Content Curation in the Age of Generative AI:
Five Tips from a Corporate Librarian

For years, corporate librarians and other information professionals have heard many opinions and theories about what artificial intelligence (AI) may mean for their future. In 2024, with generative AI catching fire and enterprises aggressively exploring ways to productively use the new technology, the topic is garnering even more interest.

A recent article in The Harvard Business Review seeks to quell some of the fear around AI. The authors see great potential in gen AI as an aid to help people manage knowledge:

> **"The key is to use generative AI to manage the flood of information washing past you every day. Humans have limited cognitive information processing capacity. On the other hand, most knowledge workers today are inundated with a high-velocity in-flow of digital information and always-on communications. This crush of information is creating a 'digital debt': an ever-increasing backlog of information waiting to be processed by each knowledge worker."**

It stands to reason, then, that a prime target for generative AI is knowledge management systems. Given what gen AI is especially good at – aiding and abetting content discovery and synthesis – embedding such capabilities in a knowledge management application feels like a perfect fit, and an extremely useful technology tool for corporate librarians.

Last month, we had a lengthy conversation with one of Northern Light's customers – Jill Shuman, Director of Library Services at Takeda Pharmaceuticals. Jill shared her insights about the state of content management and curation today, and the technology, including generative AI, that corporate librarians can enlist to help them with those challenging tasks. Her guidance can be distilled down to five tips:

Tip #1: Curate and consolidate all key information sources in one place.

"My journey to finding a competitive intelligence content curation tool for my company began when a product team came to me and asked if there was any way all the information sources about their topic could be curated so they didn't have to go to ClinicalTrials.gov and PubMed for various pieces and then follow science and financial news in the media and journals separately," Jill explained. "They wanted a single place where they could find everything they needed.

"Many of Takeda's teams use SharePoint to store their content, which can be hard to search and update. We needed a way for clinical teams to stop using SharePoint for curation.

"Our requirements for a content curation system were straightforward but demanding. I wanted it to be completely intuitive, simple to use, dynamic, and require as little manual process as possible. I didn't want to build the solution, and I wanted a vendor who had been in the curation business for a long time, someone who understood content well, and someone who works in multiple industries because I believe there are lessons to be learned from other industries. And, of course, the solution had to be competitively priced."

Jill noted that the content Takeda licenses from specialized third-party sources is some of the most valuable and expensive content the organization possesses, and it is the most difficult to make accessible to users in a centralized way. A key requirement was to select a platform provider that had already built many of the connectors to this content.

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Tip #2: Collaborate with IT and other internal groups.

"The philosophy at our organization had always been that homegrown platforms were preferred, but I felt differently – if I can find the right commercial tool, I'll consider it," Jill said. "In any case, you should work early with your IT team. There's a robust validation process required with any enterprise application and implementing capabilities like single sign-on (SSO) or creating a URL can take a while.

She added, "Also, work to get buy-in from people outside of your immediate team. Be proactive in thinking about how broadly your content curation solution can be used across the enterprise."

As for timing, Jill says, "My basic advice to other corporate librarians when it comes to deploying a content curation platform is to target your launch – do not go enterprise-wide all at once. Look at requests you've had and what publications are stored in SharePoint to determine your best starting point. Then get a small group on board and

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have them serve as ambassadors to the broader organization. Also, make sure the IT work is complete – things like single sign-on and testing the URL– before you launch, because content and back-end IT are both important to the ultimate success of the system.

"Use the final week before you launch to fine-tune the content, check spellings, and ensure competitor lists are correct. If you're working with photos on a disease dashboard, double check that the art you've chosen reflects people who are likely to have the condition and make sure that all dashboards and widgets are retrieving the information you expect! In one case, we found that a common acronym used as a search term on an immunology-based dashboard was also an acronym for a financial services company. The information being retrieved from the subscribed news feeds was featuring the financial services company, rather than information about the immunology condition! In other words, sweat the details and check for the simple things that will make you look like the 'information heroes' that you are!"

