Information Literacy in the Corporate Environment:

Teaching the scientist, engineer and business professional

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Places I have worked...
We’ll be focusing on multinationals, but not including . . .

- non-profit organizations
- government agencies
- small business
- hospitals
- law firms
We’ll be focusing on the expert and professional, *but not including* . . .

the downtrodden support staff who do all the real work, and are chained to their desks, while the privileged crowd go off to endless meetings, fly all over the stinking planet, and snarf down the best donuts!
Who are these so-called “experts”? They are a motley crew

- research scientist
- scientist/manager
- engineer
- engineer/manager
- corporate lawyer
- marketing, finance
- public relations, advertising
- regulatory, quality
What the heck is an expert anyway?
How do experts behave?

- excel mainly in their own domain(s)
- perceive large meaningful patterns in their domain(s) and use forward reasoning to solve problems
- think fast because they have internalized much into long term memory
- categorize ideas within their domain(s) semantically or by broad principles
- analyze qualitatively and spot ill-defined problems quickly
- strong self monitoring skills within their domain(s)
Organizational & Social Pressures

- **role conflict** – are they here to decide or explain?
- **autonomy** – do they have carte blanche or are they micro-managed?
- **general knowledge** – are they free to concentrate on their domain(s)?
- **status** – is their expertise recognized and valued?
- **recognition** – teams? individuals? demigods?
- **knowledge management** – are vital pieces of information locked in someone’s file cabinet?
- **keeping current** – do they have institutional support to nurture and further their expertise?
Information Seeking Scientist

- medium cycle of information
- lone-wolf attitude
- respects the research process
- favors cutting-edge data found in journals
- seeks answers to big-picture issues
- tolerates the rhetoric of other domains

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Information Seeking Engineer

- fast cycle of information
- favors traditional data found in books
- seeks answers to specific problems
- proximity of data/services is important
- resists the rhetoric of other domains
Information Seeking
Business Professional

- medium cycle of information
- asking a question may mean more work
- asking a question may slow down the process
- favors colleagues/experts over documents
- understands team dynamics
- open to the rhetoric of other domains
Where do they get their information?
What is their level of Information Literacy?

- unable to determine the nature and extent of the information needed
- not aware of full range of services available
- unable to retrieve information effectively from information systems
- unable to evaluate and filter information
- information overload
- unable to exploit technology to manage information
What do you teach them?

- what the library can do for them, as opposed to other service units
- to consider the library before embarking on a project
- streamlined, effective search techniques – tips that save them time
- what they can get for themselves and what they have to ask you for
- to be mindful of copyright issues
- computer literacy
How do you teach them?

- promote library services
- conduct formal and informal tutoring of end-user resources
- demonstrate your expertise, do not talk about your expertise
- play it soft - look for the teachable moment
- show up at their departmental and project meetings
- all promotion/reference/instruction MUST be fast and streamlined
Where to go for further reading

- information seeking behavior & knowledge management / information science
- expertise theory & organizational behavior / psychology
- information literacy / library science & education
- learning behavior & metacognition / education