

INFORMATION SYSTEMS, WEB AND PERVASIVE COMPUTING SERIES

ADVANCES IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS SET



Volume 2

Information and Knowledge System

**Pierre-Emmanuel Arduin
Michel Grundstein
Camille Rosenthal Sabroux**

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Advances in Information Systems Set

coordinated by
Camille Rosenthal-Sabroux

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Contents

PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	xi
CHAPTER 1. INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY	1
1.1. The concept of information systems	1
1.2. History of the concept of information systems	5
1.2.1. The centralized processing stage (1950s–1960s)	5
1.2.2. The data decentralization stage (1970s–1990s)	6
1.2.3. The interoperability and standardization stage (1990s)	6
1.2.4. The universality and globalization stage (2000 onward)	7
1.3. What is “digital” technology?	9
1.4. Information systems and digital technology for business	11
1.5. Key points	15
CHAPTER 2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	17
2.1. Historical overview	18
2.2. Knowledge Management: two dominant approaches	20
2.2.1. The technological approach	21
2.2.2. The managerial and sociotechnical approach to KM	22
2.3. Specific management principles for KM.	23
2.3.1. Definition of Knowledge Management	24
2.3.2. The organizational context	24
2.3.3. The vision	26
2.3.4. Guiding principles	27
2.3.5. <i>Ad hoc</i> infrastructures	28
2.3.6. Generic KM processes	31
2.3.7. Methods and tools for KM	34

2.4. A model for general knowledge management within the enterprise (MGKME)	36
2.4.1. Description of the MGKME	36
2.4.2. State indicators for knowledge management systems.	40
2.5. Conclusions.	42
2.6. Key points	43
 CHAPTER 3. THE ENTERPRISE'S INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (EIKS)	 45
3.1. Basic theories.	45
3.1.1. Three fundamental postulates.	45
3.1.2. Creation of individual and tacit knowledge	47
3.1.3. Commensurability of interpretative frameworks	50
3.1.4. Conditions in which knowledge can be assimilated to an object	50
3.2. The enterprise's information and knowledge system	52
3.3. A knowledge system is not a knowledge-based system	54
3.4. Evolution of an EIKS	59
3.5. Representative example of an EIKS	59
3.5.1. Presentation of the context	60
3.5.2. EIKS in this context	61
3.6. Key points	63
 CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES	 65
 APPENDIX. SEVEN GOLDEN RULES FOR SUCCESSFUL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT.	 69
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 75
 INDEX	 83

Preface

Communication is an essential aspect of human life, and the opportunities provided by information and communications technologies are unprecedented. Information in various forms can now be transmitted across space and time. Paradoxically, to cite Feenberg [FEE 04], a distance has been created between individuals, of “disposable experiences, that can be turned on or off like water from a faucet”. Individuals have thus become services, made available to others via a technical system, which can be activated or deactivated at will.

Originally, the computer was not intended as a means of communication. The Internet was not intended to serve as a conduit for this communication, and information technology was not intended for anything other than the automatic processing of information. Nevertheless, computers have become ubiquitous: information technology is everywhere, in our jobs, televisions, watches, telephones and even in our health. The quantities of information involved, unimaginable in previous decades, are now treated using concepts such as Big Data. Computers play an important role in our private lives, and our private lives themselves have become computerized; with data located at distant and unidentified points, they are in the clouds due to the use of techniques such as cloud computing.

Man thus makes use of all available tools to fulfill the essential need for communication. The use of information and communications technologies should not obscure the substance of these exchanges: information. Information which was previously passed from one person to another through human interaction is now exchanged via computer protocols, which aim to optimize systems interoperability without really considering human

interaction; these interactions involve the exchange of much more than simple information. Information alone is simply a transcription, in the same way as a prehistoric painting on the wall of a cave, hieroglyphs on a papyrus or the neumes of Gregorian chant in a hymnal. Historians of today are constantly confronted with the challenges involved in interpreting this transcribed information (see Figure 1).

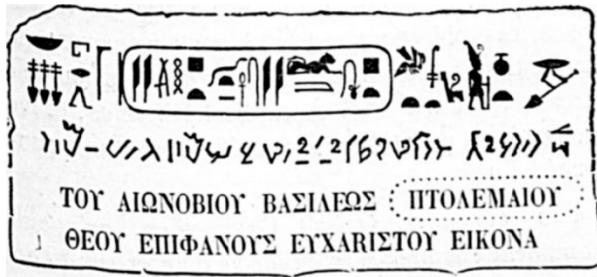


Figure 1. Information can only become knowledge for you if it has a meaning for you. “King Ptolemy, the ever-living, beloved of Ptah, the god Epiphanes Eucharistos, most gracious lord”: extract from the Rosetta Stone [FER 68, p. 43] (source: National Library of France)

This book aims to highlight the advantages offered by information and communication technology (ICT) both in terms of information exchange and ensuring that the correct meaning is transmitted, allowing beneficial interpretation and the creation of knowledge. Information systems thus become information and knowledge systems. Although an information system may be based on ICT, it cannot be reduced to these technological aspects: users themselves play a role, acting as system components in their own right. These users process, store and transmit information, but this data has a meaning for them, something which does not occur in the case of technological artifacts.

Any attempt to limit information exchange to the framework of a digital information system using computer technology, to the exclusion of human contact, would most probably be seen as “totalitarian” within any organization [FEE 04, p. 180]. However, the number and availability of technological devices, the ease of use and the social character they may acquire all lead to more direct, frequent and essential interaction between individuals and the digital information system. Moving beyond the information transmitted within an organization, this book introduces the concept of information and knowledge system, which highlights the role of

knowledge and the part played by individuals as holders of this knowledge. To do this, a clear distinction should be made between “information” and “knowledge”; moreover, it is crucial to be aware of the fact that information can have different meanings, leading to the creation of different knowledge for different individuals.

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