PROJECT PORTRAIT

A review of the Knowledge Management Centre of the Economic and Human Development Department, City of Cape Town   **#27 (2012)**

UCT KNOWLEDGE CO-OP

What is this project about?

The Knowledge Management Centre (KMC) for a municipal department was set up by a Project Consultant in 1998, with the aim of providing a largely self-service resource centre to store and distribute appropriate and up-to-date information linking to economic development and tourism.

The aim of the project is briefly to evaluate the current processes of the KMC and to determine whether these continue to address the needs of its present clients and of potential clients within the City of Cape Town municipal services sector, also to establish whether the KMC is suitably lined up with modern information service delivery techniques. This "As is" assessment is compared with current global best practice in Knowledge Management (KM) for information services of a similar scope and kind to identify a "To be" cluster of facilities and services. A gap analysis identifies areas of change, skill acquisition and suitable strategies for closing the gaps.

What did the researchers do?

- Distributed a short questionnaire
- a series of focus interviews of selected staff
- a review of existing resources and services
- identification of existing client base from work records and circulation lists
- identification of potential client base
- desk research to identify international best practice for knowledge management
- gap analysis and desk research
- desk research to prepare a job specification for a person to reconfigure and run the KMC.
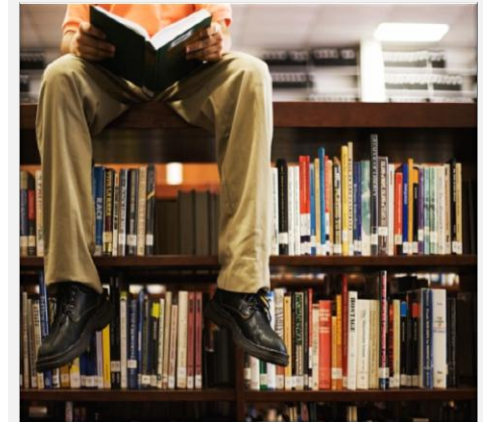
What should a modern 'library' look like?

What you need to know:

The municipal department approached UCT for the expertise needed to assess their existing services and develop a vision for how they could be updated and made more user-friendly.
In this particular case it was a KMC, but the same could be done for any other aspect.

The research findings

The KMC has been managed on a part-time basis since its inception. The responsibilities of the KMC manager have covered acquisition of materials identified by the staff of the EHD Department, processing and addition to the database, including the assignment of a Dewey Decimal Classification class number but no subject metadata.

Service to users has included question answering, identifying items of stock required, conducting searches of the KMC database and other sources via the internet and liaison with other information services within the Cape Town municipal structure.

Some current awareness was also undertaken through the medium of a monthly newsletter, sent by e-mail to a list of those requesting it.

The research deliverables

A report containing

- "As is" assessment.
- "To be" blueprint based on global best practices.
- Gap analysis and recommendations for closing the gap.
- Job specification for a KMC manager.

Using the research

At a later and, as yet undefined, stage it may be possible to extend similar services outside the municipal structure to allied services such as schools, public libraries and information services and NGOs; no consideration has been given to such extension in the present project report.

The study was completed in March 2012.

Want to know more?

The review was carried out by Emeritus Prof Peter G. Underwood and Dr Gretchen Smith, of the University of Cape Town. This summary is based on their evaluation of the Knowledge Management Centre of the Economic and Human Development Department (EHD). The full report can be accessed on the Co-op website.

The Knowledge Co-Op at the University of Cape Town

The UCT Knowledge Co-op aims to make it easier for community partners to access UCT's skills, resources and professional expertise. It helps initiate joint projects that benefit both the community partner and the university. The Co-op links community groups with appropriately qualified staff and students at UCT, and supports both partners throughout the project – from initial planning to final product.

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