PART II
The Accidental Knowledge Manager: Another Role for Independent Information Professionals
by Deb Hunt

Have you ever needed an existing print or digital file, document or image to do your work but couldn’t find what you needed? Did you need to reinvent the wheel when beginning a new project because you could not find information that resides somewhere on a shared server, your hard drive or in a filing cabinet?

If you’ve ever experienced this problem, then you can imagine what a stumbling block this must be to organizations of all types – from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies to government agencies.

Did you know?
- Organizations spend on average:
  - $20 in labor to file a document
  - $120 in labor to find a misfiled document
  - $220 in labor to reproduce a lost document
- 7.5 percent of all documents get lost; 3 percent of the remainder get misfiled
- Professionals spend 5-15 percent of their time reading information, but up to 50 percent looking for it
[Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers]

Is it any wonder that organizations of all sizes are drowning under a sea of digital and print documents, reducing their productivity and affecting their ROI?

Stephen Kaukonen, in a recent study entitled “Measuring ROI: An Award-Winning Accenture Case Study,” stated that every dollar spent on KM returned $25.06 to Accenture. This finding is a really powerful statement about the value of KM. How many other initiatives in an organization can boast a 25:1 return?

In the current economic climate, more than ever, organizations are striving to be lean and more competitive. There is a great opportunity to work with clients to fill this need to survive and thrive. Once they understand the impact that knowledge, enterprise or document management can have on their bottom line, they clamor to find a consultant who can help them.

Independent information professionals have skills that can be adapted and applied in a way that may not have occurred to them: to help organizations that are desperate to find their information assets (paper, digital, knowledge) in information overload reality. Even in tough economic times, clients recognize the competitive advantage they will gain by being able to access their knowledge easily and quickly. We can fill this need.

What Are Enterprise, Document, Record and Knowledge Management?

As I work on projects with clients, it is clear that there are many levels of information management. As solutions grow more robust, the line can blur between what kind of solution a vendor offers and what a client needs. What I do know, though, is that it’s best to right-size the software to the project.
Here are some basic definitions to understand the different types of information management:

- **Document management (DM)** encompasses indexing, searching, file check-in/check-out, version control, retention management and workflow for digital and print files.

- **Enterprise content management (ECM)** is the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. ECM tools and strategies allow the management of an organization's unstructured information, wherever that information exists. (www.aiim.org)

- **Records management (RM)** is defined as the systematic control of records throughout their life cycle including long-term archiving, automating retention and compliance policies, and ensuring legal, regulatory and industry compliance. (www arma.org)

- **Knowledge management (KM)** is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. Most often, generating value from such assets involves codifying what employees, partners and customers know and sharing that information among employees, departments and even with other companies in an effort to devise best practices. (www.cio.com)

**Case Study**

The staff of my client, a global architectural firm, were spinning their wheels trying to find images, documents and other resources that lived in many information silos. What they needed might be on someone’s desk in paper form, on that person’s computer, on the server or in a filing cabinet. This firm already was using Canto Cumulus software and had indexed some 30,000 images for staff to use in their work. There were 2.5 FTE staff devoted to this indexing, metadata and taxonomy creation and maintenance. I was thrilled when I discovered this system, but shocked to learn that they had never promoted this amazing, deep resource. When I mentioned this database in a meeting with the CEO and several department heads, the CEO told me he had tried it and hated the web interface. I immediately questioned why he wasn’t using the desktop client and he said he didn’t know there was one.

Upon further investigation, I learned they only paid for three desktop client licenses. When I suggested they buy at least six more and train key staff and the CEO to use it, they were surprised at how reasonable the cost was and did it immediately. The CEO was so impressed with his new search capability that it was implemented firm-wide. This step alone leveraged a rich resource they already had that was organized, accessible and had the copyright owned by the firm. But, there was still much work to do.

I did an information audit, created software criteria based on the audit, researched software solutions to meet those needs and presented a report and recommendations to the CEO and key staff. (This study took place over a couple of months.) I also recommended they hire an information professional to actually implement this project, which they did. However, I had to convince them that a non-IT person had the right skill set to do it. That person is still there today, wrangling assets, making them accessible and contributing to the ROI of the firm.

**The Accidental Knowledge Manager**

I got into knowledge, enterprise and document management because I had clients who needed library automation solutions. When these clients realized how easy it was to find externally produced documents, they understood the value of having their internally created documents just as easily findable. I jumped in with both feet using transferrable skills I already possessed. I also read and attended seminars related to this field so I could be better trained and informed.

With data growth and proliferation ongoing, organizations have two choices:

- **Maintain the status quo and hope employees can find relevant information when they need it**

- **Learn from what the Internet has taught us and leverage search technology to connect knowledge workers with information**

I prefer the latter strategy.
In December 2007 Gartner conducted a web-based survey of organizations and their use or intent to use processes and technologies related to information management and found that “of more than 400 respondents, 67% of enterprises had more than six repositories . . . In many cases, these multiple repositories consist of departmental solutions, and the content is often duplicated in other repositories in the organization.” [Source: Five Best Practices for Deploying SharePoint Alongside ECM Suites, Gartner RAS Core Research Note G00157266, Karen M. Sherga, Mark R. Gilbert, April 25, 2008.]

“Files may reside in local laptops, email attachments and on paper averaging 19 copies per document.” [Source: International Data Corporation (IDC) & Document Management Alliance (DMA)]

It is clear that organizations need to invest in an information management solutions, and IIPs are positioned to bring them the expertise they need to be successful.

“If we play our KM or ‘knowledge engineer’ cards right, there are very few areas in any organization in which we won’t have significant contributions to make.” [Source: “Education for Changing Roles” by Gaye Colvin. Information Outlook, Oct/Nov 2009, p. 21.]

So what are you waiting for? Here is an opportunity that is only destined to grow as organizations sink under the weight of information and knowledge they cannot find.