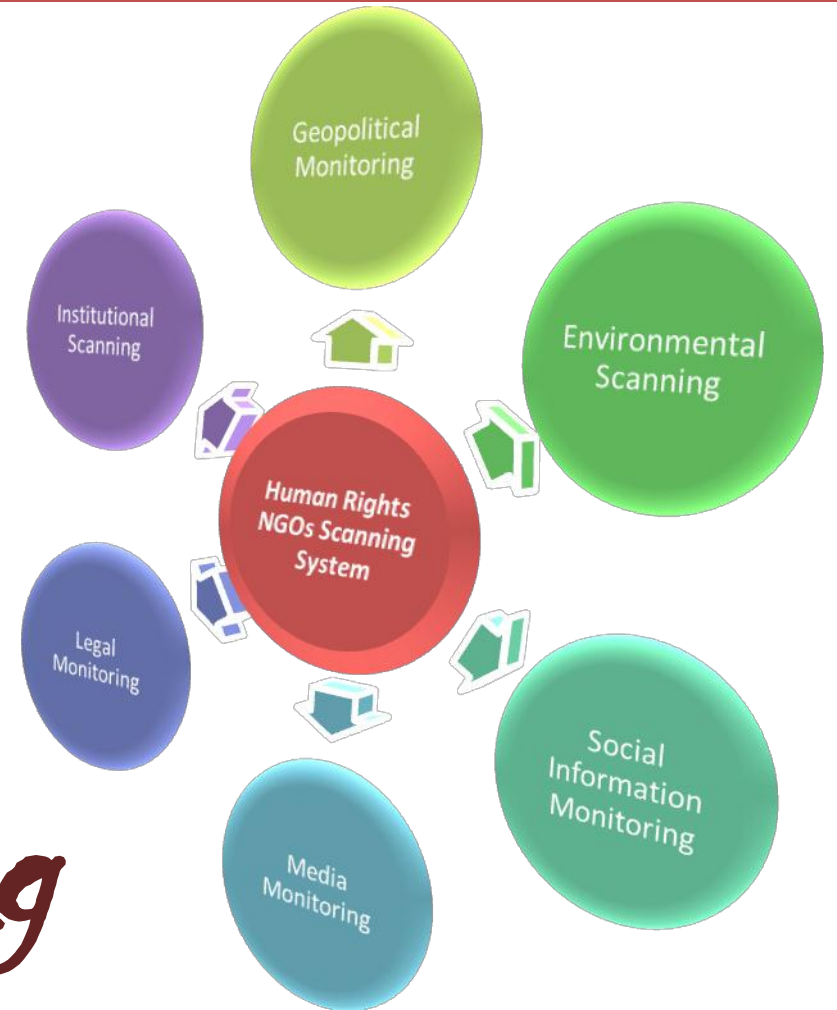


*Media monitoring,  
information scanning  
and Intelligence*



***for Human Rights NGOs.***

# Media monitoring...

...has always been important for Human Rights organizations.  
Lead information enables the detection of indicators, trends  
and features from your environment.

**Today**, many of you watch and monitor external, online, media, websites and blogs sources.

These activities entail two principal needs:



Media monitoring is a repetitive task, but many tools can meet the **needs for automation** and time saving



Relevancy and accuracy are limited by information overload and the subsequent blindness. Your action should not only be to search the web, but also **filter, evaluate and pilot your information flows**

**In this manual**, we will follow the path drawn by the information cycle:

1. A clear view on your environment. your information assets and needs may guide your action and lead you to intelligence
2. A specific scanning package with relevant sources will help you to know where to search on the web
3. Web information management tools, when carefully selected, will provide an automated support for information monitoring
4. Finally, we will show you how a professional project framework for information scanning activities draw the way to get good practices and avoid information management pitfalls

## Media monitoring, information scanning and Intelligence for Human Rights NGOs.

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# Part 1

## The Basics: Information Scanning

**Scanning** is the identification of data and information related to changes occurring in your environment. **Monitoring** consists of a continuous and iterative surveillance of these data and information from your external environment in order to understand, anticipate and react to any change, threat or opportunity that may appear. This activity must be considered as a project aiming to provide filtered, validated and relevant information to an organization. Moreover, information can be analyzed to become sufficiently valuable in making strategic decisions and supporting your activities.

Information scanning can be automated or may involve the work of one person, an entire team, a department, an organization or even a community of organizations. This kind of project needs technological support, although this is often not the priority of information scanning projects. This paper aims at presenting the main concepts about information scanning as a way to get information intelligence.

**Information gathering must neither be reduced to simple documentation management or internet surfing, nor should it be regarded as a complicated task.  
Information has a purpose and a meaning.**

A good starting point is to try to concretely determine what objectives lie behind each of your activities and tasks.

That is why after a brief overview of the various human rights NGO monitoring activities, we will try to use intelligence in gathering meaningful information.

Starting with the task of analysing your environment, the challenge is to identify several main steps, actions and tools composing your information management cycle.

Finally, the importance of project methodology for information monitoring cannot be forgotten. The project methodology approach offers a positive result: the establishment of professional information behaviour.

# What is media monitoring?

Seeking and gathering information from the external environment is often described as media monitoring, but it should not be merely reduced to simple information scanning from external sources. Indeed, several types of topics, sources and formats have to be taken into account in order to gain an overall snap shot of diverse media outputs.

**Media monitoring is the activity of surveying and observing the output of printed, online and broadcasted media.**

In the case of media monitoring, the type of sources that an organization chooses to monitor can limit their monitoring. Indeed, media monitoring involves the systematic recording of radio and television broadcasts, the collection of press clippings from print media, and data from online information sources.

As a consequence, the reference filter for collecting this material can be particular events, certain people involved, the global situation or other factors.

Despite the various, effective technology available for recording, text scanning and broadcasting, media monitoring still has its faults. Information delivered by media often only offers a general picture of the observed material. Further research is necessary to add details and verify content.

Media monitoring does not cover all the aspects of an organization's environment, which is why we advise organizations to broaden their search scope for information with a complete scanning package.

## Scanning package for human rights NGOs

Different scanning fields are necessary for complete surveillance of your environment.

