

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION  
AND INFORMATION

# Using Internet Services for Personal Information Management

**Shaheen Majid**

# Importance of Information

“Nations will **flourish or fail** depending upon the availability of leaders, professionals and citizens who have been educated to **understand the power of information** and have access to it for decision making and solving the problems of their society.”

(Oslen, 1989, p. 120)

Oslen, J.K. (1989). Strategic Issues in Information with special reference to developing countries, *IAALD Quarterly Bulletin*, 34(3): 119-125.

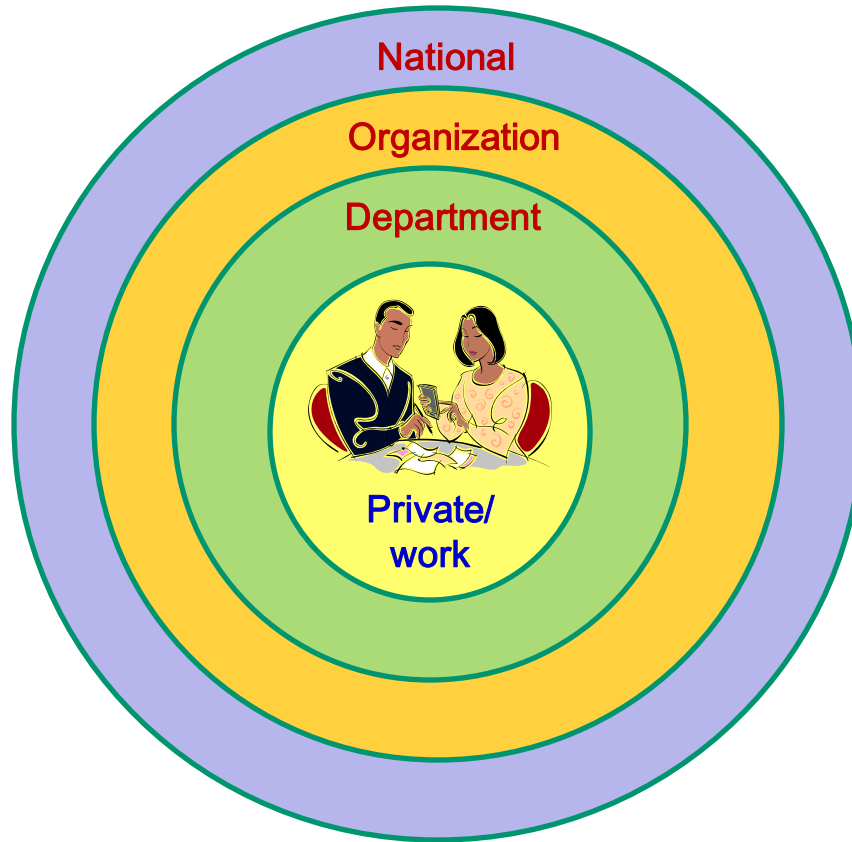
# Importance of Information

Stewart (2002) claims that **national success is dependent on corporate success** and how an organisation uses information and knowledge to leverage its core competencies and capabilities enables it to sustain its **competitive edge**.

Stewart, Thomas A. (2002). *The wealth of knowledge: intellectual capital and the twenty-first century organization*. London: Nicholas Brealey.

**If information is so important then it should be properly managed**

# Personal Information Management (PIM)



**Proper information management is essential for persons, organisations and nations to succeed**



**NANYANG  
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# What is Personal Information Management?

**“ ... activities a person performs in order to acquire or create, store, organize, maintain, retrieve, use and distribute the information needed to meet life’s many goals and to fulfill life’s many roles and responsibilities (as parent, spouse, friend, employee, member of community, etc.).”**

Jones (2008)

# Examples of Personal Information

- Academic and professional transcripts
- Personal property and other assets
- Medical records
- Insurance policies
- Mortgage contracts
- Bank statements and financial transactions
- Legal documents
- Family photos
- Email messages
- Bookmarks
- Contact information of friends and relatives



# Mismanagement of personal info. may result in:

- ✦ **Loss of family heritage**
- ✦ **Delays in legal proceedings**
- ✦ **Financial losses**
- ✦ **Delays in medical treatment**
- ✦ **Problems in making insurance and other claims**

