Hidden seams: Auditing Knowledge, Information and Communication

Information Innovation @ UTS & ISKO Singapore

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Straits Knowledge
Agenda

• What do we mean by “audit”?  
• The curious history of KIC audits  
• What can we learn from each other?
# Types of Audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Formative</th>
<th>Summative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inventory Audit</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discovery Audit</strong></td>
<td><strong>Value Audit</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowledge resources, Knowledge flows,</td>
<td>• Checking practices and resources against needs</td>
<td>• ROI of investment in IM/KM? (Cost benefits)</td>
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<td>• Knowledge gaps</td>
<td>• Very open-ended, emergent</td>
<td>• Do we create sufficient value from our knowledge? (Asset capitalization)</td>
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<td>• Sets goals based on discoveries</td>
<td>• Checking our datasets to see if we can get evidence to improve our practices</td>
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**Assessment Audit**

- Benchmarking practices
- Checking compliance with a standard (e.g. ISO 30401)
- KM quality check
- Maturity assessment

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1. STAPHS
2. FLOWS
3. GOALS & NEEDS
4. ENABLERS
5. PROCESSES
6. CAPABILITIES
7. OUTCOMES

INDIRECT AUDITS

DIRECT AUDITS

Inventory Audits

Discovery Audits

Assessment Audits or Discovery Audits

Value Audits
The Strange History of KIC Audits

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication audit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information audit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge audit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In summary...

We’ve forgotten our history

• Records audits (1920s onwards)
• Communication audits (1960s onwards)
• Information audits (1970s onwards)
• Knowledge audits (1990s onwards)

We all mean different things by “k-audit”

• We focus on different things (assets, resources, flows, processes, capabilities)
• We have different goals
• We speak at cross-purposes – it’s hard to compare data and learn

Picture credit: http://tobendlight.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/tumblr_kw9zs5SCyK1qzmn5wo1_400.jpg
Communication Audits

• Very wide variety of applications
  – Public relations, communications effectiveness, information flows to stakeholders, perceptions, change management, organisation development

• Very rich portfolio of methods
  – Content analysis, social network analysis, observation, climate surveys, ethnological techniques, action research, focus groups, influence mapping, soft systems approaches, narrative methods
Information Audits

• Narrow applications
  – Cost benefit analysis of information resources and services, inventories for improved management control, compliance and risk management, strategic use of information

• Relatively narrow portfolio of methods
  – Surveys, interviews, documented evidence, standards-based assessment instruments
Knowledge Audits

• Wide variety of applications
  – Inventories of knowledge and knowledge flows for improved management control, evaluations of knowledge needs, KM enablers, KM processes, value creation from knowledge – relatively sceptical about formal compliance assessments

• Relatively narrow portfolio of methods
  – Surveys, interviews, some generalised assessment instruments (e.g. maturity models), beginning to explore use of ISO 30401
## Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Communication Audits</th>
<th>Information Audits</th>
<th>Knowledge Audits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applications</strong></td>
<td>Wide range</td>
<td>Narrow range</td>
<td>Wide range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Wide variety</td>
<td>Narrow variety</td>
<td>Narrow variety</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shortcomings</strong></td>
<td>Field appears fragmented, ICA attempt at a comprehensive and systematic audit instrument in the 1970s failed (probably overly complex/ onerous to implement)</td>
<td>Very focused, but can lose sense of human context of information use</td>
<td>Unfocused, literature and practice appear confused, range of methods insufficiently diverse for the range of applications</td>
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</table>

**Richness**

**Rigour**

**Formative**
Discussion

*What can communication, information and knowledge audits learn from each other?*
Thank You!

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If you would like to know more about knowledge audits, we have a workshop in January 2022. For more information visit www.straitsknowledge.com