Media monitoring is not sufficient for effective information scanning because along with observing and surveying information from media, it also needs to be identified in terms of data and related to the changes occurring in your environment. Scanning is not simply searching for information and documentation, but also turning information into data and highlighting its relevance to its environmental context.

Each component of your environment has to be considered and must be subjected to surveillance.





## INSTITUTIONAL SCANNING

For an organization, institutional monitoring is a way to ensure that its strategic goals, statutes and missions are up to date and reflect the latest evolutions of its context and environment.

Because organizations often seek to have a strong impact on their environments, institutional scanning enables organizations to keep aware of relevant current events and to prepare them for sudden changes to the status of situations concerning their organization.

## LEGAL MONITORING

Human rights work is now strongly linked with legal affairs. The information shared in this field often comes from judicial and legal action.

A strong, up-to-date knowledge of local, national or international law is central. For this reason, legal information monitoring helps to obtain the knowledge of new or recently modified laws and regulations, legal and administrative decisions.

Legal monitoring can help the whole human rights community in contributing to the enforcement and effectiveness of international norms, as these have to be openly shared with a broad audience in order to be fully understood and applied.



## SOCIAL INFORMATION MONITORING

Social monitoring is a two-part activity.

First, it is used to monitor and understand the complex linkages between social change in different spheres of social life, from family, to work and the labor market, to the urban and housing systems, to health and community services or an NGO's economy. Any social topic related to the targeted population is relevant to social monitoring. Monitoring these topics can potentially lead to further understanding and analysis and connect the organization with people in need.

The organization's role consists of tracking and analyzing key social changes with the goal of relating them to internal and external policy processes and settings. It tracks and analyzes information on society, which impacts the organization directly or indirectly and its network or community. This information can be used to evaluate the processes of a human rights NGO from a fresh, up-to-date social perspective.

Blogs cannot be ignored as valuable tools in social information monitoring. They are, for example, platforms of expression for journalists in repressive regimes as well as individuals and grassroots organizations. Surveying the information outputted by blogs can provide NGOs with the latest commentary on a variety of topics from varying perspectives.



## ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

Environmental scanning is often rightly defined as a process of obtaining information about the business environment of a company (indeed, we will discuss later what an NGO environment is and how it has its own ecology), but here we want to deal with the natural environment, which an NGO often has to take into account.

We see environmental scanning as a way to get information on regulations concerning the natural world, its fauna and flora, and even the more or less predictable changes occurring like climate change, natural disasters and the impact of human activity on the environment.



## GEOPOLITICAL MONITORING

Geopolitical monitoring is linked with challenges and changes on the international scene concerning political, social, economic and humanitarian risks.

This is a major concern for many NGOs since they often operate in unstable countries or territories. For this reason, it is important for these NGOs to have access to up-to-date coverage on and predictions about situations and events that impact military, political and economic relations.

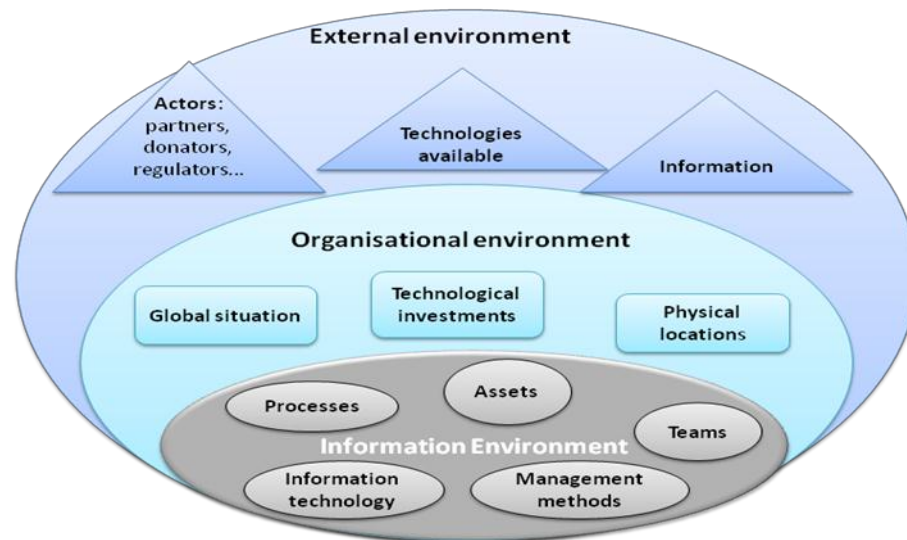
Moreover, NGOs have to stay informed on the rules of the international game, since they are operating within in. The NGO world is a network of different actors, partners and funders. Just because each of these groups is involved in a common network does not ensure that they share the same targets or objectives. NGOs have to protect their own interests as much as possible. The most effective way for them to achieve this is to understand their external environment well.

Once NGOs have understood their position with respect to the environment and acquired an in-depth knowledge of trends in information cycles as well as the software tools needed to access this information, they can then move on to successfully gathering intelligence.



# How to get *intelligence*?

The way from information to intelligence is often described as a process: first scattered data are structured to create information and then this information is synthesized and analyzed to build up knowledge. As soon as this knowledge is used to help decision making and to achieve the organization's goals, it becomes intelligence. More practically, the staff involved in information scanning can be a strong resource for an organization because they work to improve the integration of different (often wrongly called "antithetic") dimensions with a constant focus on information.



*The organization's information, organizational and external environments: Information Ecology (From Davenport, 1997)*

## *You and your environment*

Information is part of an organization on every level, and is also a key to understanding its external environment. The organization's environment has to be identified, understood and analyzed, and information on the environment can be useful in doing this.

