SharePoint is Plug and Play for Librarians

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Introduction

How can librarians perform their collection assessments and reference research with SharePoint in their office environment? Last year, it was exposed that librarians were using SharePoint in the corporate, government, and non-profit sectors (Weldon, 2010). Further exploration, through SharePoint Without Coding, Volume 2: My Notes on the Further Embedment of the Librarian, the step by step process of how one non-profit librarian found out what other librarians were doing with SharePoint out-of-the-box is explained in detail. As a solo librarian found out how SharePoint could meet her library management needs, views from other librarians began to correlate their social media site skills with the ways they have all been embedded within the SharePoint 2003 and 2007 platform.

Determining the Way

Through a deeper analysis of the librarians’ responses in Volume 2 of SharePoint Without Coding, it was shown that the government sector had the largest known library collections based on a SharePoint platform (2011). The problem that occurred in the corporate, government, and non-profit sectors was that “out-of-the-box” SharePoint was geared for staff with a project management and computer programming background. Was there a way for librarians to avoid total dependence on project managers and computer programmers to customize SharePoint to fit library management needs?

As soon as SharePoint made its debut, consulting firms have been frantically creating “add-on” applications that the different sectors could purchase to make SharePoint more “user-friendly”. Since SharePoint seemed to some librarians as a “document eating monster”, they could not find the time to train themselves on the many facets of SharePoint—collaboration, searching, site architecture, content-typing, look-up fields, and workflow streamlining (2011).

The new study in Volume 2 explains how librarians had found a way to customize their SharePoint sites that decreased their workload and increased productivity in their researching capabilities within their sectors (2011). SharePoint, once seen as a playground for code and project management strategy, started to become a “plug and play” field for the novice who had social networking skills from MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

SharePoint was found to be a “plug and play” social networking tool for the office. It helped to embed the researching skills of the librarians within the normal business flow of their sectors (2011).
Research Questions for Internal Customization without Coding

In further analysis of how librarians could use SharePoint in their assignments, mechanisms would need to be created in order to capture resources that would respond to the information needs of the organization (2011). Questions were designed to find out the motivation of staff to share information to capture organizational knowledge (qualitative artifacts):

1. How to provide a mechanism to integrate the organizational knowledge of staff into the larger goals and objectives of the non-profit association?
2. How to assign appropriate staff and members to select appropriate qualitative artifacts for the organizational knowledge base?
3. How to create selection criteria for the selection of qualitative artifacts? Define the boundaries of the knowledge base?

Through the answering of these questions, the librarian would begin to understand that a SharePoint site could be constructed as a professional learning community filled with staff who would want to learn and “work collaboratively, and hold yourself accountable for results” (DuFour, 2004). This has been found to be a necessity in order for SharePoint to work thus showing a collaborative flow. Staff may find a need of a type of information. Through the embedded librarian, their needs are explained further into questions (2011). The librarians perform the research to answer those questions. With the research found, the librarians are able to analyze the information into solid answers to fulfill the needs of the staff. The research is performed from the knowledge base site that would have been created from the SharePoint platform. The librarians have defined workflows that help them to manage knowledge from staff on programs, projects, initiatives, and publications that are being worked on by their organizations.
Conceptual Map of Workflows

Inventoring the organizational knowledge would allow the upper management to see what information that the knowledge base would be missing. This would encourage staff to share information and to help the library gain more up to date information for future research.

The following schema, as shown in *SharePoint Without Coding, Volume 2: My Notes on the Further Embedment of the Librarian*, would demonstrate how the research questions developed into functional mechanisms to help capture or classify qualitative artifacts currently within or that would need to be within the online knowledge base of a non-profit association library (2007).
The above figure shows how an embedded librarian could use collaborative research to assess the information for the SharePoint knowledge base (Weldon, 2009). It would be based on five requirements of the information that would be defined within SharePoint site workflows: relevancy, currency, quality, feedback, and the unknown factor.

The relevancy requirement would be based on how the information showed dedication, responsiveness, respectfulness, teamwork, communication and committed efforts to answer members’ requests (2009). The workflow would rate the information through a system of 1 meaning “least relevant” and 10 meaning “most relevant” (2011).

The currency requirement would be rated on the publisher’s date and timeliness of the information through a rating system of 1 meaning “least current” and 10 meaning “most current” (2011). The quality of the information would be measured by subject matter, relation to other titles, overall purpose, audience, demand, author’s reputation, availability, condition, and graphics through a rating system of 1 meaning “poor quality” and 10 meaning “best quality” (2011).

The feedback would be coded by subject areas of the collection. The code would help find the unaccountable information that staff would:

- Gather all sources found to replace missing information.
- Ask consultants in their area for the missing information.
- Track projects in their area for the missing information.

The Research Plan

Through a 3-phased approach, 530 member sample of 35,000 members of a non-profit association library helped to define how well the library (and librarian) was already embedded within the association or any organization (2007). Phase 1 was the qualitative review of anecdotal feedback from members and staff between the years of 1998 to 2007. Phase 2 was a survey asking librarians about the different types of social media tools they have used for their research. Phase 3 was a survey asking librarians how they used SharePoint. The following diagram shows the time each phase had taken.
This is described in more detail in *SharePoint Without Coding, Volume 2: My Notes on the Further Embedment of the Librarian* (2011). **Phase 1**’s anecdotal feedback came from subject discussions and requests from members. Feedback was also reviewed from phone call requests captured in the request database. **Phase 2** was to find out what Web 2.0 tools were being used by business related professionals. I had 441 respondents who were under the following subject concentrations: Library Science; Business; Education; Other. **In Phase 3**, librarians world-wide were surveyed to find out how they have used SharePoint. **Phase 3** allowed a breakdown of what social media tools librarians would use in SharePoint. The document library tool was used by all sectors (government, education, associations, and private). E-alerts seemed to be used only by associations and pictures library tool was used only by the government sector. **Government librarians** were found to use SharePoint the most.

**Conclusion**

SharePoint can be customized through social networking skills without the help of “add-on” applications. Through “out-of-the-box” features, librarians can “plug and play” what components they would want to help with their library management. This approach takes minimal training and would create a happier environment for librarians.

**References**


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