

Library practice in a FMCG Environment

Have you ever wondered about what is involved in producing the loaf of bread you buy at your local supermarket, the ham you enjoy in your sandwich for lunch, or the traditional lamingtons that make morning tea so special?

As a librarian working for one of the largest food manufacturers in Australia and New Zealand, I have a particular insight into the world that is George Weston Foods Limited (GWF). Most Australians and New Zealanders would be familiar with many of our well known consumer brands, such as Tip Top®, Burgen®, and KR Castlemaine®.

Information, insights, and knowledge are certainly among the inputs in the manufacture of these and other GWF brands you see every time you take a trip to the supermarket or your corner store. Management of this knowledge is part of the service that the Library & Information Services (LIS) team provides to our GWF customers every day across the many facets of our fast-moving consumer goods business.

GWF has six major businesses that include bread and baked products, smallgoods, flour milling, animal nutrition, cake and ingredients, hygiene solutions, and foodservice operating from 60 sites with approximately 8000 employees across ANZ.

So what does this mean for LIS at GWF?

Based at the GWF Enfield NSW site, LIS has an FTE of 1.45 so working smarter and maximising our use of technology are core to how we operate. In describing the role of special libraries both ALIA and SLA rightly focus on the need for the special library to directly support the goals and business objectives of the parent organisation and to maintain alignment with those objectives.

So how do we pursue this objective at GWF LIS?

We foster a business partner relationship with our clients, seeking to understand what their information needs are and proactively identifying opportunities for us to deliver solutions that add value. Parallel with this, we keep a watching brief across vendor/supplier offerings so we are best placed to quickly match customer needs with a known solution. The final core element to our approach is to view information as a business asset. Looking at information as an asset has helped us identify opportunities to deliver value adding information and knowledge solutions.

GWF has diverse information needs, in terms of content type, delivery, and timing.

Timely access to quality, authoritative information across the business is required to support a variety of needs including: claim substantiation; regulatory compliance; issues management; safety; and the resolution of an engineering problem in one of the manufacturing plants.

The external content required ranges from a large suite of Australian and international standards, to market research, commodity information, published literature on food science and technology, cereal chemistry, analytical methods, consumer insights, issues management, and competitive intelligence. Our GWF clients can 'pull' content across most of these topics/disciplines from the various licences to web-based services which we have implemented. Clients also request custom research on an 'as needs' basis.

Alternatively, using the efficiencies of a one-to-many approach, LIS compiles and 'pushes' packaged information on a regular cycle to targeted audiences around the business. Through regular media, technical and IP updates, and ETOCS, key staff are kept informed of the latest developments relevant to their needs and roles within the business. By filtering and packaging information in this way, we address several key value considerations for staff such as staying current, saving time which might otherwise be spent trawling the web for information, and delivering against budget.

Through developing and maintaining knowledge bases for key communities of practice our information and knowledge management activities have followed a natural progression as we have looked for opportunities to add value throughout the whole life cycle of the information asset.

Our services are now well established and we have agreed metrics to measure and monitor both usage and business impact. More recently, we have also begun preparing trend analyses using graphical presentation and exploring how we can capture and include social media insights to support issues management activities.

Going forward, the challenges we face include:

- Ensuring our metrics remain aligned to organisational goals;
- Improved integration;
- Information literacy and staff training;
- Resource sharing; and
- Professional development.

Working at GWF presents me as an information professional with a range of interesting challenges and opportunities and has certainly given me a whole new appreciation of what goes into building great brands.

Melinda Stewart

Information Specialist
GWF Group Technical
melinda.stewart@gwf.com.au

Have You Been CKDesigned?
They Have ▼

Australian Institute of Management - AIM
Library, Book Store, NSW

LIBRARY PLANNING & DESIGN SPECIALIST

CK DESIGN INTERNATIONAL

P 02 9955 0755 • www.ckdesign.com.au