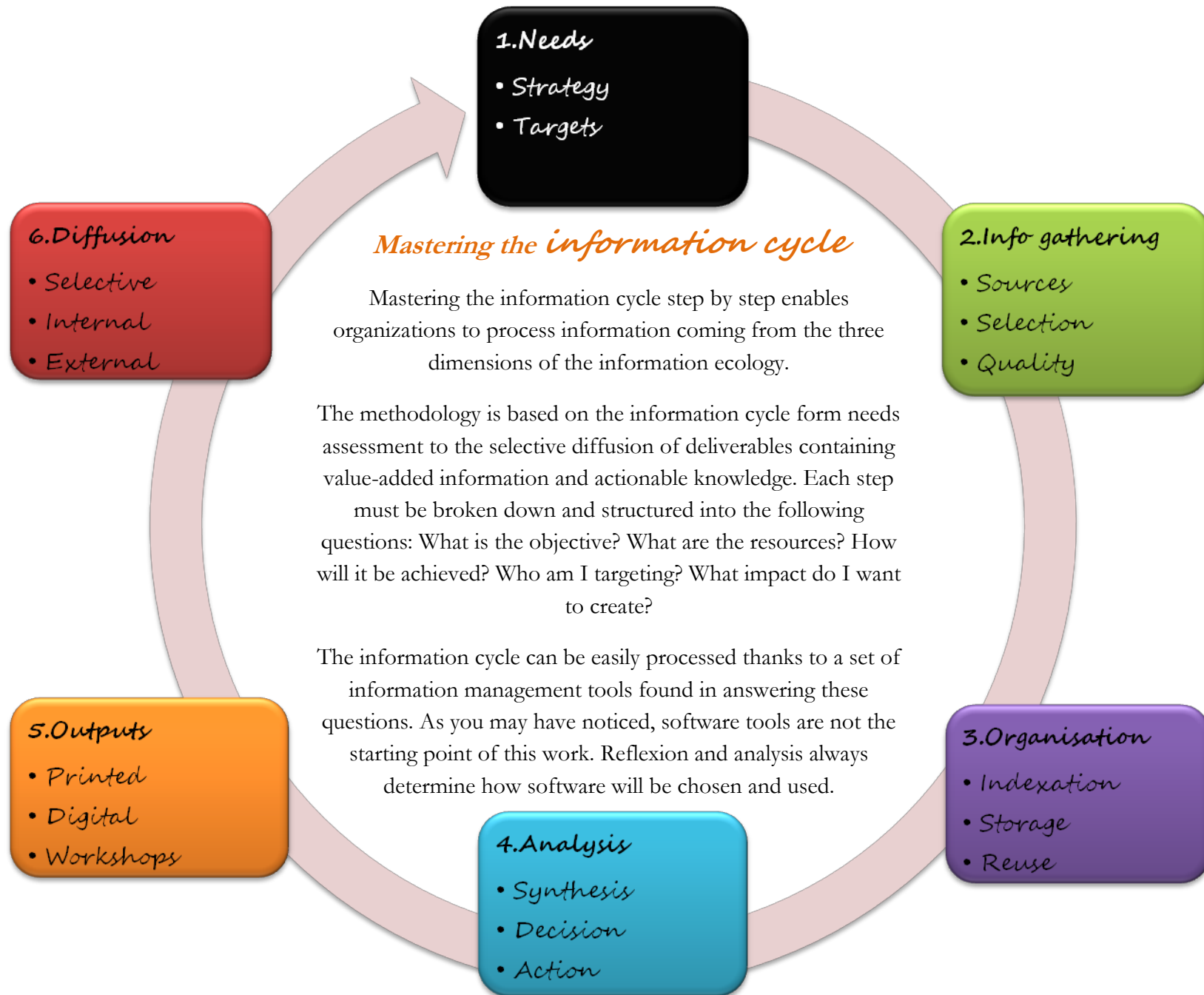
From the information perspective, the environment is composed of three linked spheres:

- INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT
- ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT
- EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

These dimensions shape the organization's environment, which sometimes appears as a complex constellation. Despite their apparent complexity, these dimensions overlap in the global network.

Each of these three spheres are identified thanks to several particular parameters, which are mapped in the illustration below. Those parameters can be identified and analyzed thanks to audits, surveys, etc. The knowledge of information ecology enables you to be aware of what you are capable of doing and be prepared to face the unpredictable future. The handling of the information coming from these three spheres is necessary to manage an organization efficiently and define strategic objectives and internal politics to drive your team towards success. This will allow you to develop information into intelligence.

The information sphere, appearing at the root of the organization's global environment, needs a particular methodology to process the well-known information cycle. Nevertheless, this cycle has to be adapted to the particular situation and configuration of an organization.



