

IS Development Council commentary

By Lars Leon, *chair, IS Development Council*

Thanks to all who helped make the First Thursday event on Engagement sponsored by IS Development Council (ISDC) a great success. This includes the program's organizers and facilitators, Angie Rathmel, Patti Fisher, Sean Barker, Kathleen Ames-Oliver, Mike Broadwell, and Andrea McGranahan. Anyone can view the materials presented at the event, including comments from those who attended, by visiting the ISDC wiki page designated for it.¹

Below are some actions you can bring to your work group related to this topic:

- *Strength's Finder 2.0*: Learn more about the book that Kathleen Ames-Oliver recommended for purchase.²
- "12 Questions to Measure Employee Engagement" (or Effective Management)³
- Explore the barriers and aids to engagement by asking your team to answer these two simple questions:
 - o If only I could ...
 - o If only I didn't have to ...

Whether or not you attended, ISDC welcomes your feedback and ideas on the wiki comment section.⁴ Also, be sure to check out Julie Buchsbaum's article on Engagement featured in the May issue of Info Matters.⁵

One tool that ISDC has found useful for interactive engagement is a wiki. Look for training opportunities in the near future if you are interested in learning how to use this tool. If you have not tried out a wiki, please visit the ISDC wiki at https://apps.ku.edu/~intra/lib/index.php/IS_Development_Council_main_page.

ISDC has also been exploring various resources available for groups interested in improving efficiencies. Please look out for more information on this soon. If any groups are interested in testing some of the resources we are gathering please let us know.

We are also completing our final FY09 action in response to comments in our ISDC spring 2008 Unconference and survey activities. We are currently pulling together information on what Information Services groups exist, how those groups disseminate information, and how staff can provide input to each of them. Look for this information soon.

1 <https://apps.ku.edu/~intra/lib/index.php/Engagement>

2 <http://www.strengthsfinder.com/113647/Homepage.aspx>

3 <http://www.workforce.com/section/09/article/23/53/40.html>

4 <https://apps.ku.edu/~intra/lib/index.php/Engagement#Comments.3F>

5 https://www2.ku.edu/~iserv/iscentral/infomatters/2009/infomtrs_May09.pdf

Here a wiki, there a wiki, everywhere a wiki-wiki

By Angie Rathmel, *member, IS Development Council*

wi•ki (wĭk'ē)

n. pl. wi•kis

A collaborative Web site whose content can be edited by anyone who has access to it.

[Originally an abbreviation of WikiWikiWeb, software developed by American computer programmer Howard G. Cunningham (born 1949): Hawaiian wikiwiki, quick + Web.]¹

Wiki, originating from the Hawaiian term wiki-wiki, meaning quick, has become synonymous with collaboration. Quite the buzz-word, collaboration itself is certainly not new. But like everything else these days it is changing. More specifically, the tools we use to work collaboratively have altered the nature, pace, and priority of collaboration in our organizations. The ways in which we interact with information and how we use information to interact with each other is taking new forms. So it should come as no surprise that the word collaboration is getting an upgrade. Yes, collaboration has

(continued on page 12)

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(continued from page 11)

gone 2.0. In the May 2009 issue of *Library Technology Reports*, Robin Hastings uses the term Collaboration 2.0 to explain a myriad of collaborative tools and their context.² Wikis are one of these tools and probably most familiar to those in Information Services. Since around the time of the Information Services Development Council (ISDC) Unconference, both Libraries and Information Technology have created and maintained a number of wikis to address increasing need for efficient knowledge management, capturing tacit knowledge, and collaboration in the virtual environment.³ Many other free public wikis are available and used for similar virtual sharing.⁴ The type of wiki used in Information Services is provided by MediaWiki, the same platform that hosts the well-known Wikipedia.

