Leveraging eContent in STM

How info pros successfully align their information services and econtent strategies with the strategic needs of their organization

Information professionals within organizations have seen dramatic shifts in how they acquire and distribute content within their organizations. While the overwhelming majority of libraries and information centers still maintain at least a small collection of print material, the migration to digital content has turned some more traditional libraries into electronic-only collections. While these are sometimes referred to as *virtual* libraries, in fact they are no more virtual than any other information centers; both types of libraries purchase relevant content, use it for research and analysis, and ensure that it is leveraged to get the most value for the organization.

This shift from print to electronic content enables info pros to more effectively align their services and purchases with the strategic goals of the organization. This white paper reviews some of the strategies and tactics info pros can use for leveraging econtent and communicating their value.

Bringing In the Right Information

As info pros evaluate the information needs of their client groups, it is tempting to make assumptions based on a limited view of each group's work processes. The general counsel's office likely needs access to legal and regulatory material. A product development team probably values sources of insight into user behavior and needs. It is reasonable to expect that the head of advancement services at a university monitors trends in building relationships with foundations and corporate donors.

That said, info pros are finding that engaging more proactively with work group and project teams enables them to better anticipate the information needs of each group and promote the most valuable services and resources of the library. By reviewing clients' usage data of library resources and having ongoing discussions with user groups, info pros can gain insight into what sources are being used most

and why, identify topics and resources on which the library could develop training modules, and develop alerting services such as RSS feeds to keep users aware of new developments in their areas of interest.

The Voice of Experience

"We have internal collaborative work spaces for project teams and groups. I go to those work spaces and post links to the econtent I think would be valuable. Since these communities are international, people around the world get to know about the library that way.
--Beth Anselm, Corporate Librarian, SAP

Embedded librarians – info pros who work directly with a department, project team or user group – find that building relationships with work groups enables them to better understand the group's priorities and information needs, and to develop products and services that best address the group's goals. Product development teams are particularly good candidates for the focus of a dedicated info pro; the information needs of these teams range from initial market research to testing, prototyping, and all the way to the presentation to a prospective client. Embedded librarians can add value throughout the process by anticipating the team's information needs and offering targeted learning opportunities such as subject-specific webinars from econtent vendors.

Info pros have a unique opportunity to both learn about a group's information needs and build client loyalty if their organization stages internal "innovation contests" or "idea competitions" – events in which individuals or teams compete to propose and develop the idea for a breakthrough product or an innovative solution to a challenging problem, and then present their proposal to executives or a funding organization. Info pros can play a pivotal role in these competitions by providing background research, market and competitor intelligence, and other insights that give teams a competitive advantage. This is also a powerful tool for info pros; they can learn how their clients gather and manage the information key to their work, and clients can see firsthand the strategic value of bringing info pros into work groups and project teams.

Building (Smart) Usage

One of the biggest challenges in measuring the return on investment in econtent is determining what in particular to measure. For planning and budgeting purposes, administrators need to monitor usage and user activity such as number of queries, number of zero-result search results, number of full-text records viewed or downloaded, and so on. However, activity per se does not necessarily correlate to value received; info pros must create and identify opportunities to tie econtent use directly to the strategic goals of their organization.

One effective strategy is working directly with the revenue-generating groups within the organization. For a trade association, that might include those involved in building and strengthening membership. In a government agency, the legislative affairs liaison may be a good target for an info pro interested in enhancing the agency's relationship with its funding source. The global account managers within a corporation may have strategic information needs that can best be met by providing environmental monitoring of their accounts' businesses. A key benefit to info pros who target these key players within their organization is their increased ability to identify their roles in the success of the organization; an information center can incorporate these success stories in its annual report and budget proposal.

Of course, deploying econtent to the desktop of professionals within an organization is only successful if the users actually take advantage of the resources. Info pros are accustomed to value-added online services, with their sometimes obscure search syntax and wide range of databases and search tools. Online researchers have come to expect to spend a significant period of time conducting multiple searches, using a range of search strategies, on a variety of subsets of available data. Clients, on the other hand, are accustomed to the streamlined look and feel of Google, in which virtually any query will return at least some relevant content. The shift in thinking required to get the best use out of a premium online service as opposed to a search engine is one that some users find challenging.

Info pros have found that the most effective way of teaching their clients how to use an unfamiliar resource is to focus on step-by-step, hands-on experiences. In some organizations, info pros develop short webinar tutorials that walk users through the process of searching and reviewing content, encouraging the users to conduct their own searches during the process and providing sample exercises they can use to test new features or services. Other info pros find that the best approach is to have (sometimes multiple) one-on-one sessions with individual users, showing them the steps required and doing as much customization and tailoring of each user's user profile as possible to ensure successful searching.

