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Supporting Companies with 21st Century Library and Information Services

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Abstract

The key requirements for a specialist business library and information service were described in the paper presented at the 35th IATTO Forum in Stockholm. We used the example of the ELIS facility of the New Zealand School of Export which combines a physical and virtual library, together with online information services delivered through a trade portal. This presentation is a development from that in which we assess the need for changes in a time where the information environment has changed in tune with times of accelerating growth. We also look to possible futures for such a service.

KEYWORDS: library, export, export information acquisition, export information use, information landscape, information literacy, information portal, integrative trade, ELIS

Background

The New Zealand School of Export (hereafter referred to as 'School') was established in 2007 as a Charitable Trust to provide professional development programmes for exporters and those who support them. The School is based in Palmerston North, New Zealand, and its main programme is an eight-module Diploma of International Trade which is delivered through distance education to the workplace using a combination of traditional text-based and e-learning methods (such as providing the learning materials in both hard copy and e-copy; links to websites including video presentations; DVDs etc).

Because the Diploma is aimed at staff already working in export, it is designed as a programme of professional development rather than as an academic course suitable for school-leavers and the general public, such as a BA in International Business, which is offered by New Zealand universities.

This dichotomy between education for 'professionals' and education as an 'academic' programme of study, is a fundamental difference in what the School does. The course content at the School is aimed at providing useful information and insights which can be applied in the workplace immediately. For example, the first module asks exporters to reflect on the reasons for their export activity which may be: domestic market is too small, foreign competition in domestic market, or born global nature of the company. In this way, exporters can better understand the rationale for their activity, how this drives their strategy and how better alternatives may be available.

The School and its programmes are differentiated from other training or education in international trade (import/export) in New Zealand by the following key features:

- Its Diploma course is a distance course with web support (exporters are not required to attend campus courses) and can study at work, at home and whilst travelling
- Course content is exporter (practitioner) driven, rather than driven by academic requirements such as a fixed curriculum.

- Course content is frequently revised to take account of new information and the need for an Individual Learning Programmes specifically tailored to suit individual exporters (they are not called 'students' to remind staff at the School that everybody we teach is working full-time in an export business) according to their industry (such as wine), target market (such as Japan) and their stage of development (such as a pre-exporter seeking to export for the first time).
- The materials are all written for a New Zealand audience with all the nuances that this requires such as that 95% of all exports go by sea with 5% by air, and the very stringent bio-security controls on all imports. This differs from many other educational bodies which use US or other textbooks which have been 'parachuted in' and are both culturally inappropriate (for example 'hard sell' negotiation techniques) and lack information on New Zealand companies and trade particularities (such as distance to market).
- All the New Zealand materials have been written by experienced practitioners.
- The Diploma has an International Trade Research module as an essential component compared to many university and polytechnic courses where this is not required.
- Exporters receive one-to-one support via e-mail, telephone or personal visit from their personal tutors which change according to which module they are studying.
- There are very high levels of customer focus with continuous improvement being driven by customer feedback such as flexible enrolment dates, and negotiated learning deadlines so that the reality of working full-time in a business can be accommodated in the administration of the programme, rather than learners being asked to fit in with the bureaucratic requirements of an institution. The School is therefore learner-friendly as opposed to administration-friendly.
- There is continuous updating and improvement of learning materials with new annual editions being produced. In some cases, editions are updated more frequently than annually where changes require this such as with the introduction of the new 2010 Incoterms.
- All exporters and staff are supported by the unique Export Library & Information Service (ELIS) which is both a physical and virtual (on-line) international trade portal facility. ELIS is in the public domain and free to use unlike other trade portals.
- The School is an Accredited Provider of IATTO (International Association of Trade Training Organisations).
- All staff of the School have completed the Diploma qualification themselves as assessed by another IATTO member. This is in stark contrast to many educational institutions where the staff are not required to undertake the programme of study they are teaching.

International Trade Research

The International Trade Research module mentioned above is the main vehicle for ensuring that learners engage fully with the School's web trade information portal known as 'ELIS' (Export Library & information Service) <http://www.export.ac.nz/library.html>.

The Learning Objectives for the module are to:

- Foster the ability of students to ask the right questions
- Become information literate
- Become familiar with, and competent in using ELIS
- Prepare an International Trade Research report in order to acquire and apply the skills within the exporter's own business or company in researching a new export market

- Understand the value of information in increasing income and saving time¹

Underpinning the objective of becoming 'information literate' are the standards set out in the Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework².

