Guest editorial

Global information integrity: an overview

A lot has happened during the past 50 years. The internet has empowered the universal accessibility of information and has enhanced the ability of everyone to create it. In addition, it has enabled and widened access to products and services in a matter of seconds. Amidst this innovation, there are examples of information abuse where details are manipulated causing users to question what is real and what is fake. Hence, there is a greater need to validate information with the resulting fundamental problem of information reliability (Smedley, 2018).

This special issue of *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication* is concerned with innovation and developments in information integrity, as it relates to global knowledge, communication and world memory. Encompassing two viewpoint articles and six discussion papers, it considers the extent to which there is a need for acceptance and a shared understanding of the need for "Global information integrity".

What is information integrity?

We live in the information age with ease of access to massive amounts of information enabled through technological developments. As information is consumed through wider, quicker and more diverse approaches, integrity is increasingly important with more emphasis on its trustworthiness and dependability and with a focus on the accuracy, consistency and reliability of information content, and its processes and systems. Information integrity is also a prerequisite for many management decisions and is an important element of success throughout the information world (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). Information with a lower level of trust associated with it represents a personal or organisational risk with potential limitations on the overall impact of business success and organisational health. Disinformation and information warfare pose a significant immense threat to information integrity with the deliberate spreading of false material to negatively influence public opinion and obscure truth. As an important element of modern-day democracy, it is vital that information generated regarding global developments maintains its reliability in currency and value within its various audiences.

So should organisations care about information integrity?

In the highly digital and connected age that we live in, information integrity is an increasingly important part of corporate and brand social responsibility. Organisations and business are pivotal as creators and gatekeepers of information. However, accessibility brings responsibility with it. Often, social responsibility in organisations involves supporting a cause or having a designated charity where a percentage of their proceeds go. Today's customer is an emotional buyer and decision-maker. They take reputation and trust into account before deciding who do business with. With social media and a 24-7 information cycle, brands at the centre of controversies, whether true or false, quickly become major headlines and gain social publicity. Narratives, whether authentic or manufactured, can spread virally and further influence feelings about a brand. Disinformation plays a dangerous role in influencing audiences. Hence, it is important to ensure that the information and narratives surrounding brands are honest and accurate.

How can information integrity be protected?

Disinformation can alter reputation, disrupt public discourse and erode trust within organisations, individuals, institutions and government. Hence, it is important to take a stand to ensure that information integrity is paramount – individually and organisationally. Brands, organisations, technology solutions and consumers need to be held accountable in fighting this problem.

Organisational communication strategy *(internal communication and information integrity)*

The impact of effective cross-organisational communications as an important element of managing knowledge is highlighted in Alison John's viewpoint article. She cites the value of creating and building relationships, pursuing opportunities for dialogue, gathering feedback and recognising that the human stories matter as much as headline news. Tone, language and style are important in presenting graphics and imagery to build corporate brand and confidence across an organisation to ensure that communications show integrity and build on earned trust and confidence to minimise opportunities for "fake news" to fill communication gaps. At times of change, where "no news" leaves a void, and updates are eagerly sought, all information, good or bad, coming from a trusted source, is valuable. It is important that "fake news" is not allowed to creep into the communications mix, when staff are too worried or stressed to notice subtle changes of communication style.

Effective information management *(knowing the value of information; how can we teach our students to have analytical minds?)*

Information is a key element of communication. In her viewpoint article, Marie-Helene Zimmermann – Nilsson highlights that, in an era of risk where previous certainties are under scrutiny, students, as tomorrow's managers, must continually develop skills and capacities to possess analytical minds and acknowledge the value of information. She emphasises that the impact of the internet into people's every-day life has profoundly changed interactions between individuals and altered the character of communication and privacy through greater access placing pressure on established social and ethical standards. Thought needs to be given on the sharing of information and its potential to cross personal and professional boundaries highlighting that the dividing line between the two is diminished and is often vague and inarticulate. From an ethical perspective, this unintentional information dispersion challenges conventional approaches leading to unintentional misunderstandings, mis-communication and confusion, often leading to stress, angst and increased workload across information systems.

