Online Alumni Information System Satisfies Alumni in an Educational Institution in Cebu City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The internet is a powerful tool for connectivity. It has become the avenue for most people to exchange information, knowledge, and apparently, almost everyone is present on the web. The Online Alumni Information System aimed to evaluate the status of the existing alumni information system in the aspect of accessibility, reliability and timeliness. It also identified the problems encountered in the current alumni information system, determine the features of good online alumni information system, and design a prototype of online alumni information system. The study used the descriptive method of research using the researcher-made questionnaire to gather data. There were 116 respondents in the study using purposive sampling technique. To obtain the relevant data, the alumni provide their answers to the researcher-made questionnaire. The results revealed that the respondents were able to acquire accurate documents or alumni information from the school after graduation, and they were satisfied with those obtained documents. The common problems encountered include the absence of the programs/ activities organized by the alumni, no communication with the graduates, and outdated profiles of the graduates. The study concludes that an Online Alumni Information System should be designed and developed to provide easy access to information to all stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Information spurs changes in societies and individuals, promoting the advancement from one level of development to another. Most organizations consider information as a resource, produced by an information system. An information system is a framework in which data collection, processing, controlling and managing undergo some stages to provide information to the end users (Yang, 2002).

According to Baroudi, Olson and Ives (1986), "user involvement" in information system development is considered as an esssential method to improve the features of the system and to assure effective deployment of the system to the end users. However, any information is useless unless it is put to proper use. Lack of appropriate information and knowledge in any sector makes society short-sighted and unable to bypass the gap.

Human beings do not live in isolation. The gregarious nature of man has prompt him to reach out, to interact with others and to keep him updated with the latest information. Individuals impart and discuss knowledge and learning to attain optimum problem solution. The sharing of information is, thus, very significant.

In this era where advancement is becoming part of each and every field of life, and time becomes the one of the key elements of success, people want to do things or everyday jobs with more speed as ever. Due to this current human dynamics, people needs an information system to facilitation exchange of ideas and information. Thus, alumni information system was conceptualized and created (Bhatti, 2009).

Academic institutions need the information system that will manage and maintain data of their graduates especially in forming their alumni organization. Retaining and managing the records of the growing number of alumni is central task which could be undertaken with the presence of an information system for the alumni. In this manner, all the needed data pertaining to the graduates of the school are retrievable with ease and convenience.

There are schools which use Online Alumni Information Systems for faster communication with their alumni and monitoring alumni activities, as well. The Sisters of Mary School Online Alumni System, www.smaa.org.ph started

in 2002. It was initially static until 2008. It was during this time that there was a launching of a newly developed website. The system contains a database of graduates where only those bonafide students can access. This system makes the graduates interact with other alumni by searching them in the users' directory tool. Moreover, they could also update their own profiles.

University of Santo Tomas Online Alumni Information Systems through the Office of Alumni Relations and the Faculty of Civil Law has launched their respective websites, with the former aiming to strengthen links with alumni and the latter seeking to help to graduate students in the bar exams. The Civil Law developed a new website, which includes an updated electronic library with a databank of jurisprudence, legislation, and rules and issuances. The website, www.ustcivillaw.com, is open to UST students and even non-UST law students and bar reviewers. Aside from the reviewer, the website also features updates on the faculty's scholarship programs, dean's lists, faculty profiles, details on legal aid and guidance counseling services, and information about student groups and organizations.

Meanwhile, the Office of Alumni Relations had introduced the Alumni Information System (AIS), to keep track and gather information from UST graduates. The AIS helps alumni associations from different faculties and colleges to reach out to their graduates and also helps them obtain and collect alumni information needed in accreditations.

The Manila Central University Alumni Online Job Information System is a research project developed by two students from the College of Computer Studies for the MCU Alumni Association to help MCU Graduates find Jobs Online (e.g., Jobstreet.com, Mytrabaho.com, Careerbuilder.com, Jobquest.ph, JobsDB.com and much more). This study started in June 2008. www.mcualumni.com is a website composed of different applications suitable for the students, graduates, employees and friends of Manila Central University. This website is a database-driven and user-driven site in which the website relies mostly on its users.