The teaching of the module is grounded in the premise noted by many authors that '*export information plays a key role in the exporting process, ultimately leading to increased potential for export success*' (Souchon and Durden, 2002)³ or more directly '*Locating new sources for raw materials may improve your company's bottom line, as could locating new markets for finished products*' (Burwell, 2004)⁴

Souchon's phrase '*export information acquisition*'⁵ is really the aim of the ELIS information Portal or Standard Two of the information literacy framework⁶. Whereas, our International Trade Research Module ventures into the territory of '*export information use*'⁷ or Standards Three to Six⁸ by encouraging learners to evaluate the sources, to manage the information by using a list of references, and to use the information acquired intelligently.

The Module is grounded in what librarians do. This has been expressed above in terms of information literacy, but it could also be expressed more clearly as David Lankes has recently done:

*The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities*⁹

Indeed the intention of NZSOE is to help its students to learn how they can make new knowledge in their businesses and companies.

The assessment for the Module focuses on finding information (acquisition) about New Zealand and one other market (for example, Vietnam) and presenting a comparative chart of the information found. In this way the exporter gains both a better understanding of their domestic market and also how this differs from the target market so that mistakes are not made in making assumptions based on the experience of home.

¹ Information Trade Research Module (2009) p.9

² Bundy, A. (2004) p.11

³ Souchon, A. and Durden, G.R. (2002) Making the most out of export information p.66

⁴ Burwell (2004) p.374

⁵ This term is taken from Souchon op cit.

⁶ Bundy, A. (2004) p.14

⁷ Souchon, A. and Durden, G.R. (2002) op cit..

⁸ Bundy A. (2004) pp. 16-22

⁹ Lankes, R.D. (2011) Fulfilling the potential: digital libraries and the future. Slide 13

In addition, by undertaking such a comparison, the comparative method can then be transferred when looking at other markets later on. What is important is that a rigorous *method* is learnt, which can then be applied subsequently in the way that exporters acquire and process information, especially by avoiding unreliable, outdated or inaccurate information sources.

The article by Souchon and Durden (2002), concludes that '*export information use*' plays a mediating effect between export information acquisition and export performance in both the UK and New Zealand.¹⁰ Although this is obviously a very important dimension of the role of export information, it is not our intention here to explore that.¹¹

Rather this paper explores how the Export Library & Information Service (ELIS) was conceived, how it has already changed in response to changed understandings of the needs of our exporters and of the changing information landscape. This paper also makes some suggestions as to the developments required by ELIS so that it is a 21st century service for 21st century international trade users.

It is these developments that readers will find useful for their own organizations, particularly with regard to the accelerating trade with China and emerging economies in South-East Asia that we certainly are experiencing in New Zealand.

History

The New Zealand School of Export by virtue of its name, and the Diploma of International Trade because of its academic connotations, set forth a well-trodden path for the development of a library and information service. In hindsight, the path taken was a rope tying the library and information service to the 20th century. The library service was however seen as being at the heart of the School given central importance of information to the Diploma and the needs of those studying it.

The library service was created using the normal practices for an academic library, being similar to the way university students use such facilities such as in issuing books and other materials to distance learners, as well as increasing amounts of sources being held in electronic copies only which can be downloaded from the catalogue. It might have been described as 'stuff centered'¹². This path was reinforced by the experience of the first Head of Library & Information Services who was an experienced university librarian and also by the highest value placed on professional librarians as information specialists by the Founder of the School.

The vendors of commercial web-based products such as Marketline (<http://www.marketlineinfo.com/>) also informed the way we saw ELIS developing. However a lack of large-scale capital investment meant that we were unable to purchase an academic database. Indeed this led to a crucial refocussing and a reasoned appreciation of where our learners were at in terms of their specific information needs such as their need for a template agency agreement or information about tariffs on wool exports to South Korea.

¹⁰ Souchon and Durden p.81.

¹¹ Souchon and Durden put forward two propositions in their 2002 study –see Appendix 1.

¹² Lankes, R.D. (2011). Slide 9.

We decided to call the service ELIS – the Export Library and Information Service. Maybe this was a second rope anchoring it to the 20th century. We hear that people now think libraries and library services are irrelevant, and that the name 'library' conjures up the stereotypical picture of rows upon rows of dusty volumes and 'Be Quiet' or 'Silence!' notices.

We do not share this view but believe that access to the best information available improves both the quality of decision making (as it becomes 'evidence-based'), and that information itself has value which can ensure that exporters both survive and prosper compared to their competitors. The sourcing and use of information is now making the critical difference to the success or failure of businesses, from Steve Jobs' understanding of the need for customer friendly Apple computers and products to the failure of Kodak to prepare for digital photography.

An Integrated Library System using Koha software was implemented at the beginning of 2008 to make the collection available for borrowing to exporters (learners / students) and to anyone who wishes to use it to find information sources for international trade particularly digital items. This is an invitation we extend to all readers of this paper.

