

## **LIS 550 Final Project (Assignment 3)**

**Winter Quarter 2010**

Prof. David M. Levy

January 3, 2010

### **Overview of the project**

For the final project, you will be asked to research an information issue in a local (Puget Sound) institution and to present your findings in two ways: in an in-class presentation and a final written report. This is a group project. Each group will be free to choose the information issue and the institution it wants to study; however, you will need to submit your proposal to me for approval.

### **How to proceed**

Your group will need to quickly decide which issue you want to explore and within which institution. Your issue may be one that the institution has already settled (and has developed policy around), or one that is still being debated and is as yet unresolved. You may want to identify a member of the local institution who will serve as your sponsor or liaison, and who will give you entrée to relevant people and documents.

In performing this exercise, you are to imagine that you are a consulting team that has been brought in by management to study the identified issue and to make recommendations about how the institution should proceed. (If the issue is one the institution has already resolved, then your job is to document how the decision was arrived at and to assess its appropriateness.) You will begin your study by:

- Exploring the issue at its most conceptual. (If the issue is privacy, for example, what is privacy as an information issue? What is the root problem?)
- Researching the nature and history of the institution. What is its mission? What is the relevant context and history?
- Exploring the specific manifestation of this issue in its local context by:
  - ✓ Interviewing relevant people (stakeholders)
  - ✓ Obtaining access to institutional documents
  - ✓ Obtaining news accounts or other external reports

Your work, then, is to analyze the issue in order to:

- **Identify the different stakeholders** and explore their differential roles and statuses, as determined by affiliation with specific institutions, location within those institutions, cultural identity, history, etc.
- **Explore each stakeholder's position** on the issue and the factors that have contributed to it. How (and why) are they aligned with or against other actors? What is the nature of their rhetorical arguments (and how might these differ from their “true” positions)? To what extent do their different positions reflect different understandings of human flourishing (and to what extent do they argue from different understandings, values, positions)? If the issue has a strong technological element, to what extent do the various stakeholders view the function and significance of the technology in different ways?
- **Explore the history of the issue** in its local context. Why has the issue arisen at just this time and in just this way (or is it a longstanding issue that has gone through multiple transformations)? In what ways have changing circumstances (e.g. technological change) either created or transformed the issue?
- **Explore the decision-making and regulatory context:** By what mechanism(s) has the issue been settled, or might it be settled (e.g. by force, law, norms, moral authority, consensus, etc.)? To what extent is/was the resolution method in dispute? How is the settlement to be “policed”? What are, or would be, the consequences for violating the solution?
- **Lay out a range of possible solutions** for the issue, for each solution specifying
  - ✓ Its strengths and weaknesses
  - ✓ Who (which of the stakeholders) stands to gain and who to lose, and what stands to be gained or lost
  - ✓ How further projected change may affect these solutions for better or worse.

## **Interim reports**

Each group will provide two interim reports over the course of the quarter: during weeks 4 and 7. These short oral presentations will allow the rest of the class to hear what you are working on, to question you, and to offer helpful feedback. You will also be asked to prepare a preliminary version of the first sections of the written report (due week 6).

## **Documenting your findings**

You will be asked to report your findings in two formats: an in-class presentation and a final written report.

Your final report should contain the following sections:

1. Executive summary/abstract
2. Introduction
3. Overview of the local institution: its mission, location, etc.
4. Overview of the information issue: brief description of the issue conceptually
5. The problem: How does the issue manifest itself for the local institution? Why is it arising at this time?
6. Description of the stakeholders and their positions
7. Possible solutions, including an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses
8. Your proposed solution and its justification. (If you are exploring a decision the organization has already made, you should evaluate the decision; you may also offer an alternative, if you choose.)
9. Bibliography

The report should be 4,000-5,000 words long.

### **Reflection on the process**

The in-class presentations and the written report are group efforts. I will also ask you to turn in a short, personal reflection on the group project in which you speak to what you learned about the information issue, how you worked as a group, and what you learned through the group process. (This reflection is part of Assignment 2.)

### **Summary of tasks**

- **3a (January 12):** Notify me of the group composition (unless I have been responsible for choosing the groups).
- **3b (January 14):** Send me an email message identifying the information issue your group will be researching and the local institution within which you will be researching it. I will get back to you quickly to approve your idea or to discuss it with you further.
- **3c (January 19):** Send me an email message: (1) explaining what role each of the group members expects to play; and (2) presenting an initial action plan: what do you intend to do when?
- **3d (January 26, February 16):** Present an in-class progress report.
- **3e (February 10):** Write a draft of sections 3, 4, and 5 of your final report and send it to me.

- **3f (March 4, 9, or 11):** Final in-class presentation of your findings.
- **3g (March 11):** Submit final written report.