**Mismanagement may also create stress, anxiety, embarrassment and information overload**

# Managing Digital Information

## ➤ **Multiple Types & Formats:**

- **Text documents**
- **Presentation slides**
- **Numeric data**
- **Telephone numbers**
- **Names and addresses**
- **Appointments**
- **Meeting notes, drafts,**
- **To-do lists, reminders, noteworthy dates**
- **Identification information**
- **Audio and sound recordings**

## ➤ **Multiple Gadgets - PCs, notebooks, iPods, notepads, PDAs, cell phones**





# Problems - Multiple formats and Gadgets

- ✿ **Inability to effectively use different gadgets**
- ✿ **Information fragmentation across several devices**
- ✿ **Information related to an activity (e.g. a research project) may be scattered into many folders or applications (Excel, MS Word, PowerPoint)**
- ✿ **Multiple version of the same document stored in different devices**
- ✿ **Inability of many mobile devices to exchange data**

➡ **Lack of desired information management competencies among the general public**



# One Possible Solution to Information Fragmentation

- ▶ **Use Internet services, which in addition to their respective functionalities, provide storage space to their account holders**
  - **Gmail**
  - **Yahoo**
  - **Hotmail**
  - **Google Apps**
  - **Office online**
  - **Facebook**
  - **MySpace**
  - **Flicker**

# Purpose of the Study

To understand the usage of different Internet services by students for managing their personal information items

## Areas covered:

1. Reasons for using Internet services for PIM
2. Types of information objects stored and managed online
3. Mechanisms used for accessing & retrieving personal information items
4. Concerns regarding privacy and security of personal information objects

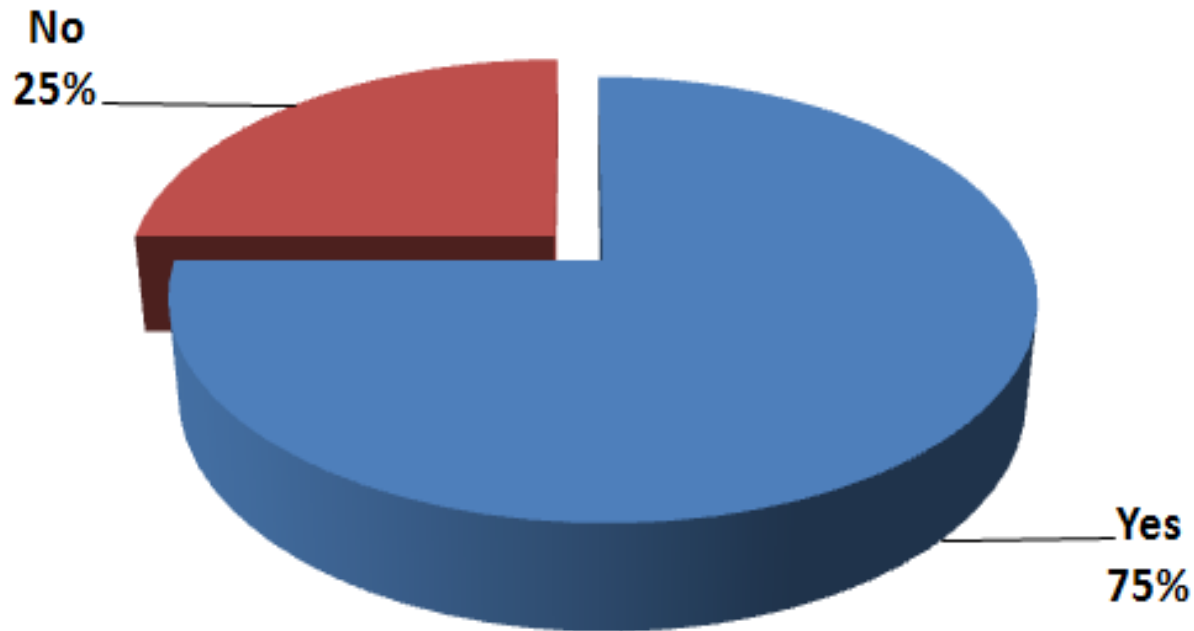
# Data Collection

- **Study Population:** Students from IT-related disciplines from two public universities in Singapore
- **Survey Instrument:** Pre-tested questionnaire
- **Response Rate:** 212 completed questionnaire returned, 78.5% response rate
- **Data Collection:** October/November 2009

# Respondents

- **Gender**
  - **Female: 48%**                      **Male: 52%**
- **Area of Study**
  - **Computer Engineering: 33%**
  - **Signal Processing: 31%**
  - **Digital Media: 24%**
  - **Computer Aided Manufacturing: 12%**
- **Nationality**
  - **Singaporean: 23%**
  - **China: 21%**
  - **Myanmar: 22%**
  - **Indian: 21%**
  - **Other Countries: 13%**

