

USER-FRIENDLY ACCESS TO REGIONAL DATA SOURCES

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Abstract

Regional data sources in institutions of public administration are supposed to serve for analysing and answering strategic regional enquiries, so that this informational environment would serve for an area administration and also as a resource for other institutions and for citizens. That registered regional data could be effectively used. To get quality outputs from such sources, it is necessary to focus more on the enquiry mechanism.

Key words

regional public administration, regional data sources, mechanism entry, user-friendly interface

Abstrakt

Regionální datové zdroje mají sloužit pro analýzu a zodpovězení regionálních dotazů tak, aby toto informační prostředí sloužilo jako podklad pro efektivní správu území, a také aby sloužilo jako informační zdroj občanům. Informační prostředí veřejné správy vykazuje určité specifikum. Protože uživatelé regionálních datových zdrojů mohou být nejen pracovníci institucí veřejné správy, ale i zaměstnanci jiných organizací a zejména občané, dotazy jsou pokládány s různou přesností a různou znalostí informačních technologií, zároveň také s různou znalostí problematiky veřejné správy. Proto je třeba se více zaměřit na dotazovací mechanismus informačních systémů veřejné správy tak, aby byla posílena kvalita výstupu.

Introduction

Region administration is significantly related to the creation of an effective informational environment for the support of this administration; whether the region is understood as the area of a district or a different area [1]. Data represent an important element of public administration, whether these are data for basic evidence registers of state administration, data important for the management of self-administration or data for the actual work of institutions. A great problem of the informational environment of public administration is to put a proper enquiry, so that the system would be able to realize the given enquiry both in terms of holding data base and correct enquiry interpretation.

Informational sources

Public administration and its informational environment show certain specificity, by which it differs from informational sources of other organizations [2] [3]. Enterprise informational sources (understood except institutions of public administration) have a program buildup aimed directly at its users. Output mechanisms are controlled by specialists in the given subject, i.e. employees with knowledge in professional terminology and with required level of technological knowledge on the level of their profession. In enterprise data warehouse, it is a duty of the user himself to master all necessary operations. Thus, it is not necessary to create a special user interface.

Quite different situation is in information sources within public administration. They are used by users with various structures of their professions and with different knowledge in information technologies, or more precisely unfamiliarity. In the public administration environment, however, it is a duty of the state to correct these unfamiliarities, e.g. by virtue of

preserving social cohesion [4]. This means that at the current development and implementation of information and communication technologies into all spheres of social life, there are generations and groups, which cannot use these technologies, which handicaps them and, in its consequence, this means that the society is being divided into information-poor and information-rich. It is advisable to create a suitable environment for such groups. It is necessary user-friendly and simple access to regional data sources.

Enquiries of Informational Systems in Public Administration

Regional data sources of information systems should enable the realization of not only an enquiry prepared within the software support, but also of a newly defined enquiry, whereas the level of definition is different (according to the varied composition of data environment users). When the specificity of enquiries about regional data sources is set, it is possible to trace the aspects of the method of enquiry input, enquiry creator, enquiry quality, search with the help of key words.

Enquiry input method:

- *prepared enquiry*: by the choice of a suitable option within the menu; the output is prepared,
- *new enquiry*: either by writing the relevant enquiry command in the enquiry language or by the choice of key words within the search system.

Enquiry creator:

- *an expert in public administration problems and at the same time an expert in information technologies*: such an employee will not have any problems with the user enquiry input,
- *an expert in public administration*: public administration employee only with limited knowledge in information technologies (for the needs of his profession): the familiarity with terminology enables a good orientation in the user menu, but the creation of a new enquiry represents a problem,
- *a non-expert*: citizens or employees of other organization with minimal knowledge in the public administration professional terminology and with various levels of knowledge in information technologies.

Enquiry quality:

- *targeted enquiry*: correctly and effectively formulated by an expert in information technologies; enquiry is created in the enquiry language or by search in the system of links through key words,
- *inaccurately specified enquiry*: caused by technological or professional ignorance; these are either errors during the creation of a new enquiry or the inquirer, due to an inaccurate familiarity with professional terminology, does not orientate himself well in the user menu.

Search with the help of key words:

- *inquirer is not familiar with the given professional terminology*: e.g. a citizen wants to get certain data from the resident register (open to him by the law), but the term register is not known to him and he tries to find or enter key words instead, e.g. list, statement, agenda, database etc.,

- *certain object characteristics can have different name in different professional or civil groups*: it is a professional terminology or jargon: e.g. terms like residential unit, structural unit, region, municipality etc.;
- *inquirer tries to enter an enquiry within the area of interest*, which is absolutely strange to him; here, it is not only about the unfamiliarity with terminology, but the area of interest as a whole is little familiar to him, still, he needs to get certain information.