The Online Alumni Information System contributes much help especially to the alumni and the school for it allows them to reach out with each other. Furthermore, it facilitates ongoing, accurate and varied communications. The successful implementation of the system would enable them to bind a meaningful relationship among each other.

The system helps the alumni to get updated with the latest news and upcoming events of the institution. Also, this system can be easily accessed through the use of the internet. It also allows alumni who are living abroad to get connected

with their fellowmen and the institution across the miles. Every graduate has varying life activities which could be worth sharing for using the online alumni information system.

The study is not just in line with one of the school's strategic directions which is to enhance networking linkages where the alumni are deemed as potential partners, but also with the school's aim for complete automation and paperless transactions.

FRAMEWORK

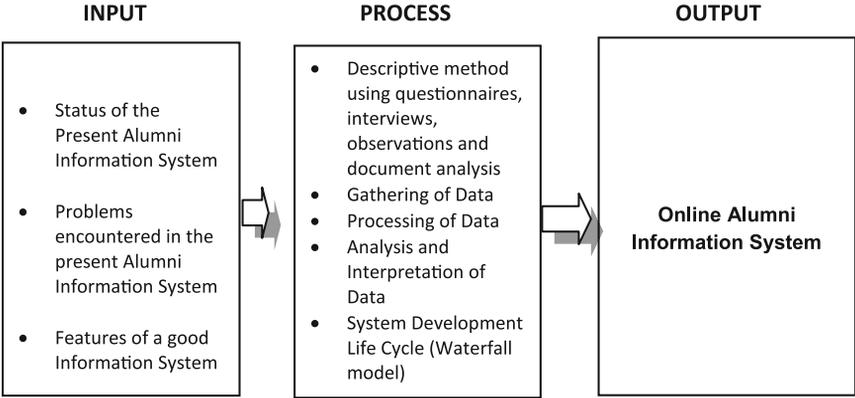| INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
• Status of the Present Alumni Information System • Problems encountered in the present Alumni Information System • Features of a good Information System	• Descriptive method using questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis • Gathering of Data • Processing of Data • Analysis and Interpretation of Data • System Development Life Cycle (Waterfall model)	**Online Alumni Information System**

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Figure 1. Research Flow

Clift's "Affiliation Theory" (1999) discusses that a well-structured information is power, correct data is necessary, updated information is worthy, interaction is needed, constant contact is orderliness, planned communication is deliberate, expanding communication is progress, and many-to-many communication is vibrant. Therefore, intentional, ongoing, expansive, many-to-many communication within the context of organized, accurate, up-to-date information is power.

The Internet offers many avenues where people can interact. It comes in the form of e-mails, instant messages, chat rooms, message boards, blogs, fora and social networking sites. Accessibility of knowledge is the greatest benefit that internet provides to the public. The Internet is a practical value that is full of knowledge. There are millions of available information that can be accessed on the internet (Pakhare, 2011).

One of the most important benefits of the internet is communication. The internet provides humans with an alternative chance to communicate with one another. Email, messenger, video conferencing are the usual means of communication on the internet and these offer people with a less costly means of communication with their family members, friends and the general public (Pantelide, 2011).

Alumni Information System is just one of the many examples of an Information System. According to the websites of Saint John's University (www.csbsju.edu) of Minnesota, USA and Baylor University (www.baylor.edu) of Waco, Texas, USA, an Alumni Information System is a directory that keeps track of alumni information which includes personal, educational and professional information.

The alumni play a vital role in every institution of learning. They are the ones who bring the name of the school once they leave its portals. They embody the ideals and goals esteemed by the school, and thus, give a more or less accurate measure of its success.

In the study, the present alumni information system would be evaluated based on the following aspects:

- **Information system's accessibility** refers to the means in which information technology

(IT) can be functional and expedient for the people for usage. IT can assist people when it permits them to gain maximum access to information and media communication. The issue of accessibility has raised some attentions, and the information technology public has given more emphasis on developing informational systems and websites that are accessible and can be of utility by people (Lazar, 2002).

