Chapter XIII

Epistemetrics: Why We Measure

Every nugget of knowledge is relevant and useful. There is no knowledge that can be described as immaterial, irrelevant, unnecessary, or without potential use. Since knowledge advances and grows by means of cumulation, every nugget adds to the pool, like every brick which is an essential component of a wall. The only possible shortcoming of any nugget of knowledge is the extent to which the transactor or user of knowledge is able to cluster it with other nuggets in his possession. The fault in any knowledge not being considered relevant and useful is not in the knowledge itself, but in the transactor or the user (e.g., Card, 2000; Davenport & Volpel, 2001; Patriotta, 2003; Rajan, Lank, & Chapple, 1998).

Epistemetrics is the conceptual space in which we are measuring what we know, how we know, and why we know. This last topic of Part III consists of the outcomes from transactions in knowledge, and the impacts and benefits which accrue to the transactors and to others.
From Generation to Utilization

We measure knowledge because the actors who transact in knowledge (at the individual and organizational levels) gain from their transactions. Such gains or benefits accrued to them will provide the explanation of “why” we measure knowledge. There are three types of transactors in knowledge: generators, transformers, and users. Each has distinct gains or benefits they derive from the pursuit and the transaction in knowledge.

In a way, all transactors are users and beneficiaries of knowledge. Generators benefit by more proximal outcomes, such as personal growth and competitive advantages. Transformers benefit from the contributions that knowledge provides to the workflow, the processes, and the activities of individuals and their organizations. Ultimate users benefit from most of the contributions of knowledge to generators and transformers and, in addition, they also benefit from outcomes that the use of knowledge seems to provide, such as economic, social, technical, and systemic outcomes.

Users of knowledge are individuals and organizations who implement, utilize, adopt, absorb, adapt, and exploit as well as benefit from the outcomes and impacts of knowledge. They incorporate knowledge into their activities; integrate knowledge with their skills, abilities, and competencies; and add it to their existing stock of what they know and understand of their environment.

At any given time individuals and their organizations may have multiple roles as generators, transformers, and users of knowledge. Consider an individual who generates knowledge and deposits it in a knowledge management system (KMS). The individual will do so because he is driven by a goal of personal growth, improved technical skills, and increased competitiveness. The individual believes that this goal can be achieved by the benefits that would accrue from the transaction in knowledge. By transacting in knowledge, the individual generates a variety of benefits from which individuals and organizations could be enriched, and these would be compelling factors that would drive other individuals to transact in knowledge.

Outcomes and Benefits from Knowledge

The key reason why we measure knowledge is the desire of users to gain benefits from the outcomes generated by their use of knowledge. There are
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www.igi-global.com/article/inter-organizational-knowledge-sharing-system-in-the-health-sector/148317?camid=4v1a