

Managing Information as a Resource, CCTA (1990)

The Intelligent Corporation: Creating a shared network for information, Ruth Stanat, Amacom (1990)