Making eContent Mobile

Experienced users are comfortable conducting their own online research but may want to access the content using a tablet or other mobile device. Some information centers have gone so far as to purchase one of each device used by their clients, so that the info pros can provide hands-on demonstrations of using the online resource with an iPad, Kindle, Nook, or other e-reader. Having a variety of mobile devices available also allows info pros to develop their familiarity with the various operating systems and learn how to access the library's econtent through each supported device.

This represents a significant shift in thinking for many info pros. Until the emergence of smart phones and mobile devices, online information was accessed through a limited number of avenues, usually using an office computer to make a secure connection to the online provider, and sometimes with

dedicated software to enhance the search experience for a particular econtent service. There were very few variables an info pro needed to address when introducing an online service to users – the browser being used and expertise of the user being the two most frequent area of concerns addressed by info pros.

With the trend toward BYOD – Bring Your Own Device – in the workplace, both IT managers and info pros are facing new challenges, as users expect premium econtent to be as easily accessible on their personal devices as at their desktop or laptop computer. The security concerns, which go beyond the scope of this paper, include use of insecure wireless connections, lack of ability to authenticate users based on IP address, exposure of the internal network to malevolent viruses, and potential loss of confidential information if the device is lost or stolen. Some organizations offer what is called "inverse-BYOD", in which the employer provides mobile devices to users; these devices can limit access to an internal network and can be remotely wiped clean in case of loss or theft, or if the employee leaves the organization.

Info pros encounter a number of challenges when users access econtent through their own mobile devices, even after the security concerns are addressed. Users now expect info pros to be familiar with searching an online resources with a wide range of platforms and operating systems, not all of which may be supported by a particular econtent provider. In fact, this may become one of the selection criteria info pros use to evaluate premium online services, as a growing number of their clients require access to this information outside of the work environment on their mobile devices.

The Voice of Experience

"Some researchers asked me an easy way to download and read eContent, such as eBooks. Some researchers said they have downloaded mobile apps to their smart phones and iPads to read eBooks and eContent. They told me that they could use the eContent to do their research at home. In a way, they can do their research anywhere and anytime!"
--Qin Zhu, Information Development, Hewlett-Packard

Clients who are frequently out of the office, such as sales professionals and field support, find themselves without online access while needing to make use of the information retrieved from a recent search. An important feature of an online information source for these users is the ability to download

econtent in an easy-to-read format that can be viewed from a tablet while in a customer's office or when away from a wireless connection. Info pros can make their econtent more valuable to clients by designing output formats that can be read on a range of mobile devices.

The Voice of Experience

"My users are sales people who are out in the field working on their iPads, so when I create a new library product, it absolutely has to work on an iPad. That's how we stay relevant and create value for our clients."

--Julia Urwin, Manager, Scientific & Technical Information, Pfizer Animal Health

Information centers may consider developing specialized library apps to streamline mobile access to econtent. The challenge of adequate security remains; building in sufficiently-robust authentication means creating more steps the user must take before getting access to the needed online resource. In addition, just as libraries struggle with creating search tools that enable access to the various econtent resources within their collection, developing a single app for a library's premium content may be an illusive goal. As a result, mobile users are faced with the need to download individual apps for each online resource to which they have access.

<u>Communicating Value</u>

Information centers often serve strategic roles within organizations; being recognized for the significant contributions they make is sometimes another matter. Info center managers are shifting their communication focus to emphasize how they contribute to the goals of the organization as opposed to simply describing the services and features of the information center. Rather than positioning their operation as part of the overhead of the enterprise, they talk about how they enable their organization to be more innovative, expand into new markets, or become seen as the leading player in their field. That means always thinking of new ways to add value to the information center's suite of econtent as well as developing new techniques for communicating that value to the organization's leadership.

One approach info pros employ to demonstrate their added value is creating customized enewsletters for their organization's key project teams, strategic work groups, and global account managers, providing them with the latest news in their area of interest. By ensuring that these key users are always

operating with the most current information available, info pros not only further leverage the value of the econtent but also build strong advocates for the information center. These are the clients who can provide the info center with tangible examples of how access to premium online content enabled them to achieve the strategic goals of the organization.

Another technique used by some info pros for identifying and communicating their strategic value is scanning the public "successes" of their organization, and highlighting the information center's role in the final outcome. An info pro embedded in a product development team can point to the value of each team member receiving the right information at the right time to meet strategic goals and objectives of the team. An information center that provides research support for grant applications can show how its services were used by successful grant recipients.

The Voice of Experience

"We look at patents issued to our company; when we are involved in the due diligence research of the patent, we use that as a practical example to upper-level staff of the outcome of using the library."

