

**INL 110 Memo**

Critically discuss why the 'Compilation of Aids' is not included in the lifecycle of information according to Vickery (1992). Make use of examples to support your discussion. 6 marks

Compilation of Aids supports three processes: Preparation of Analysis, Storage and Retrieval

Half mark each for naming three processes = 1.5 marks

1 ½ marks for discussing each process by using a good example.

Discuss the functions of an information system. Make use of examples to support your discussion. (Marks will be awarded as follows: 1/2 a mark for naming the function and 1 1/2 marks per function for the discussion and the example provided.) 12 marks

- To determine & satisfy the information needs of users and potential users.
- To organise and protect information.
- To retrieve the relevant information and to make it available.
- To add value to information.
- To educate the user
- To ensure that information is used and managed as a resource.

Discuss the carrier-related characteristics as well as the human-related characteristics of information. Make use of relevant examples to support your answer. 16 marks

½ mark for naming the characteristics – 1 ½ marks for discussing the characteristics – 4 characteristics each under Carrier and 4 characteristics under Human related characteristics— thus two marks each = 16

**(1) Carrier-Related Characteristics**

- As a representation of reality
  - Information does not stand separate from the carrier
  - Different carriers exist
    - ☛ Primary (reality, people)
    - Secondary (books, sound & light waves, symbols)
  - In this context we concentrate on representation of information by the secondary carrier.
  - Through the carrier the reality, symbolized by information, is objectified.
- Abolishment of time and spatial limitations of reality
  - As information is carrier-related, it shows the following characteristics = different carriers can represent the same information about the same object.
  - This means that information about a specific object can simultaneously be made available to a great number of people, without the time and spatial limitations of the object and without the object being physically observed.
  - The information explosion, helped by the development of information technology,

played an enormous role in this case.

- As such it is becoming more and more difficult to prevent people from having information on certain objects due to its geographic location. This is referred to as DEATH OF DISTANCE
- With time and spatial limits being abolished, not only does it mean that more people have access (simultaneously) to the information on a specific object, but the life span of information can be increased = because of the carrier-related characteristics of the information

- 2 ways
  - ☞ An object can already be destroyed while the information about the object can still keep on existing in another carrier
  - Also possible to make a new presentation of the object (which has been destroyed)
    - Apple → picture of apple / wax model

- Access and exclusion to information

- The above characteristics assume certain advantages – human beings can now obtain greater knowledge about aspects of reality without observing it personally.
- Carrier-related characteristics does not only mean greater access to information about reality, it also implies that information can be withheld from people [legally, economically, geographically, educationally]
- People can thus be excluded from information because of carrier-related characteristics for example information found/stored in electronic format – it is inaccessible not only because of economical reasons (can't afford PC), but also educational (can't operate PC).

- Communication disturbances

- Problems arise with carrier-based characteristics of information in terms of aging information, duplication, unsystematic information etc...
- Not only affects retrieval, but also the effective use for task completion.
- The so-called publication and information explosion stimulates these problems.

## **(2) Human-Related Characteristics**

- Unique characteristics of information in terms of relationship with human beings
  - Information can be observed
  - Human beings can give meaning to information in context
  - New information can be produced
  - Human beings serve as carrier of information (in terms of knowledge)
- The above-indicated section is influenced by the cognitive and affective potential of each individual.

1) Human related information is not always true to reality

- Human beings only have a fragmented view of reality (when the individual is the information processor). A person cannot observe all reality at once and for all periods of time. The individual can only observe his/her current environment / sphere of interaction.
- Thus information related to human beings not always the truth, the whole truth  
..... information related to human beings is perceptually and situational based
- The information that surrounds reality is correct/true, but with the limitations of humans which do not have the potential to see the "bigger picture"
- Information as input to human beings does NOT reflect whole truth
- A causal relationship would then mean that where information accounts as output, in other words where information is released through communication then the truth is not objectively and fully reflected
  - Carl Popper describes this in terms of his three world ontology
    - The reality itself
    - Experiencing reality by a human
    - Experiencing reality by means of e.g. written text/symbols etc.

2) Information as an effect on man

- Mainly applied to current knowledge structures / information infrastructure
- Farradane indicates 4 effects
  - Information has no or little effect – the human being does not understand the information and subsequently no cognitive processing occurs to broaden the existing knowledge base. The individual is limited to observing the associated information
  - Information has little effect – the human being only adds some additional knowledge to the current knowledge base
  - Information has a confirming effect (confirming or refuting the knowledge that the human being possesses)
  - Total change - new knowledge added to existing knowledge may also induce a total new knowledge base, by replacing the previous existent knowledge base
- Information has an effect on the affective (emotional) side of humans
- Focus on value-system/personality NOT context of information and influence thereof on the knowledge base
- When measuring effect one should take the human being in totality into account, as well as information infrastructure, age, race, education, background etc.
- It is all about human beings = same information has different effects on different people
- Same information also lead to different reactions - same person found in different circumstances may interpret the same information differently based on circumstance
- What are we trying to get at?
  - By observing the effect of information on a human being, uncertainty may be reduced!
  - Critics indicate that information can also lead to more uncertainty (when for example new information challenges a persons value

systems etc)

3) *Human related info is value-added info*

- Value is added to information depending on a human beings' potential to sensibly observe information and converting it into meaning
- This implies that every individual that gathers and possess information and process it into knowledge is busy adding value
- This value adding process differs not only from one individual to another but also according to the different meanings within different contexts for the same person.
- Value of information for the individual is NOT in the information itself – but in the human beings' ability to add meaning to it.
- Value adding is therefore concerned with accessibility, understanding and application of information for the individual relating to certain objects in reality.

- *Value-adding* = 2 ways    ➤ Observe the object - use current existing

knowledge base to process information to result in 'new' knowledge based on the meaning applied to the information

- Get additional, already interpreted information about an object by consulting other sources without directly observing object the object itself

- It is very important to add value to information - the individual is the critical element NOT the presentation / integration of info concerning reality.

#### 4) Human-related info as instrument of power

- "Knowledge is power"
- Alvin Toffler relates information to power in his books - Future Shock, Third Wave, Power Shift
- Gonzalez-Manet refers to information in his book The Hidden War of Information
  - *"information age and free flow of information . . . are soft words for hard domination"*
- Information is not the instrument of power in a political / economical arena BUT the fundamental relationship between human beings and information relates to the concept of "power"
  - Already mentioned that humans, by means of communication, can make representation about reality with information about reality
  - Where does the POWER come from? Human beings have the potential to manipulate and influence, as well as control the meaning and context of the information within specific parameters concerning reality
  - Where information, as output to human knowledge, is concerned -

humans have the power. As communication it is selective in terms of others' individuals representation of reality.

- Human beings depend on information to make decisions
- But others manipulate information in such a way that the message you receive is not the truth / reality – the person manipulates your decision.
- Any individual that wants to use information as an instrument of power, does not only need knowledge but also access to information, the ability to apply information, access to various distribution channels AND the will to do it!!!
- The focus here is the value system of the individual.

*Every individual has the responsibility to communicate right info to right person...*