When evaluating the availability of electronic information resources and devising for such accessibility, there should be a vibrant definition of what accessibility and its related terms; lucidity of the accessed daata and the target users to whom it applies. In the context of a framework, universal accessibility and usability should be taken care of– closely related terms (Andreas Kleynhans & Fourie, 2014).

- **Reliability which** pertains to the assessment of information systems (IS) service quality is very crucial to IS managers in the process of assessing

and consistently providing highly satisfactory IS services. Service quality pertains to comparing between the anticipation of the customers and the quality of services rendered to the consumers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). IS researchers proposed that determining the extent of variation of customers' expectations provides a high baseline of IS service quality (Watson, Pitt, & Kavan, 1998).

- **Timeliness** relates to the recent developments in mobile computing, communications and embedded systems are likely to enable the deployment of large scale ubiquitous computing environments. There is an expectation that real-time information services will gain importance with the emergence of pervasive computing environments. To facilitate such real- time system, a data corpus design that can flawlessly deliver an updated entree to fast fluctuating data irrespective of various user conditions and changeable application prerequisite is needed.

Updated data compendium in a changeable situation provides the innovator of the system designer with thought-provoking confronts. First, information sources provide a continuous stream of data that can dynamically vary over time. There is a necessity that this information be taken quickly with accuracy. Next, those users of the information require correct and fast access to the system in terms of retrieval. Additionally, providers of the internet connection intend to offer and provide assurance for efficient usage of the band-width and network architecture. Supposedly, information system intends to gain correct and updated data at a minimum cost. The fundamental middleware design should take consideration on the objective of providing information which is updated, factual and less costly. Many applications are willing to tolerate information imprecision and bounded delivery latencies. The approach is to maximize the correctness as well as the dormancy margins to provide assurance that majority of the system obtain data at a desirable extent in a real-time manner and quality at a minimum usage (Venkatasubramanian, 2003).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to: 1) Evaluate the status of the present alumni information system with regards to accessibility, reliability and timeliness; 2) Identify the

problems encountered in the current alumni information system, and 3) Determine the features of good online alumni information system. The results of the investigation served as the basis for the formulation of an Online Alumni Information System.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used the descriptive method which employed the researcher-made questionnaire to gather the data needed. The researcher collected information from the respondents describing the status of the present alumni information system, the problems encountered in the current alumni information system and the features of an efficient information system. The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted and applied the system development life cycle (waterfall model). A prototype of an Online Alumni Information System becomes the result of several processes.

Participants

The respondents were the alumni, school administrators, guidance office, registrar and graduating students. There were 100 alumni, three administrators, two guidance counselors, one registrar and ten graduating students. Purposive-convenience sampling was used in the study due to the complexity in reaching the respondents especially the alumni. The proponent made the respondents sign the informed consent before the conduct of the survey in compliance with research ethics protocol.

Instrumentation

A researcher-made-questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The instruments consisted of three parts. The first part pertains to the participant's perception of the current situation of the alumni system. The second part concerns on the problems that confront the various stakeholders of the school on the present manual alumni information system of the school. The last part allowed the respondents to suggest features of a good online alumni information system for deployment and all the stakeholders of the school to benefit. A trial run was undertaken by the 20 participants to determine the functionality of the researcher-designed tool.

The researcher obtained first the approval from the School Administrator to conduct the study and then the distribution of the research instrument followed. Unstructured interviews were further undertaken to students and staff of the institution to gather further additional data necessary to improve the study.

Based on the researcher-made-questionnaire, the data gathered from the existing system was processed, analyzed, interpreted and treated using frequencies and simple percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Accessibility

Results showed that most of the respondents answered that information was "sometimes available" when accessed with a frequency of 58 which comprised 50% of the participants. Some answered "most of the time" available when retrieved with a prevalence of 35 or 30.17%, followed by "readily available" when retrieved which is 19.83%.

