

## [UPDATE]

The 2nd Blogathon of the project is taking place Monday April 18. The theme is "Cyber Fears: What scares a Digital Native"

<http://tinyurl.com/632ymmqa>

The Final Day to contribute to the DN kit is April 25. Please email Samuel at [tettner@cis-india.org](mailto:tettner@cis-india.org)



# Best Practices Issue Digital

In this issue of the Digital Natives newsletter we are going to turn our eyes to best practices. By that I mean all contributions that one person can give to make others' lives and work better and easier to get things done! Best practices is all about sharing the good and the bad involving your work, whether you are a librarian, an information activist or a programmer.

There is a myriad of ways in which you can learn from others and make things easier for you. One of the most common practices is to build from success cases, comparing what is good and what is bad in your scope of work. When you separate what is good and what is bad you can compare your decisions and see if where you (or your organisation) is the wrong direction or not!

In order to not reinvent the wheel or the telephone, people share best practices. Why? Because it's good to give back what you learn to others! Best practices include:

- Sharing your experience in a project that did not end up very well
  - Listing the good and the bad things that facilitate or disturb your action in a process
  - Making public the tips and tricks in what you do
- One practical example in which sharing



Diego Casaes - Guest Editor

best practices work is the free software communities. In these communities, lots of people work in small pieces of code and software. And they have a feeling of what it is to work with sharing their achievements with the rest of the group, avoiding that another person works on one specific problem that is already solved.

Why anyone should turn their eyes to best practices? Because we live in a networked and collaborative environment! The web is wide and full of people working on ideas and projects that might be similar somehow. Why not share what you're doing and help others? =)

Below you can find best practices by some of the Digital Natives of this network! I hope you'll like it!

## Open Government: What does it mean?

**By Diego Casaes**

Work with transparency and open data. I'm often in debates, events, discussions and meetings about finding ways to

insert the open data agenda into the government institutions and to promoting that is beyond to "budget transparency". In other words: making politics easier to understand. **...Continue to Page 4**

## Buzz Around Town

Frank Odongkara's 3 month old discussion on privacy re-surfaces on the FB group

Paola's opinions on the recent Peruvian Elections (In Spanish) <http://tinyurl.com/62srhek>

Frequently Asked questions for both the book and the kit are now uploaded at <http://digitalnatives.in>

Cathartic impromptu crazy poetry slam courtesy of Maesy, Noopur, Nilofar, Nishant and Maureen on the [FB group](#)

# So you want to be a programmer...?

## Some practices that will help

By **Lukman Jaji**

**S**o you want to be a programmer? You want to write web and desktop applications. You want to develop software for the iPhone and the Android market. You want to be a solutions provider to companies and individuals alike. Let me share tips that will help in your quest to be one of us – the geeky do-gooders! Like any other profession, IT requires determination, patience and willingness to persevere. The beginning could be very challenging and intimidating because you might find it hard to figure out some ugly looking write-ups called "codes". You would wonder why a line - `JButton buttonObject = new JButton("Click Me")` - should create a button with "Click Me" written on it in Java (a scripting language). You might even be thinking about wireless internet connections as some voodoo from the west.

Being a PROGRAMMER or a SOFTWARE DEVELOPER is not rocket science. It's not as hard as many make it seem. Those codes that scare you seem to me as the easiest part of our profession. Once you understand the structure, the rules and the syntax, basically the 'logic' of why codes are written in programming language, the rest is easy.

Also, note that the more you code, the more you try out examples in the book you are reading, the easier it will be for you to master the coding techniques of the language. I remember my NIIT (an Indian school in Nigeria) days. I would always volunteer to do the coding, ever willing to help a mate identify errors in his/her code. By the end of the first semester, my coding skills were actually faultless.

Once you master coding, the rest depends on how well you can think. Don't wait for your instructor to tell you what to do. Go ahead and give yourself a pet project. It could be as simple a project as

creating a database of students in your college with information on their names, grades and activities. Build it in bits. As your knowledge grows, let the software you are building grow in functionality as well. Who knows, it just might turn out to be a gold mine for you.

In my case, the pet project I did at NIIT, Hospital Management System, kick started my career and put me on the IT radar in Nigeria. I travelled different states, met high-profile people, addressed a cross section of medical practitioners, all at the age of 22! Since then, it's been one challenging project or the other.

You also need to start thinking like a computer. Start viewing life and events around you with an IT lens. You walk into a restaurant, order a pie and a drink totaling \$10. If you pay less than the total, the computer rejects. What do you think is happening there? Consider this statement

```
If amount paid < 10. . . . tell customer money incomplete
else
Print receipt for customer.
```

If a Java programmer were to right this, its simple

```
if (amount < 10)
{
showMessage ("Customer money incomplete");
}
else
{
printReceipt();
}
```

Another example. Imagine you are playing the FIFA 2011 soccer game (Sorry, I'm a game freak :) ) with a mate and at the end of the first half, the match analysis is displayed showing that your team had 3 corner kicks and 2 offsides. What comes

to your mind? It means there is a 'variable' to store value for each of those game highlights. The variable is set to zero at kickoff and incremented by 1 anytime you win a corner kick or caught offside. At the end of the half, the variables are retrieved and presented to you. If you did not win a corner kick, the variable remains zero. Does it make sense?

