Global Sharing of Consulting Knowledge

Cynthia L. Bernstein
Andersen Consulting
Andersen Consulting Technology Park
3773 Willow Road, Northbrook, IL 60062
cynthia.l.bernstein@ac.com

Knowledge is a valuable asset that is a challenge to share globally. At Andersen Consulting,[1] the knowledge is our collective consulting expertise, which includes how we do our work, what work we have done, and current developments in our lines of work. The users of this knowledge are the over 40,000 Andersen consultants worldwide who sell their services to external clients. Our group works to conceptualize knowledge management issues and address them by developing tools, interfaces, processes, and architectures to facilitate knowledge sharing. To this end, we collaborate with a large community of knowledge managers, who own and maintain many of the hundreds of Lotus Notes®[2] databases located throughout the world.

With our knowledge management community, we have been pursuing a variety of approaches to facilitate access to knowledge in the short-term. One initiative provides a central repository of interfaces ("knowledge maps") that link to knowledge. Users can look here to select a map to use to navigate directly to knowledge stored in multiple databases, without needing to know which databases to access and when. Another approach is to build such interfaces into specific databases. Our knowledge management communities have been building different types of these interfaces ("home pages") to provide one-stop shopping for users. There are many of these home pages scattered throughout our Notes databases, and we are working to make them more accessible and easier to develop. For users, we are developing a central registry of all home pages; for home page developers, we are providing design tips and tools. We are also working on other knowledge navigation

architectures and applications, including enhanced search and profiling tools, and a managed vocabulary. In pursuing these alternate approaches, we see their trade-offs in quality, applicability, and maintenance.

We face many challenges, which include ensuring that knowledge is easily found, achieves closure (i.e., *all* available relevant knowledge is found), is high quality, adds value, addresses the needs of varied sets of users, and is gathered from both internal (e.g., Notes) and external (e.g., Internet) sources. As we work to provide thought leadership and tools for knowledge management, we need to keep abreast of the newest approaches and technologies from AI and Knowledge Management researchers and practitioners.

Previously at Andersen Consulting's worldwide training center, we designed Integrated Performance Support for Learning[3], electronic systems that provide learners with information of different media at point of need during training sessions (Bernstein & Osgood 1995). In these systems, we stored all of the multimedia content centrally and provided multiple retrieval interfaces—each designed around particular work tasks of the user.

References

Bernstein, C. L. and Osgood, R. E. Support System Indexing for Learn-by-Doing Educational Environments, *Working Notes, AAAI Fall Symposium: AI Applications in Knowledge Navigation & Retrieval*, Cambridge, MA, 1995.

Winslow, C. D. and Bramer, W. L. *FutureWork: Putting Knowledge to Work in the Knowledge Economy*, The Free Press, 1994.

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[2] Lotus Notes® is a registered trademark of Lotus Development Corporation.

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[3] IPSL is a natural extension of Integrated Performance Support (IPS) systems (Winslow and Bramer 1994).