Information integrity and cross-cultural working *(the importance of information access of cultural values to the principles of sustainable development in climate change)*

This paper proposes a methodological approach using enhanced information access and shared beliefs to provide awareness of cultural values and inform the implementation of an environmental policy as part of sustainable development in climate change. This is illustrated with application to a specific population in a small town using observation and in-depth interviews. The goal is to produce an informed and knowledgeable constructivist model which improves continuously through enhanced access to information and thereby achieves the goal of providing and enriching a sustainable environment.

Difficulties with accessing digital resources *(peculiarity of the bit rot and link rot phenomena)*

This paper focuses on the bit rot and link rot phenomena which describe the inability to access specific contents or the inability to use specific digital resources. It attempts to answer the question as to whether it is possible to eliminate the phenomena from the internet space. The associated research has revealed the reasons for their occurrence and offers recommendations on how to minimise their occurrence. However, in the current digital ecosystem, it proposes that it is not possible to completely eliminate the link rot and bit rot phenomena. Moreover, it presents the terms of "digital bumps" which cause "digital tsunami".

Information integrity in entrepreneurism *(influence of knowledge management in product innovation by intrapreneurial firms)*

This paper focuses on how knowledge management facilitates new product innovation in intrapreneurial companies. Findings suggest that the innovation of new products is critical for organisational information sharing among various departments. Responsiveness to market needs relies on the authenticity of customer data and the extent that the company is able to share these data with research and product development departments to motivate new products and fulfil customer needs. Developing better methods to share knowledge and intelligence among employees about the customers' data is a critical success factor for new product innovation.

A South African code for information integrity *(assessment of a South Africa national consultative workshop on the protection of personal information act [POPIA])*

This paper assesses the impact of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) in South African universities to formulate a code of conduct to improve compliance. Although it was evident that most of the participants were not aware of the POPIA, technology-enabled internal control systems enhanced information integrity for participants. Outcomes were instrumental to the formulation of universities' code of conduct in line with POPIA and would be transferable to other sectors such as health and infrastructure. They will also impact on South African trade relations with European countries as steps are taken to comply with the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Information integrity across social networks *(whom to appease and whom to circumvent: analyzing knowledge sharing with social networks)*

This paper analyses knowledge sharing using social network analysis to provide objective insights into the network structures and roles through simple patterns and arrangements of relationships. It makes a detailed analysis of the knowledge sharing network among the student researcher community using a variety of parameters to form a differential analysis of the knowledge sharing pattern among the research scholars.

Clarifying influential factors on customer identify and access management *(proposing a conceptual framework for customer identity and access management: a qualitative approach)*

This paper proposes a conceptual framework to introduce the different dimensions of customer identity and access management (CIAM) towards exploiting them in organisations. CIAM focuses on the connectivity with the customer when accessing any type of systems,

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on-premises and in the Cloud, from registration to track. Results indicate that customer identity management, customer access management, information technology and business management are the most important factors affecting the identification of CIAM dimensions. Organisations could use the proposed conceptual model towards identification and offering customised products and services solutions to their customers.

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Enhancing global information integrity

How can these diverse elements of information management contribute to harness greater impact on global information integrity? Communication provides an ideal overarching approach to information with technology providing a cross-boundary sharing vehicle to enhance engagement and understanding. The greater the real-life relevance of the collective "story", the stronger the impact of the information and the security of its source and message, thereby increasing impact. With more organisations innovating and customising their information reach through a variety of engagement approaches, so the impact of information grows reliant on a secure base of global information integrity.

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References

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Smedley, J.K. (2018), "Enhancing information impact: how do we make the most of our information senses?", *Information and Learning Science*, Vol. 119 Nos 3/4, pp. 142-144, doi: 10.1108/ILS-02-2018-0010.