The emphasis from the beginning was to be on a 'virtual' library collection which is now termed the 'digital collection'. This was a definite nod to the 21st century and showed clearly that we appreciated that exporters would not want the typical library service of borrow and return but required immediate access to information sources from wherever they were working.

The School planned from the start to have a website including an information portal. The website <http://www.export.ac.nz> was launched on 18 April 2007 and from day one included 'Library' pages which developed into ELIS as an internet portal. Together with the aim of creating a virtual library, the information portal moved the service firmly into the 21st century and set up a tension in concepts and practice. ELIS was then and remains on the leading edge of what constitutes best global practice in information support for exporters.

Changed Understandings

Successful completion of the first version of the International Trade Research ¹³ module required that exporters write an International Trade Research Plan which was a document of some 25 pages in a 'traditional' assignment format. This was academic in nature although very much oriented to the person working in international trade.

The Research Plan also reflected principles of information literacy using words and phrases such as: *identification of research questions, analysis, primary and secondary sources, identification, recommendations for action, bibliography, etc.* We began to realise that exporters do not need academic material, or academic approaches better suited for postgraduate researchers, although it was expected and required that they listed and respected their information sources in line with best practice. In this way we adapted the traditional approaches to research to the particular research needs of exporters.

In 2008, the School began using its own materials written for the New Zealand situation. Previously it has used foreign materials under licence while it waited to gain Accredited

¹³ Based on FITT (Canada) course materials.

Provider status from IATTO and the right to use its own materials and issue its own Certificate and Diploma awards.

The International Trade Research Module New Zealand First Edition was first taught in 2009 and exporters were expected to complete a report which was significantly different from that referred to above. It was less academic and focussed largely on 'export information acquisition' or finding information and showing where it could be found by expecting exporters to document sources and list these in a bibliography, not only for others to access, but more importantly to get into the habit of being able to find again the sources they relied upon!

There was less emphasis on the writing up of analysis or synthesis of the information, and more emphasis on how value could be extracted from the information such as population profiling for a range of cosmetics aimed at the over-60 age group.

This was the beginning of the change in approach by both the staff of the School and how ELIS was developed. It had become clear that the great majority of our distance learners did not want or need to borrow hard copies of resources which would be sent out to them – borrowing as a practice was not wanted and in most cases was not needed.

As a result we questioned what the International Trade Research Module (M2) is trying to tell learners about their need for libraries - and therefore librarians - when some may think that both are irrelevant. Was M2 trying to tell them they can do it themselves - in other words we are hastening our own demise? Or was the Module saying 'we recognise that you think you can do research independently – let us help you to do it better'.

It is a universal recommendation from a multiplicity of business and academic bodies that exporters must research their target market before proceeding as such information makes the difference between success and failure. We therefore began to question what 'research' means to the exporter (our 'students') and what we ourselves think it means?

A key point in resolving this is that of '*understanding ... how users commonly look for information*'¹⁴ and in the case of the Export Library & Information Service of the New Zealand School of Export, we have had to realise that our users rely on the information that they can access from their desktop. In most cases this means using Google. I would describe our users as 'desktop users' as opposed to 'online users' as they rarely engage with other online services such as freely available alternatives from Statistics New Zealand or Comtrade.

Our learners have no need to read academic journal articles which is implied by 'online users'. We had hoped they would read widely using many types of information sources as encouraged by the information literacy theory. In fact they *gather* widely - they take information of all kinds from the internet whether it be government statistics, foreign exchange rates or information about competitors.

We therefore have adapted to this reality by encouraging them to be critical about the way they use this information – to recognise the type of information gathered and to make effective use of web-sources. Therefore we now include checklists on for example, how to

¹⁴ Cherrie p.177

use Company Publications¹⁵, Newspaper Articles¹⁶ or Statistics¹⁷. Other information sources such as direct contact with industry leaders or experts are included as an option where appropriate.

New Information Landscape

While we were coming to terms with our own new understandings, some of the changes involved in 21st century library and information service were set out in an article published in 2009 by Craig Cherrie, Liaison Librarian at Massey University entitled *21st Century Skill Sets for NZ Libraries*.

Cherrie's article stimulated a more critical review of how we have changed the International Trade Research module in the course of teaching it over three years. While his emphasis was on the development of a new skill set, he prompted the School to think about the effects of the new landscape on the service we provide to the students enrolled in the Diploma of International trade. In turn we considered the future of ELIS is in the light Cherrie's list:

- ✚ Emergent digital information landscape
- ✚ Evolution of user information behaviours including the mediating role of the librarian no longer required
- ✚ Perceived relevance of libraries is weakening and removal of libraries as first port of call for finding out stuff
- ✚ Abundance of information
- ✚ User now has the expectations of a consumer
- ✚ Changes in reading behaviour
- ✚ Persistence of a group of people termed 'information poor' – rather than being technologically disadvantaged they are limited by education and literacy skills¹⁸

It is essential to explore a little further how each of these has both influenced what ELIS offers and what staff do to support students and less directly their business ventures.

