Meeting Reports

Planning your intranet strategy

14 March 2007: 4th UKeiG Intranets forum meeting, RCN, London

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Meg Pratley (Internal Communications Officer) demonstrated the RCN's intranet and Dr Janet Smith (Staff Development Officer) talked about Imperial College London Library's intranet and communications strategy. 32 people attended the meeting in one of RCN's comfortable meeting rooms.

RCN Intranet

RCN's intranet was launched in 2005, shortly before Meg arrived, and now serves 900 staff in 22 locations. At its heart is Mysource Matrix, an open-source content management system developed by Squiz.

The intranet has a strategy in the making (on a show of hands only one of the attendees worked for an organisation that had an Intranet Strategy). The RCN Intranet is intended to be a central place for internal information assets and a main communication channel for RCN staff. To make that happen, the RCN has identified 13 mini-projects, culminating in an Intranet handover kit for when Meg moves on!

Meg talked us through key pages of the intranet and has given us permission to reproduce them here. Features that particularly interested the meeting were:

- A social zone, accessible from the home page, which included a market place for advertising items for sale among RCN staff. Within the overall structure of the zone maintained by Meg, staff are free to add their own discussion topics.
- A webcasting facility to view the monthly "Staff link-up" – when the RCN General Secretary talks about new developments in the organisation and answers questions from staff.
- Print shop – for ordering printed products, stationery or mailing services.
- A staff directory with enhanced records including photographs, and navigation that allows the user to scroll through hierarchies.

In answer to questions, Meg said that devolved publishing had been implemented with local editors being given guidance and training, but this process was still in its infancy. The Intranet was HQ-centric but a more UK-wide feel was slowly being to evolve, with country and regional offices beginning to submit news and information to add to the intranet.

Imperial College London Library's Intranet and Communication Strategy

Imperial College London Library has an intranet for its 150 staff. In June 2006 Janet Corcoran, the Library's Web Content and Resources Officer, had given us a practical tour of the site.

Dr Janet Smith is the Library's Staff Development Officer and at the March 2007 Forum she talked to us about how a strategy for the intranet site is now under consideration. Like many intranets, the site had started (in 2004) as an experiment, because software

was already available in the College system. Processes had became more formal as it grew, and there are now four different strands leading towards the creation of a formal strategy: a Web governance group, an intranet group, a communications strategy and a marketing strategy group (which became interested through their search for the most effective route for marketing important messages).

The steps Imperial College Library is taking towards a formal strategy include: aligning the purpose of the intranet with the library's communications policy, agreeing the intranet's functions (some KM, some forms etc for "task completion", and some collaboration and communication functions), addressing user expectations, and possible structures.

Dr Smith cited four sources being used to develop the library's Internet thinking: they seem a very good starting place for anyone else intending to design an intranet strategy. They are:

- Griffiths, Peter: *Managing your Intranet and Intranet Services: the Information Professional's Guide to Strategy*. 2nd rev. ed. Facet 2004

- Horgan, Tim: "Where to begin: every intranet project starts somewhere and the best ones never end" (1997) http://microsoft.com/technet/archive/itsolutions/intranet/plan/begin.mspx (consulted 12.3.07)

- Lash, Jeff: "Three approaches to intranet strategy" (2003) http://www.digital-web.com/articles/three_approaches_to_intranet_strategy (consulted 12.3.07)

- UCISA Communications Strategy and Guidelines (updated July 2006) http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/about/admin/commstrat.htm (consulted 12.3.07)

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