DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?

A KNOWLEDGE AUDIT AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

MIHAELA MICU
McGill University
WINTER 2009 PRACTICUM
Librarians excel at organizing others’ information and knowledge, but what about the one they produce?

- This project should be seen as an attempt to understand knowledge workers’ activities and needs in an effort to identify areas in which managerial support is most needed.

- By analyzing job requirements and mapping out the knowledge flow, we hoped to get a clear idea of what kinds of explicit and tacit knowledge is used and needed.

- This is the first attempt so far to focus on tacit knowledge; previous activities only focused on availability of explicit knowledge.
Overview

- 12 week practicum project involving a group of professional librarians, one practicum student and the site supervisor.

Goals:

- identifying key knowledge sources
- evaluating information repositories
- identifying knowledge gaps or duplication
- mapping out the knowledge flow
- creating an inventory of knowledge assets
- identifying potential valuable external resources

Our focus - the delivery of web services, therefore only librarians involved in related activities were invited to participate.
Methodology

- Main data collection instrument – 21 item questionnaire, divided into 3 sections – Knowledge Sources, Knowledge Transfer and Gap Analysis
- Face to face interviews
- Evaluation of knowledge repositories
- Job and core processes analysis
- Benchmarking
- Mapping knowledge flow
- Gap analysis
Knowledge inventory analysis – explicit knowledge

- **INTRANET** – contains reusable information; navigation and interface need significant improvement; information is not up to date;

- **WEBSITE** – good source for keeping up to date with news and events

- **WIKIS & BLOGS** – efficient means of exchanging information, but in some cases access is restricted;

- **DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM** – no unified system, with clear file hierarchy; committees keep own documents, therefore no consistency across the organization; documents related to past projects exist, but there is no direct access to them;

- **EXTERNAL RESOURCES** – very diverse, majority accessible online;
Knowledge inventory analysis – tacit knowledge

- CORPORATE EXPERTS DIRECTORY – there is no internal comprehensive inventory of staff’s academic / professional qualifications and background, skills and competencies.

- Some information is available externally, from the Human Resources office (especially academic and professional qualifications).

- TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORY - Concordia University Libraries does offer employees learning opportunities, but presently this information is not organized in one inventory.
Needs analysis

- Job descriptions were analyzed (Duties and responsibilities and Qualifications) to extract skills and knowledge perceived as relevant to positions.

- Requirements were listed under a broad category, e.g. ability to train, ability to give presentations, group instruction skills and teaching skills were listed under teaching skills.

- Divided into general skills and specific/technical skills.

- Tops skills asked for - communication, teaching and work prioritizing skills.

- Skills less in demand – initiative, multitasking, web usability and writing/editing.
Benchmarking

- Same analysis - job descriptions for similar positions at other academic libraries in North America
- Top skills asked for - communication, teamwork, designing/editing software
- Skills less in demand – detail oriented, accessibility, institutional repositories, cataloguing
- See graph for visual representation of comparison between skills at Concordia and other institutions
All knowledge sources

- Colleagues (WebTeam & WebPAC)
- General interest websites (e.g. Google)
- Web tutorials
- Wikis
- Listservs
- Email
- Professional literature
- Librarians outside Concordia
- Manuals
- Innovative Interfaces Inc documentation
- Colleagues (from Concordia, but not part of WebTeam or WebPAC)
- Websites (similar institutions)
- Conferences, workshops
- Concordia website
Internal sources

- Colleagues (WebTeam & WebPAC) 70%
- Wikis 9%
- Colleagues (from Concordia, but not part of WebTeam or WebPAC) 6%
- Email 6%
- Manuals 6%
- Concordia website 3%
External sources

- General interest websites (e.g. Google)
- Web tutorials
- Listservs
- Professional literature
- Librarians outside Concordia
- Innovative Interfaces Inc documentation
- Email
- Manuals
- Websites (similar institutions)
- Conferences, workshops

A KNOWLEDGE AUDIT AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Knowledge location

- 41% of knowledge is located on Concordia's website.
- 19% is located through colleagues' heads.
- 11% is found in Concordia wikis.
- 7% is accessed through the web in general.
- 11% is through Concordia documents.
- 11% is through emails.

A KNOWLEDGE AUDIT AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Knowledge transfer

- Email: 25%
- Committee meetings: 7%
- Phone: 2%
- Face to face: 2%
- Blog: 16%
- SharePoint: 16%
- Wiki: 16%
- Memos: 9%
- Intranet: 9%
- Knowledge sharing: 14%
Knowledge flow –
internal sources only
Knowledge flow – external sources included
Expertise nodes and flow — internal sources only

A KNOWLEDGE AUDIT AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Expertise nodes and flow – external sources included
Gap analysis

Knowledge category:
- XML, HTML, CSS
- Project management
- Innovative Interfaces products
- Web usability
- Metadata
- PHP
- Graphic design
- Electronic Records Management
- Expertise of staff
- JavaScript
- Negotiating
- Organization culture

Frequency

Self reported needed knowledge
Listed in job descriptions
Self reported needed skills

- Technical skills: 64%
- Management skills: 18%
- Library related skills: 15%
- Other skills: 3%
Hard to find information

Finding answers can be challenging in the following areas:

- ERM (especially about, but not limited to, background and development) – 3 participants
- Documentation of past decisions (e.g. previous calls made to Innovative, why certain changes were made, ordering history of certain products, etc) – 3 participants
- WebBridge – 2 participants
- Human Resources Management – 2 participants
- Organization of activities (which are the priorities and which are not)
- In progress projects (who is working on what)
- Usernames and passwords (needed to access certain modules, e.g. Admin, Usage statistics)
- Troubleshooting
- Graphic design
- Coding
Potential sources for hard to find information/knowledge

- Workshops & conferences – 4 participants
- Innovative Interfaces Inc advanced manuals – 2 participants
- Additional expertise (staff with understanding of web technologies and coding skills) – 2 participants
- Workflow and organizational charts from similar institutions – 2 participants
- Improved process documentation (within Concordia)
- Access to files & minutes
- Freedom to download applications
- Combined WebPAC/WebTeam/New Developments wiki or Sharepoint.
Conclusion

- Precious tacit knowledge is brought in or produced in the organization and the implementation of knowledge management strategies is likely to improve its availability for staff members.

- Concordia University Libraries, as an organization, excels at managing external explicit knowledge and information, therefore we think that the skills to manage internal tacit knowledge are already available; they just have to be used to fulfil this objective in a more organized manner.
Questions?

- ????
- ????
- ????
- ????

- Thank you.