Spring 2003

01001100 01010100 01000101 01010010
LTER DataBits
Information Management Newsletter of
The Long Term Ecological Research Network
01001100 01010100 01000101 01010010

Good Reads

Information Ecology
- Karen Baker, Palmer Station

Davenport, T.H. Information Ecology: Mastering the Information and Knowledge Environment. Oxford University Press, 1997.

Davenport in Chapter 1 makes clear his views on information management through presentation of a pair of lists that invite the reader to compare and contrast. He lists four beliefs of those looking to technology to solve our information challenges:

- information is easily stored in computers - as 'data';
- modeling computer databases is the only way to master information complexity;
- information must be common throughout an organization;
- technology change will improve the information environment

and four beliefs of those taking a more ecological approach to information management:

- information is not easily stored on computers-and is not 'data'
- the more complex an information model, the less useful it will be;
- information can take on many meanings in an organization;
- technology is only one component of the information environment

The brief lists are an effective method to highlight differences between technological and sociotechnical approaches. Be wary browsing this author on the bookstore shelf as there is a Thomas O. Davenport who has written a book "Human Capital: What It Is and Why people Invest in It" (1999) that details a popular contemporary management philosophy. It's interesting but distinct from Thomas H. Davenport's "Information Ecology".

The Invisible Present
- Karen Baker, Palmer Station

Magnuson, John, "The Invisible Present" in Ecological Time Series. T.M. Powell and J.H. Steele (eds), 1995.

A classic LTER article providing insight into the multitude of views derived from varying temporal time scales in ecological science. A series of graphs, showing the changing view resulting from opening up of a time series, illustrates a point fundamental to the philosophy of LTER. Although published earlier in BioScience as one of a trio of LTER articles (1990), this adaptation of the article becomes part of a broader context when it appears within an ecological time series book that spans the land, ocean and human health domains.