Emergent digital information landscape

There is no doubt that this feature is linked with the abundance of information that is now available for the exporter. Taking as an example- New Zealand's hard-fought apple case through the WTO for entry into the Australia market, we find that there is a wealth of digital information for the New Zealand company which wants to export apples to Australia in the new environment:

- [Export Market Requirements - Apple & Pear Australia Ltd.](#)
- Information about South Australia's apple industry at: http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/55672/Apples_Overview_Latest.pdf

¹⁵ Appendix E. Checklist: Company Publications

¹⁶ Appendix F. Checklist: Using Newspaper Articles

¹⁷ Appendix G. Checklist: Using Statistics

¹⁸ Extracted from Cherrie pp.172-3

- Questions and Answers on Chinese apple imports to Australia (competitive intelligence) <http://www.daff.gov.au/about/media-centre/qas-for-chinese-apples>
- YouTube videos on the topic from ABARES (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences)

Evolution of user information behaviours

We know from students' assignments that they are using Wikipedia and almost solely relying on information electronically available. Few if any are using print copies of the newspaper for articles from the Business pages although these are a fund of information.

As has already been mentioned, students do not borrow from the ELIS collection so we know that traditional print sources are not seen as a source for them. Website user numbers entering the ELIS Portal 2008-2010 have grown to 1868 in 2010. Website user numbers entering the 'Getting Answers' page have also grown over that time. Clicks away from the ELIS Portal to the Catalogue have declined over the period 2008-2010. We are not able to track how many times digital copies of items on the collection are opened and this may be significant.

We are also seeing that exporters and those interested in international trade are beginning to tap into the information we provide through mobile technology. I-phone, i-Pad, Android and Blackberry were all registering on the Exportersblog as systems which had downloaded page views.

Perceived relevance of libraries

While this may be true for the School's hard copy collections, it is highly likely that the users of the ELIS Portal do not recognise it as a library. This can only be discovered by surveying users about their information seeking-behaviours with regard to ELIS. Web pages from www.export.ac.nz may in fact have been bookmarked and may be being used as a port of call for information. It is possibly more likely that Google is being used as the 'first' port of call.

Abundance of information

How often do we hear now the saying that 'you can find out everything from the internet'. This does not give any indication of the quality of the information found and the way in which it is used, or indeed whether the user was happy with what was found. It highlights the undiminished need for a well thought-out methodology when searching the internet and a critical approach to using information that is found there. Both of these are covered by Module 2 of the Diploma.

User now has the expectations of a consumer

This is linked with a perception that information should always be free and that it is 'a free lunch'. In fact no information is devoid of some attached costs such as the time and labour of making it available. We play into the hands of the consumer by offering them 'free stuff' – in our case Free Downloads, in the hope that this will attract more enrolments to the School or that it will highlight our existence. None of this information is actually free and has been crafted into a useable form from multiple sources and over a careful gestation period. Despite this entries into the ELIS Free Downloads page on the Portal have been increasing each year as a way of increasing our profile with our potential learners.

Dave Lankes in his presentation to the International Masters Program in Florence this year would however challenge this and say that there is widespread pressure for participation,

possible as a spinoff from the experience of social media and that we are not 'users' or 'consumers' but 'participants'.¹⁹

Our experience with the Exporters blog which has been operating since 2008 does not back this assertion. The blog was started with high hopes for a participatory experience for exporters and those interested in international trade. Over the period 2008 to date there have been over 210 posts, with almost 6000 visitors in that time – very few of who have left a comment.

Persistence of a group of people limited by education and literacy skills

Cherrie suggests that there are many users who have access to the technology needed to find information, and can find it because of Google's search software but who do not have the education and information literacy skills to work with the information to best advantage.

Certainly we note that among our exporters, they are able to access a wide range of information but are not able to reflect on it, to apply it to their own situation - in other words to analyse and synthesize the information. Finding chunks of information from the internet is one thing but the key for the exporter in times of accelerating growth and change is to be able to use this information successfully.

We also need to recognise the changed nature of international trade itself and other papers at this conference cover this in greater depth. The authors of the FITT report *Human resources: a vital driver of Canadian international trade capacity and capability* sum it up as:

*'The focus of trade is not just about exports anymore; rather an Integrative Trade paradigm has emerged that requires new skills to support new trade processes.'*²⁰

This paradigm or concept recognises

*'that import, export and foreign investment activity are increasingly inter-related, as sourcing patterns require those engaged in international business to take an increasingly holistic approach to the conduct of international business.'*²¹

New Information Landscape and Integrative Trade have Led to Changes

As a result of the new landscape outlined above the New Zealand School of Export has made changes to both to its flagship Diploma course and to the Export Library and Information Service.