# Part 2

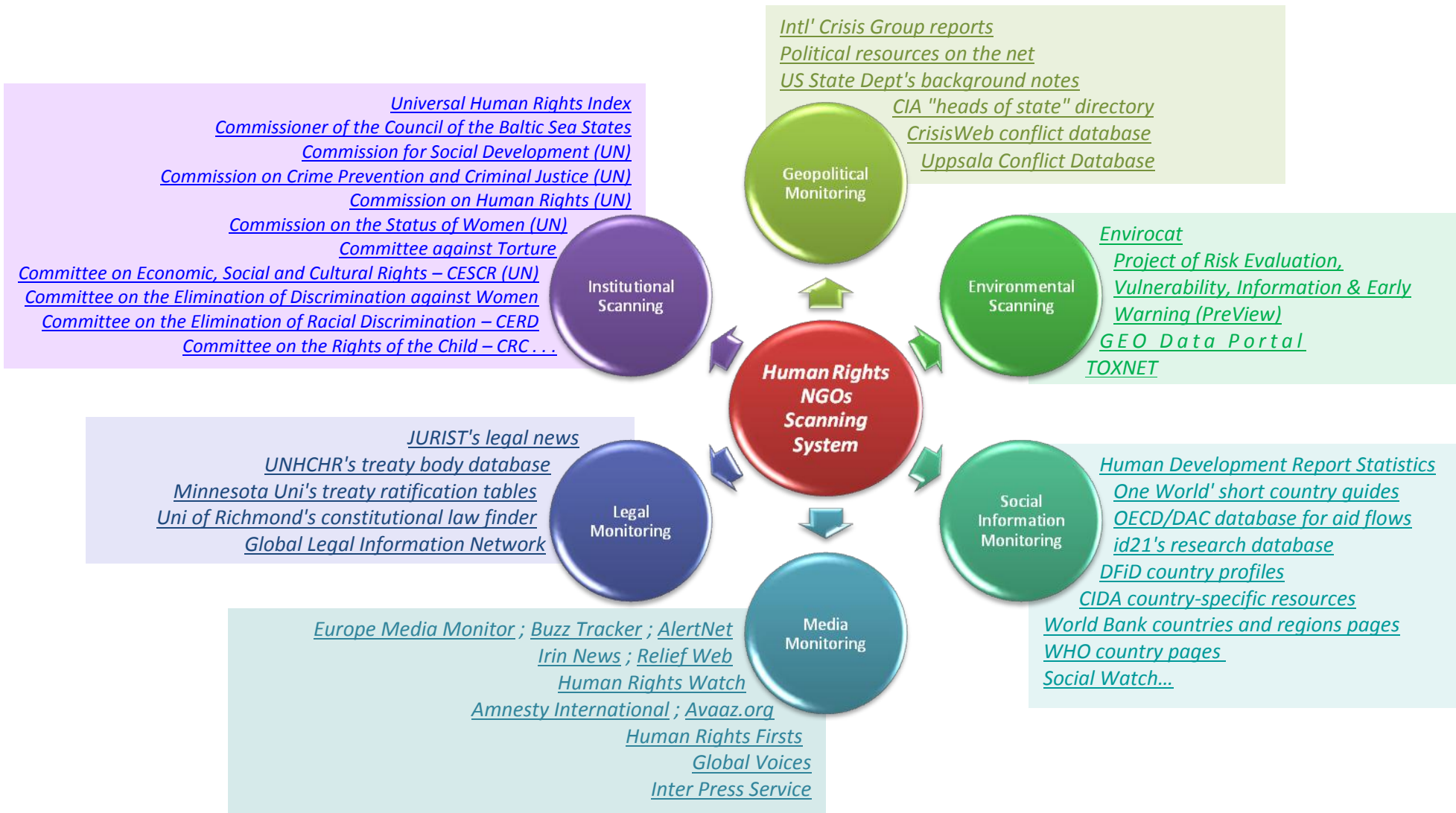
## Monitoring Information

## Getting started!

### HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION SOURCES

Information is often compared to water in that they both have a flow and source.

Sources vary according to fields and subject matter, and the human rights sector has its own sources of information.

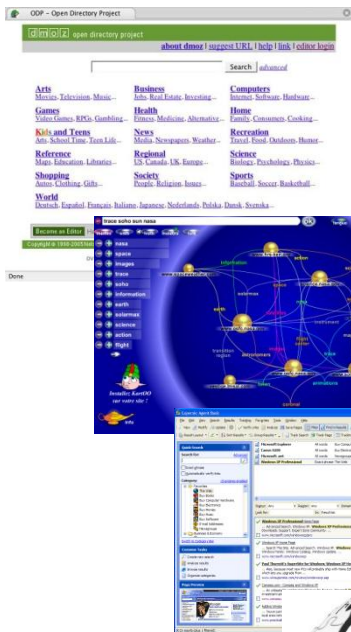


## Getting started!

### PORTALS AND SEARCH ENGINES

Most of the information on the Internet is open, which means freely accessible to anyone. Everybody knows that the Internet holds a vast amount of data, but often due to this fact, people also complain of difficulties in finding accurate and relevant information in this information labyrinth.

Internet research can be wonderfully enhanced by different tools:



**Research directories:** website lists sorted by topic and indexed manually, which entail slow updating processes and a limited number of listed entries, but a higher relevancy rate. For example try: [Yahoo!](#) or [dmoz...](#)

**Search engines:** content listing is made by a robot. More websites are indexed, but relevancy is not as good as with manual indexation. Moreover, some search engines are popular and tend to gain monopolies on information. Be sure that the search engines you use are as diversified as possible, and linked to your field of interest. Try: [Google](#), [Altavista](#), [Kartoo...](#)

**Meta search engines:** aggregation of several search engines which you can sound out with one stroke. Try: [Metacrawler](#), [Copernic...](#)

**Internet Portals:** web platform created to facilitate search for end users, they usually integrate different services such as search tools, information services like news feeds, communication tools (e-mail box, newsletters) and thematic access to information. Try: [Wikipedia](#), [UN Human rights treaty information portal...](#)



## Getting started!

### HUMAN RIGHTS SEARCH ENGINES

“**Ecoi.net** provides up-to-date and publicly available country-based information with a special focus on the needs of asylum lawyers, refugee counsels and persons deciding on claims for asylum and other forms of international protection. Access to information is facilitated by a comprehensive search tool and “topics & issues” files, offering thematically structured information on asylum-relevant topics and issues for a set of focus countries.”



“**HuriSearch** is the **only** comprehensive search engine specialized in human rights information.

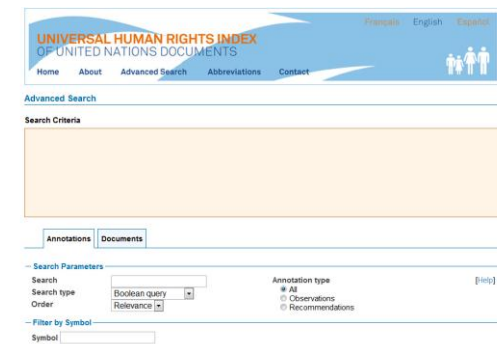
It targets persons working with or interested in human rights, who need powerful search tools to access up-to-date and relevant information including: human rights monitors and researchers, students and academics, diplomats and persons working

in international organizations.

Some features include: 5,000 human rights websites, 3,200,000 indexed pages, automatic updates, search by language, organization, country, and more to get prevalent human rights information produced by local grassroots organizations.”

