

Being a good “interface” <Part 5>

Linking people and information

Information medium and interface

In this edition, we would like to discuss “interface” as a “medium” to link people and information, using key words such as media, information and database.

Through implementation of projects, it is often required for a variety of information and to analyze, process, use and dispatch it. Media for such information include PR newsletters, brochures and databases.

Public relations and interface

For project PR, newsletters are often produced. For newsletters, contents with news value is important, as well as quick and timely reporting.

On the other hand, brochures and booklets are produced and distributed aiming to provide information that is necessary for the target audience and the expectation is that users actually use them. To achieve this, we need to be creative, by, for example, adjusting levels of information in terms of complexity depending on users, and employing illustration so that people can understand what we are trying to communicate visually and intuitively.

For environmental education for mangrove conservation we developed a brochure to explain to children what to understand while planting seedlings and we created a bird list for bird watchers in mangrove forests. In this brochure we tried to make things appeal visually and intuitively, using illustration. The bird list contains photos of water fowl which we actually observed and photographed during our field work.

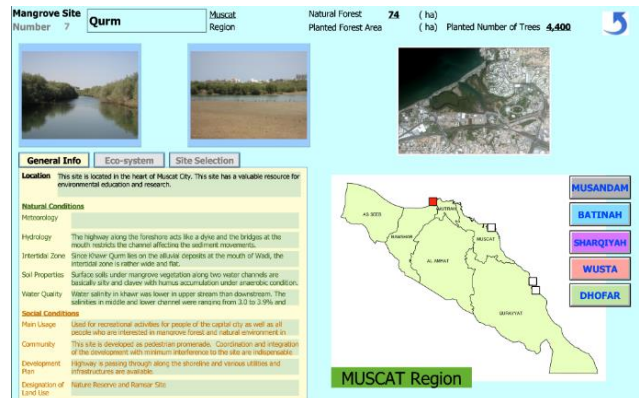


Using bird list with photo identification for bird watching

Database and interface

Database, as the name explains, is a powerful foundation for data use. Among the data tools we have

been using in our international cooperation work are the UAE’s Plant and Seeds Encyclopedia, address list, and extension staff list. As tablets are becoming popular, we have also produced an iPad based site database for mangrove reforestation. What is important for using a database is how data should be processed and displayed. This “how to display” is the “interface” which can be used effectively combined with GIS and its map information.



In the mangrove reforestation site database on iPad, map information and satellite images are introduced. In addition, it provides general information on each site and fauna and flora occurring in the sites. Contents can be changed depending on knowledge needs of users. By adding and expanding information, a range of users from the interested general public to career forest rangers who need specialized knowledge can use the database.

Consideration for others

Needless to say, in order to link people with information, it is important to know what we want to communicate. Communication results will vary greatly depending on contents of information and mode of communication (how to process and display data).

For this, in addition to the basic consideration to communicate to make others understand, if we could adapt contents and communication mode depending on the target audience and their knowledge level and demands, we can ensure that the communication will be much more effective.

We need to have consideration for people who will receive information. We need to be empathetic to know what they are looking for, avoiding falling into the trap of being self-centered, in order to reach out our target people effectively.