*Journal of Universal Computer Science, vol. 8, no. 5 (2002), 453-455*
*submitted: 15/5/02, accepted: 26/5/02, appeared: 28/5/02* © *J.UCS*

# J.UCS Special Issue

# I-KNOW '02

# People-Oriented Knowledge Management

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It is widely recognized that the transitions to an information society and a global knowledge economy will be the most important social and economic changes of the next decade. The global knowledge economy with its high innovation speed and an increasing demand of knowledge intensive products and services calls for new management tools and methods. Therefore, efficient management of knowledge has become imperative for almost all types of organizations.

Knowledge management can be addressed from two different perspectives. The first perspective places the emphasis on information technologies as enabling technologies. The second perspective is more people-oriented as it focuses on people and organizations. The difference between these two perspectives is the level at which knowledge management is applied.

The objective of technology-oriented knowledge management is to support knowledge workers at an operational level. That is, information technologies are used to provide the knowledge somebody needs to perform a specific task as well and as efficiently as possible. Often, this requires a careful and smooth integration of knowledge management tools with business process management tools.

In people-oriented knowledge management, the focus is on the people and the organization rather than on the technology. People-oriented knowledge management tries to find answers to questions such as "How can we improve our communication culture?", "How can we manage our human capital more efficiently?", "What methods and incentives exist to foster knowledge sharing and transfer in our organization?". In addition, impact assessment studies are part of people-oriented knowledge management. Typical questions in this context are "How do information technologies change an organization's communication culture?", "How do the

employees of an organization get along with the new tools and the possibilities they offer?".

The objective of this special issue is to provide an overview of the mainstream activities in people-oriented knowledge management. Eight international experts in knowledge management present their views on the topic. They do not only give answers to the above questions. Instead, they supplement them with their own questions to the research community, hoping to provide a further important stimulus to this fascinating and still so unexplored research field. In detail, the papers address the following topics:

Johann Günther from Krems University (Austria) argues in his paper "*The New Mobility of Our Society Caused by Telecommunications*" that the ubiquity of information and telecommunication technologies caused the change of the industrial society into the information society. One impact of this change is that tourism will develop to be one of the most promising economic fields in the knowledge society.

In her contribution "*The Knowledge-Attention Gap: Do we Underestimate the Problem of Information Overload?*" Ursula Schneider from Graz University (Austria) provides solutions to overcome the gap between the increasing amount of new technical knowledge and the little use of existing knowledge.

"*Knowledge on Demand: Knowledge and Expert Discovery*" is the title Mark Maybury from MITRE Corporation (USA) chooses to outline his experience with intelligent tools that support the automated discovery of distributed experts and communities of expertise, the automated detection and tracking of emerging topics from unstructured multimedia data, and capabilities to increase organizational awareness.

"*Ontology-based Skills Management: Goals, Opportunities and Challenges*" by Jacqueline Reich, Peter Brockhausen, Thorsten Lau and Ulrich Reimer from Rentenanstalt/Swiss Life (Switzerland) report on the skills management system developed at Swiss Life to support skills gap analysis and professional development.

Skills management has a lot to do with management and monitoring of human capital. Andrea Kasztler and Karl-Heinz Leitner from ARC Seibersdorf Research (Austria) describe in their contribution "*Bibliometric Analysis and Visualisation of Intellectual Capital*" how a visualization tool can help analyze the human capital data of an organization.

Shanta Liyanage from The University of Auckland (New Zealand) offers in his paper "*Knowledge and Intellectual Management Processes: Grounding Knowledge of Understanding the Organisational Learning*" an interpretative perspective on knowledge and intellectual capital development. Based on a study conducted across 140 companies he shows how learning mechanisms can play an important role in organizational knowledge development.

In their paper "*Fostering Knowledge Communication: Concept and Implementation*", Rüdiger Reinhardt and Beate Stattkus from University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) describe an approach for the transfer of knowledge between a leaving employee and a successor. The key idea of this approach is to promote a mentorship or partnership philosophy.

The last two papers of this special issue deal with knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing in specific domains. The paper "*Knowledge Transfer in Recycling Networks: Fostering Sustainable Development*" by Elisabeth Milchrahm and Arnulf

Hasler from Graz University (Austria) highlight how knowledge transfer can be institutionalized in recycling networks. The authors argue that the factor "mutual trust" is an important prerequisite in this context.

Anita Komlodi from UMBS Baltimore (USA) entitled her contribution "*The Role of Interaction Histories in Mental Model Building and Knowledge Sharing in the Legal Domain*". Her focus is on the role of interaction histories and history-based interface tools in supporting mental model development of legal information seekers of a topical area and sharing this information with other users.

With this selection the readers will get a very good and comprehensive overview of the state-of-the art in people-oriented knowledge management. We hope that the readers will enjoy these papers as much as we did !

Klaus Tochtermann and Hermann Maurer Graz, May 2002
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