Introduction to Minitrack on
Knowledge Management and Social Media: The Challenges

Robert M. Mason
The Information School
University of Washington
rmmason@uw.edu

Dianne P. Ford
Faculty of Business Administration
Memorial University of Newfoundland
dpford@mun.ca

This mini--track is an early focused effort to consider how knowledge management may change--or need to change--with the widespread use of newer social media. As members of the 'net generation' (NetGeners) enter the workplace, they bring with them an ease of using rapidly changing information technologies and the expectation of access to information and social networks that these technologies enable. With this comfort in using the technologies, there are corresponding evolving changes in values and behavioral norms. Often, these values and norms differ from those observed in most established organizations. As a consequence, organizational leaders perceive tensions arising from the increased use of social networking and new social media such as Instant Messaging, Twitter, and Facebook. Executives are challenged to find ways to mobilize and channel the energy and creativity of those who embrace the use of these media and still manage the organization's knowledge for competitive advantage.

Papers presented in this mini-track investigate and discuss organizational issues ranging from conceptual and critical assessments of current models for knowledge management, to the practical and managerial challenges of trying to measure the value (or potential value) from the use of social media.

We have three sessions in the mini-track, each with papers that are tied loosely with a common theme.

In our first session, the papers critically examine existing knowledge management models and seek to understand how established models may be applied to help our understanding of the impact of new social media on knowledge management. Papers in this session investigate how familiar models of KM, theory of reasoned action (TRA), technology acceptance model (TAM), media synchronicity, etc., may be applied to the use of new social media.

In our second session, four papers explore how communities of practice and knowledge networks may be modeled and how these models may expand how we think about organizations. In these papers, authors have suggested conceptual frameworks and explored the implications of empirical evidence from field studies of networks and communities of practice.

In the final session, authors ask the tough questions about value and how to actually implement the concepts of what is visualized as a Web 2.0 enterprise. In the first paper in this session, the authors use design science concepts in a collaborative approach to a "mindful" implementation this enterprise model. Another paper suggests an approach to measuring the return on investment of social media, and the final paper describes two cases studies of implementations.

It's a provocative set of papers--enjoy!