--Dorothy Mason, Digital Content Manager, Alcatel-Lucent

By cultivating users who understand the extent to which they benefit from econtent provided by the information center, the manager has advocates available to lobby on the information center's behalf during budget discussions. If funding for a key resource is threatened, users can be encouraged to contact their upper management and tell them about the impact these cuts would have on their ability conduct research or accomplish other strategic goals of the organization. In fact, when a resource is being considered for elimination, some information centers actively solicit comments for users.

Feedback from clients is particularly powerful when they describe the information resource in ways that focus on value. While a testimonial such as "I can't imagine doing my job without this resource" sounds good, it does not communicate the tangible need for the continued funding of a particular econtent provider. One of the new responsibilities of info pros is teaching by example; they must describe econtent in terms that their clients can adopt when advocating on behalf of the information center.

Back in the days of information scarcity, before the word google became the verb to describe how to find information, libraries could describe their value with tag lines such as "we have access to premium databases" or "we offer search services on behalf of our clients". Now, in spite – or perhaps because – of the over-abundance of information available simply by clicking a [Google Search] button, access to premium online information is still a significant asset of information centers. However, the words used to describe the value of econtent are changing.

The Voice of Experience

"We can't be seen as an overhead operation – we always have to show our ROI, and be ready with a story or a picture. It isn't optional anymore."
--Nola Heyns, Library Portfolio Manager, Eli Lilly & Company

The focus is shifting away from talking about *what* the information center does or what services it provides, and toward an emphasis on *why* the information center is offering these services. Instead of talking about access to premium databases, info pros now say "we bring valuable perspective from the outside". While what they do might be described as licensing and deploying econtent for the organization, econtent managers talk about their role in "providing intelligent filters to the info-sphere" and "making critical information accessible".

The international chemical company BASF uses the tagline "We don't make the products you buy. We make the products you buy better." This slogan is particularly effective because it focuses on the company's ultimate goal as a customer-oriented organization: making "the products you buy better." Info pros can create a tagline along those same lines and demonstrate their alignment with the key goals of their organization: We don't make the strategic decisions in our organization. We make the strategic decisions better.

Econtent Providers As Marketing Partners

Fortunately for info pros, the companies that provide them with econtent also offer a wide range of training and marketing support services. Online information service companies often produce short webinars on advanced search techniques or new features, as well as basic tutorials and library-branded

quick-reference cards. Info pros can share these tools and resources with their key clients and with the information gatekeepers within practice groups and departments, who can then communicate the relevant information most effectively within their group.

Organizations with a strong research component, such as those in manufacturing and information technology, may hold poster fairs or similar events to foster the sharing of information among researchers. These offer opportunities for info pros to meet their potential clients in person and highlight the value they can offer in support of the research process and the creation of knowledge. Econtent providers can help the info pro promote their online resources with marketing collateral, training material targeted to their specific audience, and customized collections that address the needs of each research group.

Likewise, companies with a global sales force hold annual sales meetings, where an information center can staff a booth with material focused on how their premium content can contribute to the sales professionals' success. Some info pros design contests that require the use of licensed econtent as a way to encourage their clients to become familiar with these key resources. The online provider may have a collection of relevant online tutorials, quick reference guides, brochures and other tools to help searchers get the most value from the online resources available.

The Voice of Experience

"I had a booth at a national sales meeting, which was a great way to connect with the sales force. If I can have an impact on sales, well, that's a great place to be!"

--Julia Urwin, Manager, Scientific & Technical Information, Pfizer Animal Health

Once the information center has identified new or prospective clients, they need to reconnect periodically to ensure that their clients will remember to make use of valuable econtent. One approach is to set up an alert service that delivers a formatted report with the tables of contents to recently-added issues of journals of interest to that client. When the alert profile is designed well, the info pro has ensured that the econtent investment is being put to best use. Each client receives a customized filter of content, enabling her to stay abreast of all the content she values the most. When these newsletters include live links to the full text of the content, and when they are available in the formats

most convenient for each client, they offer a dramatic contrast to what a client could find on the web with a search engine.

Econtent providers can also provide key usage data that information center managers can use to ensure that the organization is getting the most value for its online investment. Info pros can use activity reports for a variety of purposes: to identify groups that are under-utilizing valuable resources, to compare usage across content sets or even between econtent providers, and even to spot unexpected spikes in use that might indicate an opportunity for an info pro to offer additional training and support to a group of new users.

Info pros are encouraged to take full advantage of the tools available through their econtent providers. These can range from webinars on successful product roll-out to technical overviews and user guides, data visualization tools, templates for email and print promotions, and internal press releases.

When info pros partner with client-focused econtent providers, together they can meet the promise of enabling better strategic decisions within their organizations.

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