# Are you using Internet Services for storing and managing personal digital items?



# Reasons for Using Internet Services for PIM (1)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Personal information items available <b>anywhere anytime</b>	4.4%	3.2%	8.1%	52.5%	31.8%
Most internet services offer <b>enough storage capacity</b>	3.1%	12.5%	13.1%	51.3%	20.0%
Reduces the need to <b>maintain multiple copies</b> of my items	2.5%	16.9%	18.8%	50.0%	11.8%
<b>Uploading /downloading speed</b> of personal info. items from the Internet services is satisfactory	5.6%	20.6%	19.4%	46.9%	7.5%
Most internet services are <b>more stable</b> than my own PC	5.0%	23.8%	25.0%	36.8%	9.4%

# Reasons for Using Internet Services for PIM (2)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Personal digital info. items can easily be shared with others	0.6%	5.7%	10.0%	65.0%	18.7%
Personal items can be easily and effectively organized	2.5%	8.8%	20.6%	61.8%	6.3%
Search features allow me to retrieve my item quickly and accurately	0.0%	15.0%	18.8%	54.4%	11.8%
Internet services are only suitable for non-sensitive information	3.1%	12.5%	15.6%	41.9%	26.9%
Internet services are trust worthy for confidential info.	4.4%	28.2%	24.3%	38.8%	4.3%



# Types of Personal Information Stored (N=159)

Digital Information Item	Use Frequency	
	Mean Score (scale: 1-5)	Standard Deviation
Email Addresses	3.94	1.13
Website Links	3.62	1.08
Text Documents	3.57	1.12
Mailing Addresses	3.48	1.28
Photos	3.43	1.06
Draft works	2.70	1.10
Sound and video recordings	2.67	1.20
Schedules	2.55	1.12
Reminders	2.52	1.11
Noteworthy dates	2.50	1.10
Appointments	2.43	1.12
To Do List	2.40	1.07
Telephone Numbers	2.18	1.07
Personal Identification Information (e.g. passport, IDs/ passwords, bank accounts, etc.)	2.04	1.23

# Organization of Personal Information Online

Statement	Frequency				
	Never	Seldom	Some-times	Most of the times	Always
I pay adequate attention to organizing my digital information items online	11.9%	18.8%	38.1%	21.9%	9.3%
I use hierarchical folders for organizing my digital items	7.5%	27.5%	29.4%	25.0%	10.6%
I use tagging/labeling to organize my digital information items	7.5%	23.1%	36.9%	24.4%	8.1%
I use meaningful file /folder names which adequately represent the content	6.3%	11.9%	36.8%	27.5%	17.5%
Features of Internet services are useful in organizing my info. items online	5.6%	13.8%	38.1%	31.9%	10.6%

# Retrieval of Personal Information

Statement	Frequency				
	Never	Seldom	Some- times	Most of the times	Always
<b>I browse through</b> my online files/ folders to reach my desired items	6.9%	16.8%	42.5%	26.3%	7.5%
<b>If I don't know the exact location,</b> I use search features to access my items	7.5%	15.0%	35.6%	33.1%	8.8%
<b>Even if I know location</b> of my items, I use search features to access my items	6.9%	23.7%	43.1%	23.8%	2.5%
<b>I can know the location</b> of my desired items through file/folder names	3.8%	15.0%	43.1%	27.5%	10.6%
<b>I find difficulty</b> in finding the information items I need back	7.5%	32.5%	50.0%	9.4%	0.6%

# Security of Personal Information

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I don't put my sensitive information in the storage provided by internet services	5.0%	7.5%	15.6%	31.9%	40.0%
I only store those personal information items that I want to share with others	2.5%	10.7%	14.4%	45.0%	27.5%
Internet services can adequately protect my personal information items	8.1%	35.6%	24.4%	28.8%	3.1%
I can control sharing of my personal information items with the intended persons	1.9%	13.1%	28.8%	50.6%	5.6%

# Conclusion

- **Now even an ordinary person deals with a large number of digital information items in his/her life**
- **This study suggests that the participants possessed only limited info. management skills**
- **Unfortunately, only a few academic institutions currently offer courses on 'Personal Information Management'**
- **LIS professionals, in addition to IL skills, should also teach basic information organization and management skills to their users**

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