



Knowledge Management at the NATO Defense College: Restructuring the Library for an Enlarged Mission

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the case of a special library working in collaboration with communication and information services and using knowledge management principles to adapt its role within an evolving information landscape. The library at the NATO Defense College has had difficulty convincing its users to favor its complex and nuanced digital catalogue over the simplicity and immediacy of Google. As rosters for NDC Courses change frequently, it has been a challenge to keep its user base informed while it is constantly overturning.

The library recognized its own particular role and challenges within a specialized institution, then examined the distinct needs of its two most prominent Communities of Practice: Course Members and Faculty Advisers. We then addressed the research and managerial challenges involved with servicing these Communities, namely the desire for simpler means of research and the fact of consistent rollover.

The library formalized its internal knowledge cycle of translating tacit knowledge of outgoing Community Practitioners into explicit knowledge for incoming Practitioners by developing a prototypal web portal via SharePoint. The prototype acts as a template for user access within both Communities, as a discussion forum for NDC and as an institutional memory for library staff to draw upon when assisting novitiate users.

The library's progression was formalized through interdepartmental rebalancing of roles and the official reconstitution of the library as the Library & Knowledge Centre. Instead of viewing itself solely as a conduit through which users can find the information they need, the Library & Knowledge Center adapted its organizational structure to facilitate needs for information organization and knowledge transformation within an adapted SECI cycle.

The NDC Communication and Information services have also handled security aspects—which are crucial in a NATO-based environment. The project is also addressing website design and work flows analytically. At the end of the story, the LKC structure will be totally overhauled with a redistribution of staff's roles and responsibilities, and the application of a combination of publishing, knowledge management, and traditional library concepts.