First we have had to recognise the tension between the local and global which Cherrie describes as *'Patterns [of use] may be influenced by what is locally provided but the core expectations and behaviours are rooted in global, Web-conditioned phenomena.'*²² The local

¹⁹ Lankes, R.D. (2011) Slide 85.

²⁰ FITT (2011) Human resources... p.7

²¹ FITT (2011) Op cit. p.73

²² Cherrie p.180 Footnote 14.

'available information landscape'²³ of the ELIS portal can only be a part of what is available. It may be that the user who recognises this will reject the portal for the web.

We have geared our International Trade Research Module to making the learner aware of their information landscape particularly the New Zealand information landscape while pointing them to international suites such as FITA. We believe that this is still necessary otherwise we risk producing exporters who do not know what information is available in New Zealand for them to use for their company and market intelligence. We give them a map of it (information gateway)²⁴ and encourage them to use it. The Internet' can provide anyone with big pots of information called 'Exporting to Qatar' or 'RTDs in China'. Our Portal and the International Trade Research Module is an attempt to bring some of the information literacy principles to bear upon the information landscape.

More questions are raised than we currently have answers to:

How do we know that the information map we provide is that right one? Perhaps because of the response we get from our exporters 'This is just what I have been looking for!' or 'I didn't know that this information was even available!'

How many people are using ELIS? Although we know from Google analytics absolute numbers of users, we need more information on how and why they use it – in other words, what do they use it for?

Should the information landscape we provide for our learners only include the information sources we know they will use, that is, those that are part of their landscape or should we include those that might be termed 'legacy information sources'²⁵ such as the Catalogue?

Secondly we have tried to expose students to the web links between the portal landscape, the catalogue information and blog – in other words 'the deep web'. While this not a new concept, it is still unknown or unrecognised.

Mike Bergman who has been credited with coining the phrase in 2001, has said that *'searching on the Internet today can be compared to dragging a net across the surface of the ocean: a great deal may be caught in the net, but there is a wealth of information that is deep and therefore missed. Most of the Web's information is buried far down on dynamically generated sites, and standard search engines do not find it. Traditional search engines cannot "see" or retrieve content in the deep Web'...*²⁶

In the case of the New Zealand School of Export, we have two such dynamically generated sites – the information that is in the Catalogue (ELIScat) and the information that is in the Exportersblog. Standard search engines do not find information in ELIScat, and occasionally pick up blog posts. Therefore it is essential to point our learners and other users of the ELIS

²³ Cherrie p.

²⁴ See <http://www.export.ac.nz/elisgettinganswersgateway.html>

²⁵ This is a term I have developed but is based on Cherrie p.173

²⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_deep_web Retrieved 7 October 2011

portal to information in the deep web. Below is an example of how we are harvesting the deep web for our students and other users:

I need information on benchmarking for my export business:

Some information can be gathered by using the sources of information given on this page e.g. statistical information compiled by Statistics New Zealand. Or you can search the internet for the annual reports of publicly-listed companies.

You can also search in the ELIS Catalogue for information on companies against which you would like to benchmark your own export business. You can type in the company name or, to get several examples within one sector use the sectoral name e.g. food and beverages sector. You can also look for the tag **'New Zealand exporting company'**, or, you can search in ELIS Catalogue for **"new zealand exporting company"** (Note: include the "). Check also for **exporting companies** in Exportersblog.

There are many companies which specialise in the gathering and preparation of competitor intelligence. One New Zealand example is BPIR.com Limited.

ELIS
Catalogue

Exportersblog
information

Screengrab of <http://www.export.ac.nz/findinginformation.html#Benchmark>

In the Catalogue where we are using a range of taxonomies and also through our Subject Map guides, we recognise that the people who want information choose according to their own inbuilt keyword or subject guide. In order to give users the best chance of matching their information need with our information offering, we try to use natural language headings or keywords which we select and attach to our information in the catalogue. We have focussed on using the Thesaurus of Trade terms from the UN International Trade Centre and supplemented this with single-keyword descriptors from the Library of Congress Subject Headings thesaurus, the Māori Subject Headings for New Zealand, as well as some local headings such as sectoral descriptors as established by New Zealand Trade & Enterprise.

In order to further ensure that users can see at a glance the kinds of keywords they can use to access information we have begun to develop Subject Maps and an extract from the Textiles Subject Map is seen below:

This subject map helps you find resources from the Export Library & Information Service (ELIS). It is designed so you can click on a subject in the map that is hyperlinked (blue). This will take you to a list of ELIS resources on that subject.