An enquiry, whose realization is included in the output part of the regional information system, is basically trouble free, yet, it provides only such a form of output, for which it was designed / programmed.

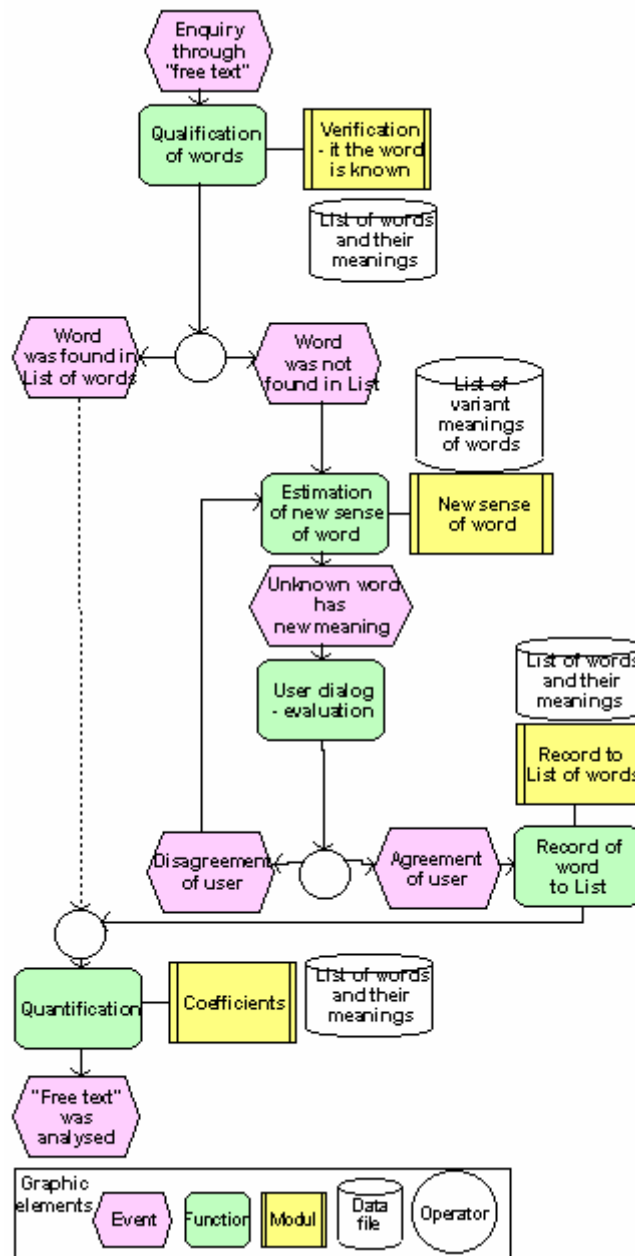


Figure 1: Analysis of inaccurately specified enquiry

To get information with the help of newly created enquiries, certain skills are required, whether these are basic knowledge (e.g. SQL enquiry language) or experience with searching with the aid of key words. An expert in the area of information and communication technologies, especially when he is an expert in public administration at the same time, he is

able to create targeted enquiries, which are correctly and efficiently formulated. An interest, however, must be aimed at non-experts in the area of information technologies, whether these are professional experts in public administration problems or not.

User enquiry must be analysed and pre-prepared before its processing. For example user enquiry by help of “free text” is necessary first to identify – to find the right formulation (in Figure 1).

Specificity of users of public administration information sources requires such an enquiry mechanism, where a certain enquiry pre-processing will be applied, so that errors at the input will be eliminated. Just the incorrectly specified enquiries become the basic problem in getting information from regional data sources, not only for their majority occurrence (information from regional data sources will be drawn especially by non-experts), but particularly in light of problems with getting quality or at least sufficient answers to an incorrectly entered enquiry.

Conclusion

The right to get information is defined by the law about a free access to information. Public administration is, among others, obliged to preserve social cohesion, i.e. it cannot exclude generations or groups that cannot use information and communication technologies from the right to information. A significant function of regional informational environment is providing quality outputs on even more complicated or inaccurately formulated enquiries. Enquiry creators can be public administration personnel, staff of other organizations and especially citizens, i.e. enquiries are put with different accuracy, different knowledge in information technologies and different knowledge in public administration problems. The solution is a preparation of a suitable informational environment, which would take given problems into account. Answering of regional enquiries is necessary for an effective area administration as well as for regional institutions and citizens.

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