Strengthening IL Competencies through Incorporating Personal Information Management (PIM) Skills

Gaps in IL Skills

- **Information Literacy (IL) is now a matured discipline**
- **Various IL models and standards are proposed**
  - **Provide unique perspectives and interpretation of IL activities**
- **A majority of them don't put adequate emphasis on the management of gathered information**

Gaps in IL Skills

* **ACRL IL standard mentions "The information literate student … incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system", however its:**
  - **Emphasis is on information summarization, synthesis, and repackaging.**
* **Seven Pillars of Information Skills – one of the pillars is on 'manage information', but its:**
  - **Emphasis is on ethical use of information, use of bibliographic tools, record of resources found and used, and help others with the needed information.**

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The changing Scenario

Personal devices and cheap digital storage have allowed people to acquire and keep huge number of information objects

Inability of human beings to accurately recall the information pieces they have previously seen, used or stored

Absence of basic PIM skills may result in delays in information retrieval/use, even lose of information forever

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IL and **PIM** are two closely related concepts and in the absence of one the other cannot achieve its full benefits

What is Personal Information Management (PIM)?

A set of activities that people perform to acquire or create, organize, maintain, retrieve, use and distribute the information needed to meet life's many goals and to fulfill life's many roles and responsibilities (Jones, 2007).

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Some Examples of Personal Information

- **Personal text, numerical, and AV files**
- **Downloaded documents**
- **Personal notes, scraps, post-it notes, etc.**
- **Address books**
- **Task lists; important dates and reminders**
- **Email messages**
- **Bookmarks of important websites**
- **Archived information objects**
- **Personal records (financial transactions, insurances, health records, etc.)**
- **Personal and family property records**
- **Personal and family photos and videos**
- **…**

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Characteristics of PIM

Jones (2008) suggests **3** main areas of PIM activities:

1. Finding Activities

- **Seeking already collected/stored information or acquiring completely new information**
- **May involve activities such as searching, browsing and asking**
- **We also need to know:**
  - **What information is already available and where;**
  - **How to identify/search/discover and locate it,**
  - **Bring together the relevant information scattered across different gadgets/ locations**

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2. Keeping Activities

* **People are likely to 'keep' the potentially useful information (already consumed or unconsumed) for its possible future use**

* **Factors usually considered for 'keeping' information are:**
  - **Level of effort required to keep it**
  - **Best way(s) to store it for future re-finding**
  - **Location/device selection**
  - **Expected useful life of the stored information**

Thus, 'keeping' is not just saving useful information rather properly organizing it

Information Organization
'Filers' and 'Pilers'*

Filers

➡ **Use a more structured approach for organizing documents based on certain attributes (a particular activity/task, subject, format, creation date, etc.)**

➡ **It is usually easy and less time consuming to retrieve the stored items**

Pilers

➡ **Keep piling up documents without using any schema or structure**

➡ **Mostly retrieval is based on memory recall and likely to result in delays or even lose of useful information**

* Malone (1983)

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Information Organization

Spring Cleaners

➡ **Do not use a filing system all the time but periodically attempt to organize information items based on certain attributes**

3. 'Meta-level' Activities

Activities useful in information organization and future re-finding

- **Organizing & Maintaining:** **Organizing, categorizing and labeling items**
  - **May also include activities - renaming documents, moving to different folders/devices, deleting, backing-up, and archiving.**

- **Measuring & Evaluating:** **Periodically evaluating privacy and security issues; review the current PIM practices for improvement**

- **Sense-making process:** **Identifying items useful in meeting part of the information needs as well as identify gaps in the existing information seeking**

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Consequences of Lacking PIM Skills

Inadequate integration of PIM skills with the standard IL skills may result in:

- **wastage of time, effort, and energy**
- **may also create information fragmentation and information overload**

Information Fragmentation

- **When documents are stored in different physical locations, in different formats and in multiple devices – desktop, notebook, smart phones and other devices**

- **Even within the same device, information may be scattered into different files, folders, and incompatible application software**

- **Info. fragmentation may result in wastage of time and effort in locating the needed information**

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Information Overload

➡️ **Information overload occurs when users do not have enough time to read, understand, digest and utilize the available information**

➡️ **Each new technology is further adding to the current information overload**

➡️ **Information overload may even lead to 'information anxiety', resulting in frustration, hypertension, distraction, confusion, irritation, and annoyance**

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Mapping of IL and PIM Activities

IL Skills	PIM Activities/Skills

IL Skills

1. Defining information needs/task

PIM Activities/Skills

➡ Consult **personal info. space** for documents relevant to the task in hand

➡ Use existing information to understand different dimensions of the task

➡ Determine the need for **new** information

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Mapping of IL and PIM Activities

IL Skills	PIM Activities/Skills
2. Selecting information sources	➡ Identify and select info. from **existing** personal folders/ devices ➡ Identify and select info. sources for seeking **new** information ➡ **Avoid creating information overload**

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Mapping of IL and PIM Activities

IL Skills	PIM Activities/Skills
3. Seeking & evaluating information from different sources	➡ **Finding:** Retrieve new info. as well as from the personal information space ➡ **Keeping:** Decide what info. to keep for re-use – storage devices, folders, formats, etc. ➡ **Meta-level activities:** ✳ *Organizing*: Categorizing and labeling ✳ *Maintaining*: Renaming, moving to different folders/ devices, deleting, backing-up, and archiving

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Mapping of IL and PIM Activities

IL Skills	PIM Activities/Skills

3. Seeking & evaluating information from different sources (contd.)

➡️ **Meta-level activities (contd.)**

✹ *Evaluating:* **Review privacy and security issues; review current info. management strategies**

✹ *Sense Making:* **Identify more relevant info. sources; identify gaps in the existing info. seeking**

✹ *Information Flows:* **Identify alerting services to receive updates on the topic**

✹ **Prefer 'filing' over 'piling' for information keeping**

✹ **Avoid information fragmentation**

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Mapping of IL and PIM Activities

IL Skills	PIM Activities/Skills
4. Using information	➡ **Repackaging of new info. with the existing info. from the personal space**
5. Information Synthesis	

Mapping of IL and PIM Activities

IL Skills	PIM Activities/Skills

6. Evaluation/ Project Termination

➡ **Identify and keep relevant info. for possible future use**

➡ ***Re-organization:* Re-categorizing and labeling; re-naming files and folders; moving items to different folders/devices; deleting unwanted files/folders**

➡ ***Archiving* of used and un-used materials for possible future use – decide where to archive and for how long**

➡ ***On-going monitoring* of new information for similar future projects**

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Conclusion

- **Some of the PIM concepts and techniques are well-grounded in IL activities**
- **An incorporation of selected PIM skills into IL training programs can significantly improve their impact and benefits**
- **The existing IL models/standards also need to be reviewed to come-up with a more comprehensive skill set to further empower our information users**

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