Textiles
Textiles sector
Textiles industry
Individual textile industries within the sector
 Apparel industry
 Knit goods industry
 Wool industry

The full Subject Map for Textiles is appended in Appendix 2.

The pervasive digital environment²⁷ means that exporters do not request book material even if they think they might use it but they are happy to receive a resource that is in book format and which is sent to them as part of SDI service (Selective Dissemination of Information).

So the fourth area of change for NZSOE has been the replacement of the 'old' lending library service by operating an SDI service where the professional librarian points out the potential value of information available and how it might be used, such as the size and location of dairy herds by US state – information which is 'pure gold' for a New Zealand manufacturer of dairy equipment entering the US market. The usage was however up to the learner – to be shown information is one thing, to then proceed to use this information is quite another.

The point at which a learner receives the information is the point where their perceived interest meets the relevant information. This is in contrast to traditional tertiary education where learners are overwhelmed with information for which they have no immediate need, where the approach is to cram for an exam rather than to learn because the knowledge is immediately useful in the work environment. Knowing for example that there is a shortage of honey in a particular Middle East market and that prices have reached record highs, can lead to an informed decision by a New Zealand honey exporter.

All this highlights the need for analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information. So a fifth area of effort for us has been to ask *How are the exporters going to assess or how are they already assessing the value of information? Does availability mean it is OK? Or do they go any further than that? Is it a case of 'if it answers my question then it is OK'.* The need to ask the right questions therefore becomes central to the search for answers. We attempt to get the exporters to be more critical by providing a range of checklists already referred to but also by ensuring that new sources of information such as YouTube is covered by a Checklist.

A newly emerging area is that of social networking media such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn which are part of Cherrie's 'emergent information landscape' and which includes blogs and YouTube. Our Exporters blog was started in 2008 and is still going 200 plus posts later. Participation by students and exporters is shown by comments made and discussions started, has been very low and certainly not what was hoped for. However participation might be defined differently as 'looking at or scanning to see what is going on' and indeed 6000 viewers/visitors may be being exposed to that part of the information landscape.

It is clear that a additional new issue is also emerging. While our enrolment focus remains within New Zealand, there is evidence to suggest that the audience for the 'information landscape' we offer through the ELIS portal and the Exporters blog has become an international one. In 2010 visitor domains on the website included Australia, Russia, UK, India, Italy and Sweden. In 2011 the top ten domains had changed to include Canada, China and Thailand dropping the UK, Russia and Sweden. Similarly the Exporters blog audience was a global one with the top ten since 2009 including the US (the most), New Zealand, Russia, Germany, Netherlands, India, France, Ireland, Iran and Australia in that order. Until we survey this audience we can only guess at the uses to which the information found on the website and blog is being put. It raises the as yet unanswered question of whether we cater for this global audience.

²⁷ Cherrie p.172

A final issue for us is that in our collection development we look for the availability of digital versions of everything which can be made available to our students and other users of the ELIS Trade Portal. This in turn brings its own set of tasks: checking links – URLs dropping out – and the need for permanent links. We currently have no method of telling how often the catalogue's digital resources are used, so this commitment to the digital resource is being actioned in spite of this.

Finally the nature of the assessment for the Diploma has been changed. Each Module requires a report or project that both tests whether the students have read and understood the materials, but also that their learning is applied immediately by compiling an assessment piece which becomes a segment of their Exporter Growth Plan. At the end of their course they have an integrated plan with discreet parts made up of each of the eight modules they have studied but which at the end forms an integrated whole which can be implemented within their company or firm.

Such an approach reinforces the difference between a working document used by professional exporters and an exam or essay which has been completed to meet academic requirements which may have little or no relevance to the learner either now or in the future.

The Future

For us at the School, we have seen how the information needs of our exporters have changed the way we support them particularly in the way that ELIS has evolved by adapting to those needs.

In addition, we have also seen the emergence of new web-based platforms and content such as YouTube (which includes interviews or lectures by speakers such as George Soros or Michael Porter) as well as the availability of new types of information – especially personal information about individuals - such as that found on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. In response to this, we have written a Pathfinder for exporters on tapping into the information that is to be found there.

Both Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 are driving these changes as is the increasing availability of high speed broadband and the implications of this for the quantity of data that can be sent especially as video.