According to Satyanarayanan (1996), most internet users have grown dependency on the ability to access information and the span to access data repositories will have to grow. The increasing social acceptance of homes or other areas is a stimulus to the improvement of the manner of accession using mobile information system.

Therefore, there is an emerging implication that in the vast world of the internet, most people expect that any data and information that they need anytime can be browsed on the online network.

Reliability

The majority of the respondents claimed that the acquired information is accurate with a frequency of 114 or 98.28%. Only 1 or 0.86% answered that the information is inaccurate, and 1 or 0.86% of the respondents was undecided.

Zahedi (1987) said that the information system consists of a level of interconnected resources, objectives, perceptions, and outcomes. To provide assurance of the efficient functioning of a particular system, one need to recognize the composition of the system that is necessary to system's performance and assess the aggregate effectiveness and performance of this component in accomplishing the system's intended objectives. His idea would mean that the users of information should acquire knowledge to recognize whether the data or information are reliable and credible or not so as not to be misleading.

Timeliness

As to the timeliness of releasing the information of the existing alumni information system in the school, the aptness of information was measured by the length of time in generating information when requested.

As to the span of time in generating reports such as list of alumni by year graduated, course and current school, alumni profile, and releasing of documents requested by alumni, respondents answered that the document that they requested was generated in more than five days, but less than a week which got a highest frequency of 54 or 46.55%; followed by 1-2 days which was answered by 30 respondents or equivalent to 25.86%. Ranked third is less than one day which obtained a frequency of 29 or 25%. Ranked fourth is 3-4 days with a range of 2 or 1.72%. And the last is more than a week and needs follow-up which got a score of 1 or 0.86%.

There is an expectation that real-time information services will gain importance with the emergence of pervasive computing environments. The approach is to maximize the correctness as well as the dormancy margins to provide assurance that majority of the system obtain data at a desirable extent in a real-time manner and quality, at a minimum usage (Venkatasubramanian, 2003).

Problems Encountered in the Present Alumni Information System

A frequency of 99 or 85.34% of the respondents claimed that the present alumni information system has no programs/activities from by the alumni. It is ranked first. Ranked second is no communication of the graduates which got a frequency of 86 74.14%. Ranked third is the profile of the graduates that was found out to be not updated with a frequency of 70 or 60.34%.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that the Online Alumni Information System should be developed and implemented. The system improved the present alumni information system and provided easy access to information to all her stakeholders – the alumni, graduating students, registrar, guidance counselors and school administrators. The Online Alumni Information System bridges the gap between the alumni and the school for it provides communication between them and gives them the necessary information among each other. With the Online Alumni Information System, it is easier to maintain the connection with the alumni since the system can be easily accessed. Since, the world is now

in the digital age, people could communicate with other individuals around the globe.

As defined by Zwass (2014), the information system is an integrated set of components for collecting, storing, and processing data and for delivering information, knowledge, and digital products. There were series of activities that were carried out in the development of the Online Alumni Information System and these actions applied the waterfall approach of the System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) in which there is clear definition of the stages. With the application of the waterfall approach, phases are processed and completed one at a time. The Online Alumni Information System was able to manage and maintain the data of the graduates such as profile monitoring of the graduates, responding to the request of the alumni and generating reports.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The Online Alumni Information System for a Montessori School in a highly urbanized city provided an avenue where the graduates of the school and the school administrators to communicate with each other with more ease. It enhanced alumni relationship for they would have a long-lasting friendship. Continuous communication between the institution and the alumni made available with the existence of an Online Alumni Information System. The study helped registrars to view documents requested by the alumni and maintains alumni records in faster and easy way. Lastly, it also gave ease to the guidance office in performing their tasks especially in monitoring, record keeping, and generating reports.

The system is an online application that is accessible by the alumni or the graduates, graduating students, administrators, guidance counselors and registrar via internet for them to be able to view information in relation to alumni registration, profile monitoring, alumni activities. The system also exhibits the list of graduates and provides viewing of the request of document from the alumni as well as career services at their convenient time and place. The system also allows the administrator to input the profile of each graduate and store in the system in a manner in which the alumni could register and update his profile.

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