

# Preface: ECM—Still an Ugly Duckling?

*Certainly he is not handsome, but he is a very good child, and swims as well as the others, indeed rather better. I think he will grow like the others all in good time, and perhaps will look smaller. He stayed so long in the egg-shell, that is the cause of the difference...*

H. C. Andersen: The Ugly Duckling

In one of the earliest white papers on the subject of Enterprise Content Management (ECM), Telleen (1995) outlined how intranets require a new paradigm for managing content in the enterprise. At the time Telleen wrote, all information to be accessed through an intranet was also to be included in the enterprise-wide concept of content management. Soon, the ECM concept gained ground in professional information management societies (especially the Association for Information and Image Management) and among prominent consulting firms, and practitioners started to involve a few diverging foci and definitions of ECM. 7 years later, Fowell (2002), McNay (2002), and Reimer (2002) introduced the concept in the academic outlets (Rickenberg et al. 2012).

Now, 17 years after the first practitioner cracks on the eggshell of the ECM duckling and on the tenth anniversary of the first academic swims with the other ducks, the small community of ECM scholars continues to struggle, characterizing the field as immature and ambiguous (e.g., Grahlmann et al. 2012; Rickenberg et al. 2012). It seems the ECM community, like H. C. Andersen’s ugly duckling, still does not fully know “what the birds were called” or “whither they were flying,” although we all love a swan—an academic piece of ECM research—when we see one.

Rickenberg et al. ’s (2012) literature search found only 68 relevant academic ECM articles published in 2002–2012, and of those, only 7 appeared in recognized information systems journals. Most top journals in the information systems field have yet to publish a single article on ECM. If we compare these figures on academic attention to those of other types of enterprise systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), data warehousing, or customer relationship management (CRM), the difference is striking. For example, a simple search of “enterprise content management” by Google Scholar covering January 1 through August 23, 2012, resulted in 220 hits, while “enterprise resource planning,” “data warehousing,” and “customer relationship management” had 4,520, 3,060, and 5,040 hits, respectively. ECM also received little attention in the recent curriculum

guidelines for academic information systems education (Topi et al. 2010); “content management” is briefly mentioned under the knowledge area of enterprise architecture, but the course suggestions that include data and information management, enterprise systems, and new technologies all ignore ECM. Is this scarcity of academic attention in line with the practical importance of the field?

A comparison of the ECM market with the ERP market reveals ECM’s practical importance. According to Forrester’s market analysis, the ERP market size will grow from \$45.5 billion in 2011 to \$50.3 billion by 2015 (CBR 2011). In turn, the Radicati Group estimated that the ECM market will reach \$4.385 billion in 2012 and grow annually by 15 % during the next 4 years to \$6.37 billion in 2015 (Radicati and Yamasaki 2012). Hence, the ECM market will be about 12 % of the annual ERP market in 2015. If we look at the software-as-a-service (SaaS) market, the picture changes remarkably. The SaaS market category “Content, Communications and Collaboration” is estimated to reach \$3.954 billion in 2012, while the ERP SaaS market is expected to be only \$1.957 billion (Mertz et al. 2011). Customer relationship management will still be larger than ECM in the SaaS market in 2012 (\$4.341 billion), but it will grow more slowly than ECM, ending with a market size of \$5.719 billion in 2015 (Mertz et al. 2011).

Based on this coarse reasoning, we can still state that ECM is something of an “ugly duckling” in academia, struggling to find its natural flock of swans with which the field could start to fly on its own. Compared to the market, ECM may have stayed in its egg and in the flocks of established ducks and geese for too long, focusing on the traditional ways of thinking about enterprise systems and software. For example, if we make the blunt assumption that a field’s market size reflects its relevance and compare ECM to, for example, ERP, ECM should deserve at least twice the amount of academic research as it receives today. If ECM joined the swans flying up the winds of the SaaS business, ECM (together with electronic collaboration and communication) should be a key research topic! The ECM academics should do their best to influence the older ducks of information systems to update their education curricula, as we will need to educate more reflective ECM professionals in the future.

This book is warmly welcomed as a remarkable contribution that gathers together many, if not most, of the academic ECM ducklings that have pioneered and struggled to form the identity of the field. It provides one of the leaps that the field needs in its transformation from an unsure ugly duckling with a shaky identity (and little room in the pond among more established ducks and geese) to a beautiful swan. Let us “shake our feathers” and “stretch our slender necks.” It is time to fly.

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<http://www.springer.com/978-3-642-39714-1>

Enterprise Content Management in Information  
Systems Research

Foundations, Methods and Cases

vom Brocke, J.; Simons, A. (Eds.)

2014, XII, 287 p. 36 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-642-39714-1