So what of the future - let's look at some of these possibilities:

Where might Web 3.0 take us? First of all we need to say how Web 3.0 is defined. Wikipedia's summary article indicates that there is no clear definition yet but that it may include a high degree of personalization, a return of experts and authorities as opposed to everyone being an expert, focus on video, and the development of scenarios where the Internet does the work! For example the computer is told that Company X wants to export avocados to Malaysia – and treating this statement as the information need, the computer will come back with:

- The phyto-sanitary requirements for sending avocados to Malaysia
- A Certificate of Origin form
- The rules under the Free Trade Agreement with Malaysia
- The tariff schedule if any for this product
- The correct Incoterm to be used for the shipment

"I have a dream for the Web [in which computers] become capable of analyzing all the data on the Web – the content, links, and transactions between people and computers. A 'Semantic Web', which should make this possible, has yet to emerge, but when it does, the day-to-day mechanisms of trade, bureaucracy and our daily lives will be handled by machines talking to machines. The intelligent agents people have touted for ages will finally materialize."— [Tim Berners-Lee, 1999](#)

In this scenario the computer is performing one of the features of the information literate person who can analyse information and assess it for its usefulness. Would Company X still need to have a person who checked that the computer was delivering the right forms and the right information and that forms and information were used correctly! We believe so.

The audience for our Exporters blog has become a truly international one – is this pointing a way forward in terms of the information we provide as well as the opening up of our courses to international students? Search engines and the deep web make it possible for wide-ranging information to be located without physical collections. This highlights the imperative for the exporter to be information literate, to be aware of the types of information and the crucial need to evaluate, synthesise and analyse it before use.

Almost certainly there will be technological developments in the way we teach the Diploma course and provide information support for its students. This paper has shown how we can take advantage of mobile technology with the use of QR codes – the square designs of information that link to a document, a blog or a website. Those of you here with smartphones can get and/or use your phone to scan the code to access the New Zealand School of Export website or the full text of this paper. More widely QR codes could be put in the text of the Modules and those with mobile technology can click on that and can get up the document required at that point. Developing a mobile site especially for students with smartphones may be necessary as we begin to see our Portal and blog accessed by mobiles.

We cannot go into the future without consultation with the users of our website, Blog and teaching materials. This conference paper has identified some of the gaps in our knowledge of what is useful, and what is not. As difficult as this might be with an international audience and clientele a gap analysis is essential. Products such as Survey monkey will need to be used to take advantage of electronic technology.

Web 2.0 and 3.0 would seem to be taking us further away from the 'international trade memory' – the memory of what has gone before as in the textual history of what has happened, been planned, achieved or not achieved. International trade in our countries, if yours is like ours is littered with reports with titles such as: '*Stretching for growth*' and '*Competing in the new millennium*'. Our own website and blog have been harvested by the National Library. What kind of a picture will that provide for the future? Who is the repository for trade history gathered and garnered by some of our institutions?

Collection and the thrust of knowledge creation (Lankes) is product oriented rather than service oriented or a balance between the two. As the export of services becomes more important in economies such as New Zealand's, it is incumbent on us as the leading educator of exporters to reflect this in our course materials, and in the ELIS portal. The FITT report on human resources needed in the future in Canada alludes to the special needs in the service sectors.

Integrative trade with its inter-relationships requires a new set of competencies which include skills for business development in new markets, an emphasis on regulations and compliance, management of formal research and development, for innovation and intrapreneurship. None of these competencies within international trade can be achieved without information and the FITT report acknowledges that: *'Knowledge requirements are multi-faceted, including the know-how to perform complex trade tasks, and the knowledge to leverage global business and social networks.'*²⁸ Plainly the road ahead will need skilled trainers and training with the support of information specialists.

Of course it is impossible to predict exactly the future in terms of library and information service to the international trade community. Lankes would say that we need to coordinate *'the knowledge infrastructure [in order] to unlock the potential and passions of society'*²⁹, but maybe we need to hold on to the following five principles. We believe that they will both accelerate growth of the organisation and be appropriate in a time of both accelerating growth and increasing uncertainty:

1. We have stuck with the term 'library' at the School, both out of respect and admiration for what this means historically, but also as a statement about the *increasing* importance of information in the future. However the existence of the service is the key thing, rather than the name it is given. A professional information worker will deliver timely, accurate and appropriate information which will support the growth of any exporting company or organisation by responding to the information needs, but such a worker is usually only found in the largest multinational companies.
2. The *value of information* to the exporter needs to be re-asserted and the proof of its worth demonstrated by integrating the service of an information professional into the planning and preparation for market entry, and indeed at every stage of an export venture. For a professional librarian it is also exciting to be matching up the exporters' information needs and with best information, and to be recognised and valued. For performing this role.
3. Information literacy continues to be important even if not overtly evident – it should be embedded seamlessly in learning structures where a training course is being delivered and in the experiences that all company staff members have as they prepare for, and participate in, international trade.
4. Delivering a high quality information service operating to international best practice, is an expectation which must be delivered as a company moves through its stages of growth. Continuous improvement is what follows on from what happens at the beginning either with the training of staff or indeed with the delivery of information services as needed.
5. Recognising that the right information delivered on time and in an appropriate format *is exciting in itself* and that the excitement of seeing information inform and change an exporter and exporting company cannot be beaten, such as the experience of an

²⁸ FITT (2011) p.13

²⁹ Lankes, R.D. (2011) Slide 86.

exporter installing water treatment plants into the dangerous environment of Papua New Guinea.

