



WHY DO WE NEED A KNOWLEDGE CENTRE?

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Mark Lamont,
Information Resources Manager

IPWEAQ has developed a digital Knowledge Centre, designed to serve the specific needs of members and those involved in the public works sector in Queensland. The intention has been to create a place where anyone involved in public works engineering can go to access and share a wide range of information including technical reports, collections of standard drawings, podcasts and papers arising from various conference proceedings, and articles of relevance from scholarly journals and daily media outlets.

The Knowledge Centre has been developed as an information repository in keeping with the rapidly changing information landscape of contemporary society. The early 21st century is commonly described as the knowledge era. The term was popularised, with considerable prescience, nearly fifty years ago, when Peter Drucker employed it as a major descriptor in his book, *The Age of Discontinuity*, from 1969. More recently, due

to a fundamental shift in the global perception of information handling, the term has proliferated across every discipline and profession. It is now widely utilised in theory and practice within the sciences and humanities, in education, the media, and wider society in general. One of the central characteristics of this new era is that knowledge is perceived as an important, rapidly growing economic commodity, replacing the older definitions of resources encompassing tangible goods and services only. For this reason, knowledge management has become an integral part of overall asset management within any organisational context.

There has been an equally profound shift in the way we think about the spaces in which information is contained. The knowledge era spells the end for the centralised immobile building in which all information is stored, where users come in order to access the documents and books they require. Information now inhabits a space which that older physical model can no longer accommodate. The capacity of digital information storage has become so great that it is difficult

to express in concrete terms. If we take the basic measure as being a stack of books that reach from the surface of the Earth to the sun, we'd need four and half thousand such stacks to represent our present capacity to store information. That equates to about six hundred and seventy five thousand million kilometres of books. That's a lot of books, and given the knowledge era is still very much in its infancy, information capacity is expected to rapidly multiply in the coming decades.

One of the principle needs of modern organisations therefore, is to take responsibility for their own information; for its collation, safe storage, and dissemination. The sheer volume of information made available since the inception of the internet has made it impossible for single-entity institutions such as libraries to curate it all.

Accordingly, libraries throughout the world, academic and public, as they transform to digital collections, have been instrumental in facilitating the shift to self-reliance. There has been a call, from the American Library of Congress down, for specialised

institutions to develop their own repositories, to complement the national public holdings. It has become incumbent upon professional and commercial organisations to assume responsibility and control of their own specific information needs via smaller self-contained knowledge centres. Knowledge is no longer kept under lock and key by specialised custodians, but instead must be available to all members of an organisation whenever, and wherever the need arises.

The information contained in the IPWEAQ Knowledge Centre is collected from external data bases, as well as from internal knowledge sources. It is structured in a way that allows users to access information in documented form but also to identify and connect with other people within the organisation who have the experience and expertise they are seeking. In practice it means individual members do not

need to search and sift through the vast amount of information available in most subject areas of public works engineering. The Knowledge Centre represents the finished product of that searching, and provides a body of information designed to meet the specific needs of the public works engineering profession that IPWEAQ serves.

It is important to note that the Knowledge Centre provides, not only a means of collection and managing information but a vehicle through which that information can be shared. This last function needs emphasising because sharing knowledge is an essential element of collaboration, and there is no work in which collaboration plays more vital a role than in public works engineering. No knowledge centre can be truly effective and add to the work of the organization without continuing input and participation from the community

it serves. Based on those principles, IPWEAQ hopes that the Knowledge Centre develops into a space of information engagement between users so that it becomes a source of knowledge generation, as well as a central storage facility. It is an open information space that is designed to encourage all users to make suggestions in regard to papers they may want to share, or any other material they think would be of benefit to the engineering community. We'd also welcome any comments and practical recommendations from users about their experience in utilising the space. For first time users, we have provided some general information on the IPWEAQ homepage, an instructional video, and a detailed 'help' menu within the space itself.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at Mark.Lamont@ipweaq.com with any queries or suggestions in regard to Knowledge Centre.



Queensland

IPWEAQ

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC WORKS
ENGINEERING AUSTRALASIA



IPWEAQ PORTAL

Gateway to your profile, professional development and resources

The IPWEAQ portal is your gateway to update your contact details, register for training courses and view your course and CPD records.

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Access the IPWEAQ Portal at:

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