Debates that Wikipedia has introduced surrounding author and content credibility represent the larger issue of how information is created and stored in fundamentally different ways. Essentially wikis embody four basic ideas: **openness**, **peering**, **sharing**, and **acting globally**.⁵ To get a more realistic picture of how these ideas play out in our work, we should compare appropriate uses for wikis and their limitations.

Many examples exist for effective wiki use in libraries and other organizations to improve collaboration and make the work people do and the services they provide more efficient.⁶ Information Services staff are using wikis as collaborative tools for committee work and development of policy and procedure across departments, units, or teams. Wikis by design have no real final product. Because of this, a different tool for storage and final display (e.g., Web site, shared file folder) may be desired. In areas where policy or procedures change more frequently, however, using wikis as a quick, one-stop way to share and update policy information is more ideal.

Other benefits of wikis include:

- **Empowerment:** The entire group can participate and take ownership.
- **Transparency:** Although anyone can change information, the wiki maintains a record of who made changes, when the changes were made and what change occurred. The format also provides the ability to compare versions.
- **Currency:** Since changes can be made easily by anyone in the group, there is the possibility to keep the information current and relevant.

Some challenges to the wiki (these mostly apply specifically to MediaWiki):

- **No RSS for tracking changes** – This would be a benefit if it were available as it would allow a member to be notified of changes rather than having to go to the wiki to see the updates.
- **WYSIWYG (not always)** – WYSIWYG is a term that means “what you see is what you get.” Creating and editing content in MediaWiki is somewhat less intuitive than other wiki platforms and makes use of some basic HTML code.

Wikis are not perfect and they are still relatively new technologies within the workplace. Staff may be reluctant to use or to trust the technology. Two big hurdles to using a tool like wikis are the adoption of a new technology and adoption of a new collaborative mindset. In fact, Hastings argues that “... even technological solutions won’t work if a culture of sharing and working together is not in place to begin with.” Lack of motivation, which may be based on issues of trust, is “a silent killer” of any established wiki.⁷ It’s critical in the early implementation of a wiki environment to have support groups primarily of early adopters of wiki-technology. These groups are often called wiki gardeners and their task is to regularly provide content and support the contribution of others. For Web sites, this gardening role was assigned to a single ‘webmaster’. Organizations that implement wikis are advised to assign this role to a group of people, à la Collaboration 2.0.

Across Information Services, such wiki gardeners have been creating wikis and helping others to explore their use for ‘quick’ collaboration. This summer, the Information Services Development Council (ISDC) will host **Wiki Wednesdays**, a series of six instructional sessions about the potential uses of wikis. This will be an opportunity to learn as well as share your own experiences using wikis and other collaborative tools. The series began **June 24** and runs every Wednesday afternoon throughout July. The first three sessions will focus on basic tools and concepts. The last three sessions will explore more advanced capabilities (tagging, commenting, and editing). More details and a full schedule are available at the ISDC wiki Events Page [https://apps.ku.edu/~intra/lib/index.php/IS_Development_Council_main_page#Events]. Email Anne Hayden [mailto:ahayden@ku.edu] to reserve your spot wiki-wiki!

¹Source: *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Retrieved June 15, 2009, from *Dictionary.com* Web site: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/wiki>.

²Hastings, R. (2009). “Collaboration.” *Library Technology Reports*, 45 (4), 7-9. Retrieved June 9, 2009 from ProQuest Research Library.

³See IT Knowledge Base, The KU Libraries Wiki, and Hawk Drive (includes wiki within).

⁴See a list of wikis (aka wiki farms) cited at *Wikipedia* which compares features of each.

⁵Tapscott, D. and Williams, A. (2006). *Wikinomics: how mass collaboration changes everything*. New York: Portfolio.

⁶Source: *LibraryWikis*. Retrieved May 3, 2008 from Library Wikis: <http://librarywikis.pbwiki.com/>.

⁷Haupt, J. (2007). “From zero to wiki: Proposing and implementing a library wiki.” *Journal of web librarianship*, 1(1), 77-92.