Conclusion

To make decisions without information is folly. One may as well throw a dice or seek out astrologers for advice. The alternative is to seek out the best possible information available, and where this information ends, to seek answers to the questions posed through a process of research.

Finding the right information is about asking the right questions, it is only then that we can have a chance of finding the answers we need.

For those engaged in international trade, having the right information has very real benefits in for example, reducing costs, saving staff time and increasing income.

Knowing what information is required and how to find it are the basis of information literacy, a skill in being able to find information, which is far more important than simply knowing a 'fact' which will change over time and in some cases – such as foreign exchange rates – in fractions of a second.

Therefore it is our duty as educators to ensure that the international trade professionals of tomorrow have the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will stay with them to guide their progress through new lands and across time.

We welcome contact with our readers and in freely sharing ELIS as our 'koha' (gift) to the world. The URL is <http://www.export.ac.nz/library.html>

Or if you have a smartphone with a reader go directly to the ELIS Information Portal by scanning this QR code:



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Palmerston North
29 November 2011

About the authors

Graeme Siddle is a Registered Librarian of the Library and Information Association New Zealand Aotearoa. He has been a teacher and librarian for a number of years and has been working and tutoring at the New Zealand School of Export since its inception. He manages the website for the School and has been writing posts for Exporters blog since it was set up in 2008. Completing the Diploma of International Trade has opened a new and exciting field of knowledge for him which he is excited and passionate about sharing.

Dr Romuald Rudzki founded the New Zealand School of Export in 2007. In 1998 he received his Doctorate from the UK's University of Newcastle Upon Tyne for his research on '*The Strategic Management of Internationalization – towards a model of theory and practice*'. In

1996 he received the *Financial Times'* David Thomas Award for his pioneering work on education for entrepreneurship. He is a current Board member of the International Association of Trade Training Organisations (IATTO) and is in demand as an entertaining and thought-provoking speaker on export, as well as on the philosophy of management including creativity.

He is married with a son, and in his spare time is an accomplished artist being a Member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Art (NZAFA) with his work in many private and public collections throughout the world.

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Appendix 1

Souchon and Durden propose to study two propositions in their article. These are set out on p.69:

The market orientation literature has also implicitly assumed a direct correspondence between extent of export information collection, and export information use (e.g., Jaworski and Kohli 1993). It is therefore proposed that:

H_1 : Extent of export information acquisition is positively related to extent of export information use.

On the other hand, many authors guard against ignoring information, or using it merely to support intuition (e.g., Goodman 1993; Schoemaker and Russo 1993). In their 1997 study, Souchon and Diamantopoulos found that ignoring export information almost invariably had detrimental effects on different export performance dimensions. It is therefore proposed that:

H_2 : Extent of export information use is positively related to export performance.

Appendix 2



SUBJECT MAP – TEXTILES

This subject map helps you find resources from the Export Library & Information Service (ELIS). It is designed so you can click on a subject in the map that is hyperlinked (blue). This will take you to a list of ELIS resources on that subject.

[Textiles](#)

[Textiles sector](#)

[Textiles industry](#)

Individual textile industries within the sector

- [Apparel industry](#)
- [Knit goods industry](#)
- [Wool industry](#)

Textile industry processes and techniques

- [Dyes](#)

[Levin Textile Cluster](#)

[New Zealand textile companies which export](#)

Textile articles – this subject is for products made wholly of textile materials

- Camping goods
- [Floor coverings](#)

Textile fabrics

- Cotton fabrics
- [Merino fabrics](#)
- [Possum fabrics](#)
- [Synthetic fabrics](#)
- Wool fabrics

[Textile yarn](#)

- [Cotton yarn](#)
- [Wool yarn](#)

Fibres

- Animal fibres
- Hard fibres
- Manmade fibres
- [Natural fibres](#)

Clothing – this subject is used instead of 'garments' or 'apparel'

- [Baby clothing](#)
- [Cold weather clothing](#)
- [Hosiery](#)
- [Knitwear](#)
- Men's clothing
- Sports clothing
- Underwear
- [Women's clothing](#)
- [Work clothes](#)

Exported textile products

- [Cotton](#)
- Jute
- Silk
- [Wool](#)

The School is New Zealand's only provider of qualifications accredited by the global body IATTO. We encourage exporters to enrol in the Diploma of International Trade or Exporter Growth Programme which have been developed for exporters seeking practical information to apply to their business and career.

Web: <http://www.export.ac.nz> Email: info@export.ac.nz Tel: 06-356-5656

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