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Tip #3: Customize the user experience as much as possible.

"Each user knows what's important to them, and each user is different," Jill said. "So, one of my priorities is to make each user's experience with our content curation platform as customized to their individual preferences as possible. That includes what they see on their screen when they first enter the system, the latest content displayed from their priority sources, and the headlines and news digests related to the topics they care about."

Jill added, "So it was essential any CI platform we deployed be able to display curated content not only from many sources but also about many topics. Alerting, dashboarding, QuickBoards, newsletters, and personalized recommendations from the system were required features."

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Tip #4: Be open to AI.

"Generative AI is very interesting to me," Jill said. "In fact, I'm already using it to learn more about what's happening in AI and publishing a newsletter on that topic." She added with a wry smile, "So you see I am using the AI tool in our new CI platform to learn about AI tools. I envision doing GenAI workshops to help users see how it can make their lives easier."

She continued, "Accuracy of responses is essential to us and constraining the AI to only use vetted high-quality sources helps ensure accuracy. To that end, our solution uses the GenAI technique known as Retrieval Augmented Generation, in which text answering users' questions is created only from designated and well-vetted source materials."

The bottom line for the Takeda library is this: "Having a purpose-built tool that automates content curation and retrieval is vital for effective corporate information management, and adding generative AI to it is a huge plus." Or, as the authors of the HBR article referenced earlier note, "Instead of automating your job away, the power of generative AI can help to improve your ability to do cognitively challenging knowledge work." That is why corporate librarians and information professionals are excited about GenAI and other AI applications related to knowledge management.
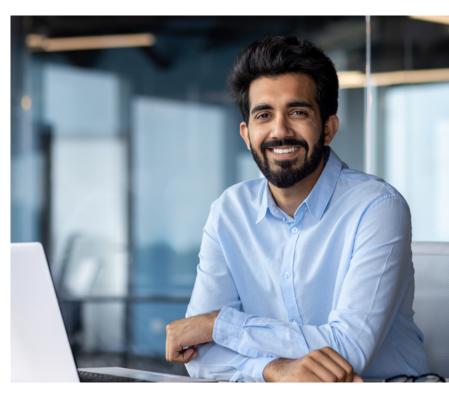
Of course, corporations like Takeda don't want their proprietary or licensed research documents used to train a commercial large language model (LLM). As research firm Jinfo reports about a recent GenAI roundtable it conducted with corporate information professionals: "Confidentiality and privacy were critical concerns. There was universal agreement [among information professionals] that tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini must not be used for queries involving sensitive information." Therefore, it's vital that all generative AI interactions between an enterprise knowledge management application and a third-party LLM are secure and "disappear" as soon as the session ends.

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Tip #5: Select a partner whose support is as strong as their product.

"I started asking around and one person on my team had used Northern Light SinglePoint™ at a previous company and recommended it highly. Coincidentally, I had heard of Northern Light's life sciences industry conference abstracts content collection, which seemed like a great research asset for an internal client. Also, I had heard an integrated content curation approach like what Northern Light enables can save an information professional many hours per week, and who doesn't want that kind of efficiency?" As for subscription content integration, Jill said, "Northern Light shone brighter than the rest with much experience with our content sources.

"Think about what you get from a vendor beyond just their product," she advises. "I've made it a point to take advantage of the support Northern Light offers; they are a wealth of knowledge about content management and curation; after all, they've worked with librarians and information professionals at large companies for over 20 years. Northern Light's attitude is, 'We will do our best to make it work.' What else can you ask for? And our IT team said the validation process with Northern Light was one of the best they've ever undertaken with an outside vendor.

"During implementation, it's vital that your internal team meet once or twice a week and meet with your vendor that same week to address questions and stay on top of any issues. We've benefitted greatly from that close collaboration. I don't know that I've ever worked with an outside vendor who bends over so backwards to get it right."

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We'd love to hear your use case.
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