AN ESSAY TO SHARE

Get a Hold of the Information   
Fire Hose

A firefighter putting out a fire

Description automatically generatedStrategies for Developing Knowledge & Wisdom

An essay you can share or copy from and make your own

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# From Encyclopedias & Microfiche to an Information Explosion

Access to information has changed dramatically over my lifetime. When I was a child in the 70s, having a set of encyclopedias in your home was a sign of either:

* Privilege, or
* A self-sacrificing breadwinner who prioritized learning over other basic needs.

I don’t recall ever having encyclopedias at home and whenever I was at someone’s house who had a set, I would excitedly choose a book and open it up to a random page, voraciously reading the entries, no matter the topic.

As a college grad working in research for an elite ad agency, I conducted my work not from a desk computer but by walking across the street to the Seattle Public Library.

In the mid-90s, I worked at **Microsoft**. At that time, the VP of Sales (who worked for Scott Oki who worked for Bill Gates) **did not allow the field sales reps to have email** **because he felt it would be too distracting for them**. (He had a point!) So, my work was to write memos to the sales teams who worked throughout the U.S. and get the physical paper to them.

After writing a memo and getting it approved, I would send it to the printer (located in another room), pick it up and put it in the copy machine, pushing all the buttons for how many sides and copies and which group to charge the copy fee to. Then I’d stand there over the copier while it made enough copies for each sales office. In those years, I needed to hand-staple them and then put a copy in each sales office box in the mailroom. From there, the memos were shipped to the sales offices.

In addition to the memos, I would send group voicemails to provide the information to 120 Microsoft sales reps so they would have what they needed to implement corporate marketing and sales programs. There were no links for more information… just paper memos and the telephone (tied to a wire at a location).

The bottom line? Access to information has absolutely exploded over my lifetime. And that suits me just fine.

# Information In and Of Itself is Often Not Valuable or Helpful

### It’s Not Information That We Need but Knowledge & Wisdom

However, information in itself doesn’t get at the heart of what we need.

1. Information overload, partial truths, misinformation, lies and propaganda are as real as the ground under our feet. As such, information in and of itself isn’t the answer to any problems we have and, like everything else it seems, can hurt as easily as it can help.
2. Knowledge isn’t gained by going to college or reading magazines, watching the news or consulting social media. I personally find workshops and books, trade research and practice as some of my favorite forms of information gathering and learning, but no matter what forms of information may be a part of our lives, learning evolves not from information per se, but from knowledge that we acquire.

It’s not enough for a business or nonprofit, a workshop leader, a book author, or an article writer to publish or express something. Anyone can publish or express something! And while that’s great, it also means that more discernment is required in evaluating information and sources. Whether we are mindless or mindful about it, we are constantly choosing which sources we consult (and perhaps, by default, which we don’t), discerning its value, and how we will utilize it (or how we won’t, and having it make no impact on our lives or those who we serve). **The bottom line is that knowledge and wisdom are different from raw information.**

* Knowledge is gained through information that we can actually integrate, apply and test in order to formulate a functional knowledge base.
* And knowledge and wisdom are gained through personal experience.

*Icon

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True knowledge is the master key to unlocking all our potentials — the ultimate problem solver is a mind guided by the truth. We need true knowledge to do things correctly in the world. To play music properly, you need wisdom, the accumulation of true musical knowledge. To run a successful business, you need true knowledge of the business. The more true knowledge you accumulate, the more you can understand the past, master the present, and work to realize a self-directed satisfying future.

**– Justin Deschamps**

[4 Key Steps of Discernment](https://stillnessinthestorm.com/2018/10/4-key-steps-of-discernment-advanced-truth-seeking-tools/)

I have found that true value comes when information sources offer transparency, organization, accessibility and applicability.

### Transparent & Verifiable

Information sources ought to be transparent and verifiable.

Ask yourself, From where was this information derived? What is the agenda or motivation of the source? Does it come from a channeled or mystical experience, a research study of 12 people, an experienced teacher whose teachings have been tested for 100 years? From someone you know? From a corporation? No source necessarily needs to be discounted out of hand; but it’s usually very helpful to help frame the information as you take it in.

**Organized & Contextualized**

Information ought to be organized in a way that it can be contextualized and people can get it when they need it, not simply when the provider “pushes” it.

To me, this is critical for so many reasons, just one of which is that people who hold organized information have more to offer to others. Randomness of information that comes across my desk drives me nuts. I think we all need to ask ourselves, What’s the point of this material? Is this my priority right now? Do I already have the necessary context or does it need to “go with” other material? I am constantly organizing information, putting it in context and linking it to related material, all so that you can find what you need when you need it and become aware of how it relates to a bigger picture.

**Clear & Accessible**

Information ought to begin at the beginning by defining terminology and laying the foundations.. This not only makes communication and progressive learning much more efficient, it invites in so many more people who were missing information here and there and so didn’t feel “qualified” or worthy in some way to enter the discussion or even try to learn more. I have worked my entire life to circumvent structures that horde information or support elitism. As such, the explosion in information availability has made me very happy. But availability, I realize, isn’t enough. Laying the foundations for learning, I’ve found, is the ultimate tool for making knowledge more accessible because otherwise, it’s too easy for someone to feel left out of the knowledge loop on something.

**Applicable & Transformational**

It’s not information we’re after, but wisdom and transformation. Information ought to be presented in a way that makes it clear that it’s not just information (of which there is an infinite amount), but that it’s something that can help you become more knowledgeable in how to actually use it to create the impact/change you endeavor to make (thus, contributing to the far greater goal of wisdom and the elevation of humanity as a whole.)

### Make A Choice to Not Allow Information to Overwhelm You

A person with white hair

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

I hope that anyone who reads my essays or gets the Yoga Teacher Central newsletters, or access our site understands that the plethora of information can be seen like a library; you won’t get through it all. That’s not the point, and I absolutely don’t want to overwhelm you or make you feel like you don’t know enough.

On the contrary, I want to make it more likely that you’ll find what you need when you need it, and be able to easily jump to the necessary resource. Once there, I want you to be able to efficiently discern the source and its trustworthiness to you, and how you can apply the information to build your knowledge base and resource toolkit.

Ultimately, it’s all so that you can get what you need to fulfill your [dharma](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/dharma-intention-goals-main/theme-dharma/?highlight=dharma)/ mission. That’s why we’re here after all.