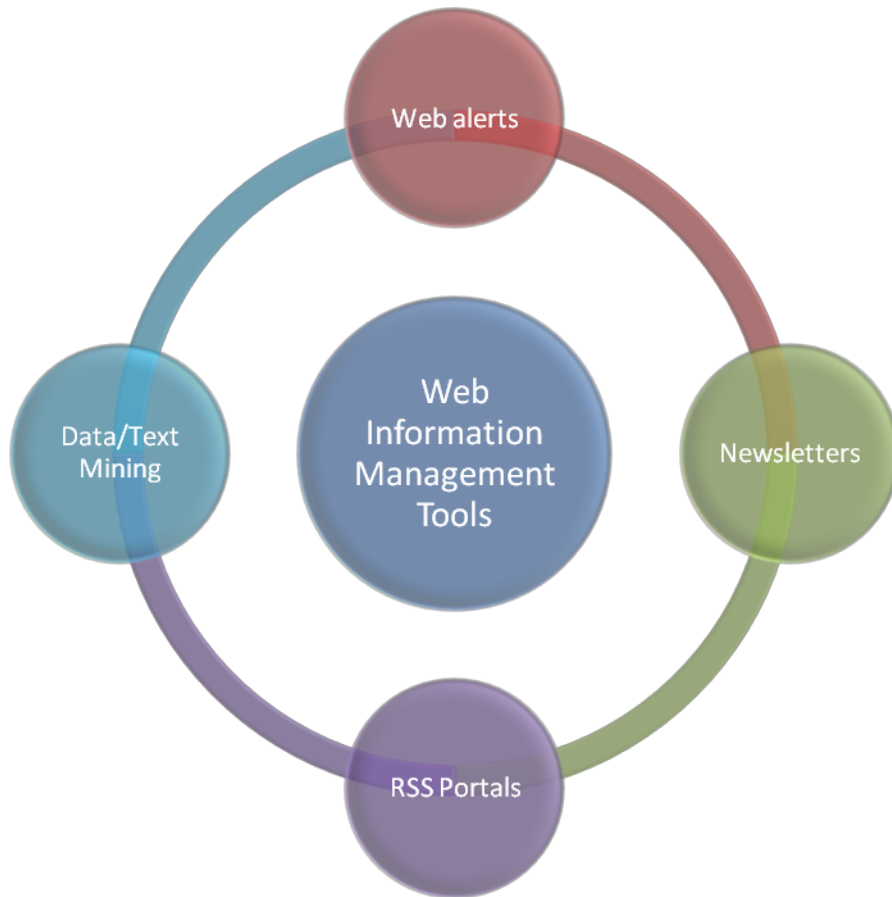
“**The Universal Human Rights Index** provides instant access for all countries to human rights information from the United Nations system. The index is based on the observations and recommendations of the following international expert bodies:

- the seven Treaty Bodies monitoring the implementation of the core international human rights treaties (since 2000)
- the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council (since 2006) ”





## Tools for each step



Several tools are available to help you processing the information you need. The objective here is to provide the big picture of this set of tools in order to help you get started. Each tool could be separately detailed in a full-length report, but here we intend to provide merely a brief overall introduction to these tools so that you can get started as soon as possible. Accordingly, we will not include software packages in this section as they provide integrated platforms to process all or part of the information cycle. From data collection to publication, several kinds of information management tools are described below.

## Getting started!

### USING WEB ALERTS

Information seeking is important but being able to communicate, share and spread what you have found adds a stronger value to that information.

Web alerts are based on e-mails, as websites send automatic e-mails containing news or information related to the interests specified in the users' subscription.

Informational sources push information on to users. This technology is actually the opposite of using search engines to find information. It enables you to avoid repetitive search options on the same websites and offers automatically selected information. However, the automatically selected information is not further distributed, but rather webcasted through a growing number of information channels reachable via the internet. The vocabulary copied from TV media shows that web information tends to become a personal and continuous flow.



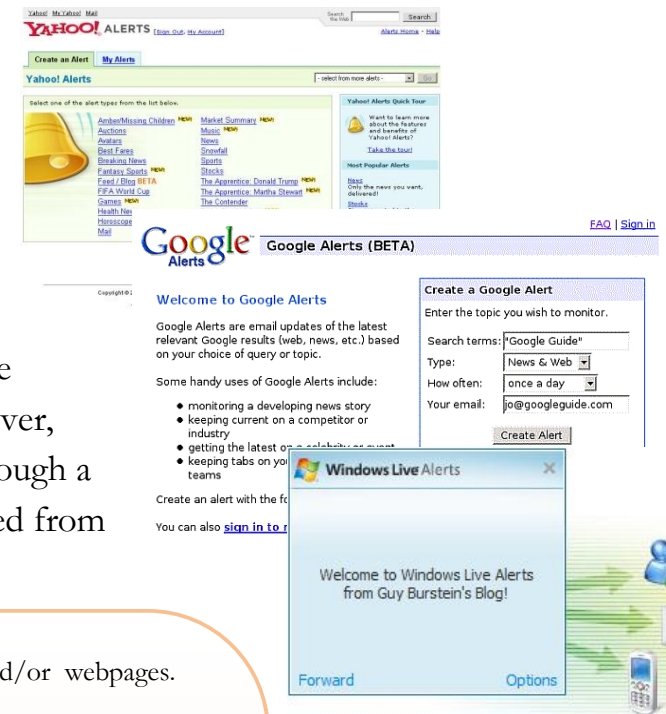
**Select the types of information** you want to get from the web: news, blogs and/or webpages.

**Choose a tool** to create your web alerts: *Yahoo!Alerts*, *Google Alerts*, *Windows Alerts*...

Enter the query corresponding to the information you seek. A query is a key, which enables you to ask the web for specific information. A query is generally built into Boolean operators in order to group information using keywords. You can add, ignore or separate them. **The Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" be used to create simple, efficient query.** The character enables you to search for a specific expression or sentence. For instance, if you are researching arrested journalists in China, you can type: journalist AND arrested OR detained...

Once you have entered the query, you will have to type the e-mail address to which you would like to send the results. It is important to think about the way you want to distribute this information.

**To avoid overloading your mailbox, you can create a specific account for information scanning** (for instance: [alerts\\_myngo@gmail.org](mailto:alerts_myngo@gmail.org)). This account will enable you to control the information relevancy (modifying the query as needed), filter the results, create diffusion lists and manage different information flows for different needs.



## Getting started!

### USING NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are publications generally published by an institution, organization or a company to share information about one main topic. Newsletters are now common on the web. They offer information about a specific topic without the user having to search for it, but they also have their faults when it comes to the distribution of relevant or desired information. Indeed, contrary to web alerts, newsletters have already defines parameters, which means that the user has no control of the contents of the newsletters to which he or she subscribes. This creates so-called “information noise” or the flow of irrelevant information into one’s email inbox as well as a possible overload of emails.



**Select the newsletters** you subscribe to carefully! It is useful to take a look at the information contained in the last published newsletter (many websites propose it).

It is also possible to gather newsletters by groups related to your information needs. You will have to create the groups into your mail box.

