Chapter 11

Faculty of Information Studies
Knowledge Repository (FISKR)

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Knowledge repositories are increasingly being viewed as a special form of knowledge management (KM) in organizational memory information systems (OMIS). Presented in this chapter is the prototype of a knowledge repository which is envisaged to be an electronic repository of online pedagogical resources and is designed and implemented as a web-based software system, built to help foster a learning organization that works together to gather and share knowledge. This heterogeneous repository stores resources or pointers to resources of many different kinds including, but not limited to, electronic or printed material, courses, slide presentations, videos, or any other resource that is relevant to the subject matter. These resources can then be retrieved in a number of different ways such as subject taxonomies, reading or bibliographic list and can be viewed in a Web browser as simple web pages.

INTRODUCTION

“Only two percent of information gets written down—the rest is in people’s mind”, says David Owens, Vice President of knowledge management at Unisys Corporation and vice chair of The Conference Board’s Learning and Knowledge Management Council (Hickins, 1999). So knowledge management (KM) places equal emphasis on capturing the tacit knowledge that is in people’s heads, rather than targeting just the explicit knowledge that can be stored in a more shareable format. By managing its knowledge an organization would know more, and the
more it knows the more successful it will be. And this comes only after an understanding of what kind of information is available to the members of an organization, where it is and how it can be accessed (Hackbarth and Grover, 1999).

A similar viewpoint on the division of knowledge in an organization is shown in Figure 1. This figure shows the results of a study, carried out by the Delphi Group, of more than 700 US companies and serves to illustrate that only a portion of the corporate knowledge is in shareable format (Hickins, 1999). The majority (42%) of any one kind of knowledge resides inside people’s head. And we have to realize that people leave organizations, taking away the knowledge that is stored in their heads, personal computers or in their possession in other formats.

Therefore, organizations must build knowledge management (KM) systems, such as knowledge repositories, to try to retain the maximum possible tacit knowledge and make it available to people who need it. This simple need for KM systems is supported by results from another survey, again by Delphi group, of 370 business professionals which shows that 28% had already begun or completed KM projects while 93% said that they will have undertaken such projects by 2000 (Anthes, 1998).

Data and information need to be integrated to arrive at knowledge, and knowledgeable people need to have the ability to integrate and frame the information at hand within the context of their experience, expertise and judgement (Hackbarth et al., 1999). What is data to some may be information for others, and knowledge is a higher order concept than either of these. In today’s high paced technological environment, information is available in abundance as it piles up in the databases or streams into our desktop computers through the Internet. Knowledge is however information that has been edited and analyzed in such a manner so as to make it useful. And when knowledge from the past is brought to bear on present activities, thus affecting the level of organizational effectiveness, then that is called Organizational Memory (OM) (Stein, 1992).
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