

(U) Op-ed: Leave Bright Pebbles, Not Breadcrumbs, for Those Coming After You

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(U//FOUO) Editor's note: In this [op-ed](#) piece, [REDACTED] provides some thoughts on the need to document and share what we know.

(U) "...pure amount of signal-to-noise that people have to sift."

(U//FOUO) This quote appeared on [Tapioca](#) recently. It caught my attention because we are drowning in information. And yet we know nothing. For sure.

(U) Anyone know just how many tools are available at the Agency, alone? Would you know where to go to find out?

(U) Anyone ever start a new target or a new language or IA [Intelligence Analysis] tour/internship without the first clue where to begin? Did you ever start a project wondering if you were the sole person in the Intelligence Community to work this project? How would you find out?

(U//FOUO) How about vocabulary or target knowledge? What if your management feels that linguists are fungible assets to be moved around where necessary, target expertise and breadth/depth of knowledge be damned?

(U//FOUO) Let us assume that you might know a few places to look: [MAUI](#), [Wordscape](#), or a relevant classified wiki page on the Agency's networks or even -- gasp -- the [Target Knowledge Base](#) (TKB).

(U//FOUO) Here is where the nightmare begins: What if the information you so desperately seek is not there? Do you keep turning to your podmates (who might also be new to the job) or to your mentor or to the "target guru" in your Product Line (who might not be willing to help you after the 20th time)?

(U//FOUO) Let us continue with the nightmare: The information is not available because no one put it there. No wiki, no Wordscape entry, nothing in TKB.

Why?

(U//FOUO) Here are some "reasons":

1. "Our branch chief looked at it [TKB] and determined it was not user-friendly. So we'll continue to use our Excel spreadsheets."
2. "I have way too much work to do to feed TKB all day. I might send around mass emails, however."
3. "I keep my vocab on a flat file."

4. "We're [not allowed](#) to go to or post anything on [A-Space](#)."

(S//SI//REL) Result: You're out of luck:

1. The phone number or name you're looking for is not in TKB. Never mind the lack of any attachments or extra information even if the phone number does happen to return as "entered."
2. The vocabulary item (English or target language) is not in Wordscape. And you know sweet-fanny-all about nuclear power.
3. You never find out that, on A-Space, there are groups of target experts champing at the bit to share their expertise. And who have posted reports, answered questions, set up blogs, and even "tagged" key items.

(U//FOUO) *It is imperative we begin sharing -- permanently -- what we know.* The days of showing up at NSA, opening your desk drawer, and then locking up that very drawer 30 years later -- are gone. The days of short tours, internships, "fungible asset" deployments, are the new rule. Email, so new to some of us over 20 years ago -- is now viewed as quaint.

(U//FOUO) What can you do, right now, on your own, to leave bright pebbles rather than breadcrumbs for those who follow?

Simple:

- Start populating a database near you: TKB, Wordscape.
 - Don't know anything about TKB? "[Go Firefly](#)" and the TKB people are willing to come right to your desk.
- Wordscape: type "wi Wordscape" [takes you to the [wiki page for Wordscape](#)].
 - There are links to various language dictionaries you can start populating! Today!
- Start a [JournalNSA blog](#): Share your expertise. Engage with other bloggers.
- Create a [wiki page](#) for your area of expertise.
- Visit "[Connexions](#)" for a way to dump your bookmarked sites and tag them so others can just click to find the information that has been helpful to you.
- Start visiting [A-Space](#). Join some groups. Answer questions your IC partners posts.

(U) In short: *Don't let those coming behind you suffer the way you have.*

(U//FOUO) Have thoughts on this **topic**? Post them on the [SIDtoday Blog](#). Comments on the article itself can be submitted using the "Comments/suggestions about this article" button below.