**Again, you can create a specific account for scanning information** (for instance: [news\\_myngo@gmail.org](mailto:news_myngo@gmail.org)). Your newsletters will then be stored in a specific mail box where it will be possible to filter the information with queries (see above) and from where you can redistribute them to others. This option, once again, gives you the opportunity to redirect your e-mails to colleagues, partners or specific groups.

**Create distribution lists and share appropriate newsletters with colleagues.**

As an effective information manager, it would be good practice to **manage different information scanning projects for different information needs**. For instance, one project for child trafficking in Asia for people based in Thailand, another one for arbitrary detention in North Korea of people based in Japan...



To find relevant newsletters, select the sources related to your subject of interest (see sources above).

Suggested human rights Newsletters:

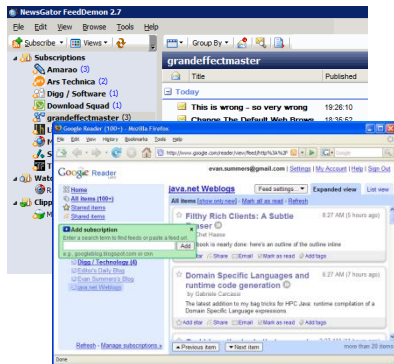
[HURIDOCs](#)  
[WUNRN \(Women's United Nations Report Network\)](#)  
[International Justice Watch](#)  
[Human Rights Monitoring](#)  
[International criminal court](#)  
[International Law](#)  
[Academic Council on the UN System](#)  
[American Association for the Advancement of Science Human Rights Action Network](#)

## Getting started!

### USING RSS FEEDS

Web alerts and e-mail newsletters may be limited by a lack of personalization. For websites which provide this technology, the trend is now to use syndication and personal portals. You can create a link to your preferred websites with RSS (really simple syndication) technology. Indeed, information flows are directly displayed on your page, avoiding mail box overload and making diffusion easier.

RSS feeds are contained in small boxes called widgets displaying titles or a few lines of information, which give a quick overview of what you could find on the original website. RSS feeds are made from links to sources.



#### 1. Feed readers

Create your own information dashboard and embed it in your website using, for example, [Newsgator Feed Demon](#), [Google reader](#)...

#### 2. On-line personal portals

There are free solutions to build up thematic portals and filter your own information. Many intelligence services are actually based on this model of collecting information.



1. **Select the websites** that you are interested in and which provide RSS feeds
2. **Select an RSS portal** provider and create your account. For instance, iGoogle provides a great portal capable of imbedding other Google applications such as mails and calendar.

Recommended RSS portal hosts:  
[Netvibes](#), [iGoogle](#), [PageFlakes](#), [Webwag](#),  
[Bubbletop](#), [Yahoo Pipes](#)...

3. Create **thematic pages inside your portal** in order to classify information feeds.
4. Send your portal's link to others in order to share it and add or delete RSS feeds to enhance information relevancy.

See how it 'really' worked for an NGO in Russia  
**Case study**

## Getting started!

### USING TEXT MINING

The set of information search tools we have just explored do not permit information processing and analysis. Indeed, information analysis is the toughest step of the information cycle because it is step which is least easily automated. No software will be able to analyze or synthesize information or determine specific trends.

However, text mining tools have been developed to help the user extract the best quality information from a set of texts. Text mining tools allow users to create a valuable document of relevant information instead of simply collecting extracts from the web. This is very in-depth information processing and requires reflection and patience.

Text mining is equivalent to text analytics, which permit the extraction of patterns and trends using text structuring (with or without a database) and the interpretation of the relationship between different data or information. Finally, evaluating text mining's outputs by comparing them to other quality sources will enable the user to deliver highly relevant information and authoritative knowledge.



Choose your software : SAS® Text Miner, [QDA Miner 3.2](#) (expensive), dtSearch, [Copernic Summarizer](#) (inexpensive), RapidMiner (Open source)

Regroup and classify your texts using categories and sub-categories based on theme or facts

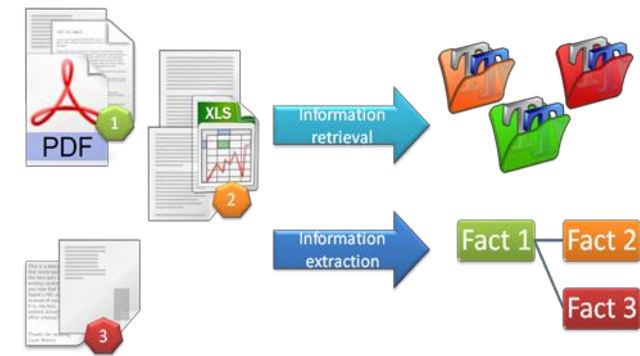
Extract concepts and entities by choosing meaningful terms, also called keywords that will define your subject, sub-subjects and any other interesting facts or data extracted from the set of texts you analyze

Produce a specific taxonomy, which is a classification and organization of the relationships between the key terms from your subject.

Produce analysis and summarization of interesting trends and patterns

Model entity relationships to create the main output (i.e. what you learn from the analysis such as text, map, chart or other formats)

Even if text mining tools may be used by non information management experts, it is strongly important to be an expert in the field you analyze, to ensure the accuracy and quality of analysis.



# Two kinds of tools

The tools described above are free but limited. It is not possible to automate the whole information cycle with free solutions (to know more about limits, read the [case study](#) at the end of the document) and they oblige users to set up and control many things manually.

Other kinds of tools called scanning software packages provide an integrated solution to managing the overall information process, from sourcing (source seeking) to information deliverables and integration to the organization's workflow to the cycle of documentation production. Costly, but efficient, these tools need strong technical support and management in order to function properly. We know that most NGOs cannot afford such tools, but as shown in the case study, collaborative efforts and cost sharing could enable a community of NGOs to gain access to powerful and professional tools.



One example of an information scanning package is [Digimind](#). This package contains modules to retrieve information, collaborate and

share issues on several information scanning projects, analyze the information thanks to text mining methods and tools, extract facts, core knowledge and trends and disseminate customized deliverables produced automatically and distributed via the Internet, intranet, newsletters or paper reports.

