New areas explored

It is a healthy sign for an established discipline such as Information Management to continuously develop new theories or research new applications of current theories or explore existing theories from other disciplines into the world of information management. *Intellectual capital management*, *information traceability* and *search engine spam* are some of the new areas uncovered in this last issue of the year.

The first article starts somewhat 'conventionally' by first emphasizing the importance of sound knowledge management in the enterprise, and consequently reporting on the results of a research project to establish the extent to which a number of construction companies were utilizing knowledge management. Tobin and Magenuka's *Knowledge management and the JSE-listed construction sector companies* found that this sector as a whole displayed a relatively low level of maturity in the deployment of knowledge management. A number of recommendations were made by the authors that, if applied, can improve the performance of the construction sector in this regard. A logical flow from or further development with regard to knowledge management is, of course, that of intellectual capital. The second article, by Van der Westhuizen and Kok, also reports on a measuring instrument, not to measure the impact of knowledge management *per se*, but rather the level of intellectual capital management within organizations. Apart from a rather solid theoretical foundation on the number of approaches that are increasingly being used to measure the value of and progress in knowledge and intellectual capital, the article proceeds to report on the measurement and interpretation of intangible assets within a retail company in South Africa, and more specifically the JD Group as a furniture retailer. In their *Intellectual capital management in a South African retail company* the reader can explore different aspects of intellectual capital such as human capital, structural capital and customer capital. The spectrum of intellectual capital management tools is investigated and four methods of measuring intellectual capital are identified. Within the retail environment, the extent to which intangible assets contribute value is pointed out as well as how this contribution can be measured through the use of intellectual capital management tools and the status of such measurement in retail companies.

Much has been written in the non-information management literature about the upcoming role of the so-called administrative professional. Upon reading Thomas and Van Brakel's article, *Investigating the administrative professional's information management role in a networked enterprise,* the important role of an administrative professional (AP) can easily be anticipated within the knowledge and intellectual capital domains of any large enterprise. The strategically important role of this position within a company is especially understood when establishing the administrative professional's role in the processing, retrieval, dissemination and repackaging of digital information in a modern enterprise. This is exactly the aim of this article, which also determines how a person from this career group can add value to the decision-making processes in the enterprise, thus enhancing its competitive position in industry. Research results reported indicate that employers expected administrative professionals to be skilled in new and emerging technologies and to show a high degree of information management skills as well.

Access to and effective management of data and information is emphasized in the last two articles of this issue. *Effective information access and automated traceability in fruit export*

chains in South Africa is the title of the Olivier, Fourie and Evans article. The authors state that the de-regulation of the South African fruit export industry in 1997 caused serious fragmentation of information management as well as the supply chain. By means of an empirical research project, this article provides a deeper understanding of the SA fruit export industry and its associated business needs. A case is also made for effective information access and traceability as its application to this industry will provide a thorough understanding of the technologies in the consumer packaged goods industry for the automation of supply chains. The authors conclude that effective information access and automated traceability are not only feasible but essential for the SA fruit export industry and that early adoption of e-commerce building blocks will result in a strategic advantage over its southern hemisphere competitors.

Mbikiwa and Weideman, in *Implications of search engine spam on the visibility of South African e-commerce Web sites*, argue that the unexpected growth of the World-Wide Web made it essential for enterprises to adopt e-commerce practices as a means of obtaining an advantage over its competitors. Using the Web to market an enterprise has therefore become the norm, that is, for e-commerce Web sites to attract as many viable visitors as possible. It is also important 'to be seen' or obtain a high visibility when search engine results appear on a potential client's computer screen. This has resulted in the Web designers of companies aiming to have their Web sites appear in, for example, the top ten of search engine result listings, as a high placement of Web sites in search engine results is one of the strongest contributors to a commercial Web site's success. To achieve such high rankings, Web designers often adopt search engine optimization (SEO) practices, with the result that some of these practices culminate in undeserving Web sites achieving top rankings by misleading search engines. This article reports on the results of empirical research that explored the implications of these negative Web design practices on the visibility of e-commerce Web sites.

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