

## Thesis summary

### Overview of the research topic

This research explores the role, use and value of social media and tacit knowledge sharing practices. Its particular focus is the support of tacit knowledge exchange between employees in public sector organisations. It investigates the extent to which social media might replicate the less visible aspects of face-to-face tacit knowledge sharing. It aims to answer the following three research questions:

- How do social media facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge between employees?
- To what extent do social media bring new capabilities in the sharing of tacit knowledge?
- Which situated factors may provide the appropriate context for using social media to enhance tacit knowledge sharing practices?

This research necessitates an investigation of several themes in order to answer the research questions. Commonly-used tacit knowledge sharing techniques and practices between employees are explored such as Communities of Practice, storytelling, and mentoring (Kingston, 2012). Consideration is also made of the potential role, use and value of social media tools as replacements for tacit knowledge between workers that allow, for example, newcomers to benefit from private information previously exchanged between employees and intergrate within teams. Such practice has been described by Leonardi, Huysman, Steinfield (2013) in discussion of Enterprise Social Media (ESM) in an IT organisation. Another focus of the work is the possible models and frameworks that can potentially help decision makers select the best option to support organisational knowledge sharing according the specific contexts of local environments and institutional profiles.

This research also investigates how previous empirical studies in this area have been designed and implemented, and the impact of methodological choice on study outcomes. It is acknowledged in the scientific community that there is a lack of empirical studies which deepen the comprehension of social media usage within organisations (Panahi, 2013, p.380). This is particularly true within the field of knowledge management, where knowledge sharing practices benefit from social media technologies and their affordances (Annabi & McGann, 2013).

The empirical work for this study is being undertaken within the UK public sector. This is because there is an increasing use of social media within the public sector (Mergel, 2011, 2013; Zavattaro, Sementelli, 2014), yet there are still many hurdles to knowledge sharing that public sector organisations are keen to overcome (Taylor, Wright, 2004, Rosen, Furst, Blackburn, 2007). From the work completed for the literature review for this study it was established that studies of knowledge sharing practice in the public sector are less common than those that consider the public sector.

The research to be undertaken for this doctoral study will thus add to the field of Information Science by contributing a deeper understanding of how tacit knowledge sharing between employees within public bodies can be facilitated by the use of social media. As well as being of interest to the research community, the issues addressed within the scope of this research have relevance to practitioners keen to establish the tools that are most appropriate to support tacit knowledge sharing and how their return on investment can be measured, with a particular focus on improvements and innovation in services provision.

**Work progress to date**

So far (i.e. by March 2016) a literature review has been produced to establish the main concepts addressed: tacit knowledge, knowledge sharing practices, social media. This review includes the comparison of several models of knowledge sharing and demonstrates the complexity of the processes that these attempt to articulate. This investigation has also helped to identify different schools of thought as pertinent to tacit knowledge sharing and the philosophical field in which they are grounded.

The design of the methodology is ongoing. At the time of writing it focuses on three aspects: (1) methodological assumption; (2) identification of the site(s) for data collection; and (3) initial survey design. The design of the qualitative interviews will follow soon after the data collected by survey has been analysed. The most relevant methodological approach appears to be a mixed method executed as an inductive study that is mainly qualitative in nature, and completed though the use of multiple case studies.

**Plan of work**

March-April 2016	Online survey, quantitative data collection.
May-June 2016	Interviews, qualitative data collection
July-September 2016	Data analysis
October-December 2016	Preliminary results
Jan-September 2017	Thesis writing and submission

**Research problems encountered**

1. The choice of the appropriate method for this kind of work is challenging, particularly due to the intangible nature of tacit knowledge. How can a researcher be certain that the choice of methodological approach is appropriate to the nature of the study in question?
2. What should you do when an organisation that agreed to participate in your study suddenly pulls out?

**References**

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- Mergel, I. (2011). The use of social media to dissolve knowledge silos in government. In *The Future of Public Administration, Public Management and Public Service Around the World: The Minnowbrook Perspective* (pp. 177–187).
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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### ▪ As an employee

- 2014-2017      **PhD student**  
*Edinburgh Napier University, Centre for Social Informatics, IIDI, School of Computing (UK)*
- 2010 - 2014      **Deputy to the vice-president 'Quality & HR'**  
*Rectorate of the University of Lausanne*
- 2007 - 2009      **Research assistant**  
*Documentation Direction, Swiss national radio (RSR), Lausanne*
- 2005 - 2007      **Digital librarian and trainer**  
*Economics & Social Science University Library of Geneva*
- 2003 - 2004      **Research assistant**  
*School of Business Administration, Geneva*
- Teaching assistant**  
*School of Business Administration, Geneva*
- 2002              **Information officer**  
*Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the City of Geneva*
- 1999 - 2002      **Head librarian**  
*French Cultural Institute of Ljubljana, Slovenia*

## ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### ▪ As a self-employed trainer and consultant

- 2013 - 2014      **Stand-in teacher,**  
*Geneva School of Business Administration, Information Science Dept.*
- 2012              **Consultant in e-reputation**  
*MaNEP (Materials with Novel Electronic Properties)*
- Consultant in knowledge management**  
*Rectorate of the University of Lausanne*
- 2012              **Guest teacher**  
*Master of Archival Science & Librarianship, University of Bern*
- 2004 -            **Teacher**  
*Certificate in Management Documentation and Libraries, University of Fribourg*
- 2003 - 2013      **Trainer**  
**Social web, e-reputation, digital mediation, big data, advanced information search**  
*Cantonal & University Library (BCU), Lausanne - Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale libraries (EPFL), Renens - Library Information Association Switzerland (BIS), Bern - Swiss Foundation for Research in Microtechnology (FSRM), Neuchâtel - Swiss Public Relations Institute (SPRI), Lausanne - Swiss Union of Media (Comedia), Lausanne*

## EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

- 2011 **Master of Science in Information & Documentation**  
Geneva School of Business Administration / University of Montreal (EBSI)
- 1999 **Diploma in librarianship, documentation & archives**  
Haute Ecole of Information, Geneva
- 1993 **Diploma of administration**  
Private school Sight & Sound, Geneva
- 1992 **Diploma of General Education**  
Jean Piaget School, Geneva. English & Humanities awards
- 1989 - 1991 **Geneva College**  
Humanities & music

## CONTINUING EDUCATION & CONFERENCES

▪ *As a speaker:*

- 2011 **European Certificate of Digital Literacy Information Day**  
Conference Interlaken, Switzerland
- 2009 **Unlocking Audio: connecting with listeners**  
Conference. British Library, London

▪ *As an attendee:*

- 2012 - 2013 **University pedagogy reflection**  
Workshop University of Lausanne, Prof. J. Lanarès, Dr E. Sylvestre
- Catalysing learning using peer instruction & learning catalytic**  
Workshop. Prof. E. Mazur, Harvard University invited by University of Lausanne
- 2011 **LILAC: Librarian Information Literacy**  
Annual Conference. London
- 2008 **Introduction to ontologies and semantic web**  
Workshop. Paris
- 2006 **Internet Librarian International**  
Infoday. Symposium. London
- 2005 **WebSearch Academy**  
Conference. Information Today. Paris
- 2004 **Pedagogy for librarian trainers**  
Workshop. University of Geneva

## ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

- ICT** Professional databases: Factiva, Lexis Nexis, Business Source Premier, ProQuest.  
E-learning platforms: Moodle, Dokeos, SharePoint, Adobe  
Monitoring tools: Website Watcher, KB Krawl  
Social web: blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest
- Languages **French:** native  
**English:** fluent (speaking, reading, writing)