The screenshot shows a search engine interface with a search bar containing 'oil crisis'. Below the search bar, there are several filters and options, including 'Arabic search engines', 'News in archive', 'Industries - Environment', 'Arabic blogs', 'Asian press', 'Blog Search engines FR', 'English blogs', 'English people search', 'English search engines', 'Jobs Morocco', 'Press Fr', 'Search Engines Fr', 'UK press', 'UK search engines', and 'US jobs'. The search results are displayed below, with a red box highlighting the 'Track' button. Three red callout boxes provide additional information: 'Results are indexed and filtered in real time' (top right), 'Simultaneous search within all search engines connected by the user' (middle right), and 'Results can be easily put into further use by setting up a monitoring of sources, exporting the data, saving favourites and then forward by email...' (bottom right).

# *Project management* for Information scanning

The set of tools we discovered are designed to be used in a project framework with a strong and patient analysis of elements. Different kinds of projects can be conducted, but a simple and essential methodology must be followed in order to connect the aims of your organization's overall work. Indeed, some keys to project management, coming from the larger field of organizational strategy, may help to avoid well known problems and achieve your goals.

## 7 Steps in implementing an information scanning project

Implementing information monitoring projects is not easy and requires the consideration of many internal and external factors. It also requires management skills and an extensive knowledge of all the steps necessary for structuring the project.

- **Step 1. Define your project framework**

Any project belongs to a particular environment. It is thus necessary to determine the strategic framework in relation to the internal structure of the organization and its policies.  
*What do I want to achieve? Will it be useful for my organization...?*

- **Step 2. Develop your strategy**

Here is a key step in defining the collective and individual context of the project. It may be useful to map the actors, the resources and the targets of the information management project.  
*Who are the potential partners, competitors and fellows? Which human resources and, financial or, informational assets would be useful? Who will use the outputs...?*

- **Step 3. Know your existing working environment**

The working environment is made up of the information environment, the organizational and the external ones. Please refer to the above section dealing with the [organization's environments](#) in order to identify your organizational environment.  
*Do I know what my partners are working on? Do I know the latest rules and laws in my field of interest? Do I know the latest and most appropriate technology available?*



- **Step 4. Audit your information assets and flows**

The raw material of an information management project consists of the data coming from inside and outside the organization. It is thus necessary to know these streams of information in order to improve, modify or remove them depending on the needs of your project.

An information audit is the most powerful method in gaining awareness about the information gap(s) in your organization (the difference between what you know, and what you should know) and allows you to deal with them accordingly.

*What information do I have? Who knows what in my team? How do we share information? Which processes does my information support? What is the technology we use and is it appropriate?*

- **Step 5. Set up your information scanning system**

We have already described all of the steps and the different tools involved in achieving a complete information cycle. During the process of completing an information cycle, each step must be processed with the help of appropriate [web software tools](#), as we have explained above.

*What purpose should information fulfil for my organization? Which steps of the cycle are the most important? Which step should we begin with? Who will be the project manager?*

- **Step 6. Protect your information**

Information management involves risks. Deterioration, loss, theft, confidentiality, control of information all require an overall security policy. [To know more...](#)

*Who needs access to what? Which information is sensitive or confidential? Where and how do I store information...?*

- **Step 7. Make decisions and take actions**

Every action involved in an information management project should be linked with internal work processes so as they can support decision making at every managerial level.

Information monitoring and intelligence can help guide your organization's behaviour towards its environment, becoming more and more aware of its components and dynamics at each step.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR YOUR PROJECT

Information management would not be complete without certain well-known, key success factors. These factors are useful for any kind of project management, whether information related or not.

### MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT

In any project, management has to be a sponsor, giving it a global, transverse and hierarchical dimension.

Moreover, top management can be very useful in implementing changes to managerial processes because users are often reluctant to modify their information habits.

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Information projects require a driving force in order to coordinate their activities, communicate with other projects, and defend the chosen management protocols. The coordinator is indeed a corner stone between top management and staff and end users.

### HUMAN RESOURCES CAPABILITIES

Staff must be deeply involved in project management. For that reason, it is useful to inform them of the strategy of the project, including overall and specific objectives, in order to encourage their motivation.

### PROJECT COMMUNICATION

Information management projects are a great opportunity for forging interlocking connections between the working teams and to bridge gaps between islands of knowledge that may appear here and there in the organization.

### TECHNOLOGY AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Tools are imminently important for project implementation.

As we have already demonstrated, tools are useful in automating the information monitoring process or sub process. Tools are also a way to enhance capacity building with training and practice. Moreover, trainers have to focus on instilling staff with practical methodologies in order to best capitalize on valuable and long term know-how.

## *Two* kinds of projects, *Two* kinds of needs

It is possible to administer two principal kinds of projects: one for long term information scanning and collection and another for a one shot in-depth informational research.

### **Long term Scanning Projects:** *Mid-long term monitoring for finding trends*

- ② Needs assessment (identification, qualification of the targeted information and expected outputs)
- ② Selection of sources
- ② Selection of tools
- ② Production of deliverables
- ② Maintenance and follow up on the processes
- ② Feedback analysis from end users

### **One-Shot Research:** *Specific research for in-depth analysis*

- Needs assessment (identification, qualification of the targeted information and expected outputs)
- Research strategy and sources selection
- Intermediate assessment
- Reorientation/continuation of the research
- Analysis and text mining
- Production of deliverables
- Development for research practices and methodology (good/bad practices) for internal capacity building

# Case study

## **Human rights violations information scanning: The case of Human Rights for Russia NGO (fictional)**

A human rights NGO based in Russia, Human Rights for Russia (**HRR**) (fictional name) plans to conduct in-depth investigations focusing on the issue of torture and unlawful detention in Chechnya. As this NGO's mission is to document cases of torture, information sourced from field interviews as well as local and regional Medias could help them gain a broader perspective on the situation. Moreover, information on how other countries and continents report on the situation in Chechnya should be gathered in order to offer clues about how and where to communicate the results of the documentation work.

This NGO decided to use web information tools to make this repetitive search task faster and more efficient. Following the advice that HRR received from another NGO, which already had experience with this kind of project, they gathered and shared information according to a specific process.

The chairman and technological adviser decided to use the free web-based solution [iGoogle platform](#). Regarding the needs they had (i.e. scanning information from local media to detect allegations or occurrences of human rights violations and scanning information from international media to be aware of the level of knowledge the international community has on Chechnya's situation), they decided to use two distinct monitoring methods. To address their first need, the information from international media was monitored using RSS feeds from general and specialized human rights news websites. For the second, information from local Medias was searched using a specific search of local websites. As these websites may not provide RSS feeds, scanning was based on newsletters and custom made RSS feeds, which were created using Google News. Obviously, this search would normally be done in English and Russian but this example was limited to English.

1. The HRR librarian was in charge of preparing the project. Her tasks included:
  - a. Creating a Gmail account for the project. The address [infoscan\\_hrr@gmail.com](mailto:infoscan_hrr@gmail.com) was created to access Google applications and collect the search results.
  - b. She then created an [iGoogle platform](#) and added a tab called **Human Rights InfoScan Chechnya**. The platform was then in use.



2. Librarian had then to prepare the two main information flows

- One for the international search
- One for local information

- a. First, she prepared the international search flow:

- i. She wrote a search query with relevant terms:  
Chechnya OR Chechen AND (torture OR 'unlawful detention' OR detainees OR abuses OR 'ill treatment' OR 'coercing confessions' OR hostage OR mistreated OR Unlawful OR 'detention facilities' OR threats OR execution OR perpetrators)
- ii. In Google news, she pasted her query in the search field and after a short analysis of the results, she realized that information was convenient, which means pertaining to the subject. The actual relevance was to be assessed after several days.
- iii. On the Google news results page, she clicked on the RSS link at the bottom left of the page. She then copied the URL address of the homepage and went back to her iGoogle portal.
- iv. In her portal, in the Human Rights InfoScan Chechnya tab, she clicked on the link called 'Add stuff >>' and on this page clicked on the 'Add feed and gadget' link at the bottom left, pasting the URL address from the search results there.
- v. A new box appeared on the iGoogle portal, showing the list of the results.

- b. For the local search, the strategy was different:
- i. The librarian selected several sources dealing with news from Chechnya and the Caucasus region. This step, called sourcing, was made using several search engines. She then found several relevant websites (sampled here): [Kavkaz Center](#), [Prague Watchdog](#), [Radio free Europe](#), [Caucasian Knot](#)
  - ii. She visited each website looking to subscribe to their newsletters. She subscribed newsletters with the address: [infoscanhrr@gmail.com](mailto:infoscanhrr@gmail.com). These sources sent her e-mails with current information related to specific topics. To increase relevancy, the librarian decided to filter these newsletters using Gmail mailbox settings. In the settings of her mailbox, she went to the filter section, entered the e-mail addresses of the newsletters' providers (addresses she got from the email confirming her subscription). Then she checked the box "has the words" and entered a new query: torture OR 'unlawful detention' OR detainees OR abuses OR 'ill treatment' OR 'coercing confessions' OR hostage OR mistreated OR Unlawful OR 'detention facilities' OR threats OR execution OR perpetrators. She then clicked on 'next step' and asked the mailbox to star the e-mails automatically. This resulted in each mail, coming from the two providers and containing one of the words from the query, being starred automatically. As a consequence, she was able to dismiss non-starred e-mails as irrelevant. She was still able to open and read them, if she personally judged them by other characteristics to be relevant.
  - iii. Finally, she went back to the iGoogle portal and added the 'Gmail gadget', which provides a list of recent emails. She was then able to monitor the information flow from one entry point.

3. The chairman and technological advisers were very satisfied (to view this portal, please send a request to [info@huridocs.org](mailto:info@huridocs.org)), but they needed tangible, visible results from the information scanning activity. The librarian then proposed to create a report each week on the latest information received. This information scanning deliverable would be the basis from which HRR analysts could find trends and patterns regarding torture and unlawful detention in Chechnya.



- a. The librarian had to select the most relevant articles displayed each day on the portal and store them. Each Thursday, she classified articles by topic and created a report with full text articles in a word document.
- b. She decided finally to write a short executive summary to provide an overview of the latest facts for each relevant topic.
- c. She then created a distribution list for analysts. She asked all of them to give her some feedback about information's relevancy and research scope to improve information quality.






**During the whole setting up process, the librarian noticed several limitations:**

- The relevant information cannot be perfectly filtered immediately. It takes days and weeks to get a reliable flow of relevant information. Indeed, technological advisers confirm that an information scanning flow is never 100% relevant. The highest possible rate is gauged at 70 to 80%.
- The query must be carefully written and constructed. Indeed, syntax varies from one search tool to another.
- Sourcing has to be enriched on a daily basis. As new sources are discovered, they have to be linked with the portal, using RSS feeds or newsletters subscriptions.
- The steps involving producing information deliverables and the analysis are entirely manual and performed by human resources. Google and other free tools cannot do more than filtering and dispersing information. Other software tools provide modules for analytics and data mining but they are licensed often very expensive.




Nevertheless, HRR's information management project demonstrated the importance and value of information scanning for NGOs. The HRR chairman decided to organize a workshop with other regional NGOs in order to initiate discussions about joint efforts to use more effective tools and establish more professional practices.

# Further readings...

## *...about information scanning (concepts)*

-  Choo, C. W. (2002). Information management for the intelligent organization: the art of scanning the environment. ISBN: 1-57387-125-7
-  Davenport, T. H. (1997). Information ecology: mastering the information and knowledge environment. Oxford University Press. ISBN : 0-19511-168-0
-  Stanley E. Portny (2006). Project Management for Dummies. ISBN: 0-47004-923-5

## *...about monitoring tools (practice)*

-  Ronen Feldman, James Sanger (2007). The Text Mining Handbook. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0-521-83657-3
-  Ellen Finkelstein (2005). Syndicating Web Sites with RSS Feeds For Dummies. ISBN: 0-76458-848-6
-  Ryan Teeter, Karl Barksdale (2008). Google Apps for Dummies. ISBN: 0-47018-958-4



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In order for this paper to remain accurate and up-to-date in the future, we would appreciate any comments, remarks or feedback from your own experiences.

If you would like to learn more about information scanning, HURIDOCS offers assistance with analysis, project management and methodology or the configuration of tools.

**Do not hesitate to contact us.**

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