Bottom line here is how logically you can break down or tear apart any situation in daily life and apply it to programming. This will determine your pace of learning as well. Start paying attention to the things you normally ignore. From your ATM machine telling you "Insuffi-

cient Funds" to your webmail application returning an 'Invalid Login' message. The more you understand the dynamics behind these simple things, the faster it will be for you to come up with solutions to problems related to IT, technology, finance, pharma, healthcare, education and even entertainment and sports industries (think about cricket match analysis on your TV).

Again, don't expect that you will master the syntax or grammar of coding in a day or learn computer languages immediately. The more you write them, the easier they are for you to recall.

Note also, that not everyone will end

up being a coder, however, a good understanding of the intricacies involved will help. So, for instance, if you decide to be an IT Project Manager or an Application Specification Developer amongst other fields, you should have the basic understanding of coding and programming.

Finally, you need a writing pad. As the wind blows new ideas to your direction, write them down. What kind of idea it is, who will it affect or who are the target audience, what do you need to bring it to life, revenue generation strategies and so on, should be penned.



PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE	PLACE TO LEARN
Java	<a href="http://download.oracle.com/docs/cd/E17409_01/javase/tutorial/">http://download.oracle.com/docs/cd/E17409_01/javase/tutorial/</a>
PHP	<a href="http://php.net/manual/en/tutorial.php">http://php.net/manual/en/tutorial.php</a>
.NET	<a href="http://www.w3schools.com/aspnet/default.asp">http://www.w3schools.com/aspnet/default.asp</a>

## Sharing Information

By **Jenny Cascante**

**I**nformation has never been so handy. In the Digital Era, everything is just a click away from our eyes and mind: concepts, information, news, visuals... a happy gathering of all the things that we want to learn and know.

The management of information, as well as the way that we use to obtain it, may not always seem as important as the fact of actually being able to get it, however, even when we are just reading the timeline of a news site we might need to be clear on what do we want to do with the information.

Are we reading for the sake of it? Or do we want others to absorb that information too? Are we keen to share our knowledge? When does the communication process begin? Is there an end?

I believe in the use of tools for info sharing and management. Several applications have been developed for this matter, and it is our choice to take advantage of them. Best practices in info sharing are aimed to work as facilitators in our human interactions.

These types of practices will not only enhance our



communication growth, but will encourage other people to try them as well. Although it is a fact that no best practice stays best for very long because people will keep on discovering improved ways of doing things, this is part of the well known creative process that never ends.

**Blogathon... happening this Monday, April 18, 2011. Don't Miss!**

**Continued from Page 1**

As a transparency and open data activist, there is a set of principles that we need to follow. These principles are ranked below (Source: [http://resource.org/8\\_principles.html](http://resource.org/8_principles.html)):

Government data shall be considered open if it is made public in a way that complies with the principles below:

**1. Complete**

All public data is made available. Public data is data that is not subject to valid privacy, security or privilege limitations.

**2. Primary**

Data is as collected at the source, with the highest possible level of granularity, not in aggregate or modified forms.

**3. Timely**

Data is made available as quickly as necessary to preserve the value of the data.

**4. Accessible**

Data is available to the widest range of

users for the widest range of purposes.

**5. Machine processable**

Data is reasonably structured to allow automated processing.

**6. Non-discriminatory**

Data is available to anyone, with no requirement of registration.

**7. Non-proprietary**

Data is available in a format over which no entity has exclusive control.

**8. License-free**

Data is not subject to any copyright, patent, trademark or trade secret regulation. Reasonable privacy, security and privilege restrictions may be allowed.

So, what does this mean to the average user? Does it change anything in his/her life? Why anyone should bother about "data", and "open government data" especially?

Well, from my point of view, open government data is important because it relates to information that is owned about society, so we have rights on this

data.

Information often is created based on data. If you have information, you have power. So, when we work with transparency and questioning the values of power, we should also advocate for forms of sharing this data with the society, scattered in various formats and possibilities, so people can reflect on this data and create their own version and analysis on facts.

If you're thinking about promoting data transparency in your country or local government, you need to follow the principles described above.

Politics aside, when these principles are followed closely in order to free this data and hand it to society, there is a guarantee that that data will safely reach the people who demand for it in an interesting format, thus allowing imaginative uses and creative constructions from it.

ladies that sought volunteers for street dog bathing.

**Impact**

Now think about "impact" and try to visualize in your own activist activity: Where did it start? Where does it end? How do you know when you have achieved it? Will it end sometime? What is it made from? What do you have to do to achieve impact?

In activism, as in other nurturing activities of life, setting boundaries for our self activity and goals is extremely complex. Teenagers commonly want to change everything right away and blame the elderly of not doing enough while the elderly pat the teenagers' back and suggest they take time to learn while the world continues to move with all its downsides.

My animal lover friend rode his bike one Sunday to the place where the dog bathing was held. There were many dogs in an empty house space and very few volunteers. To his surprise, he was not the only teenager around and quickly became friends of everyone around. After several tring hours of do-bathing, he cheated with a lady that was a nurse and, coincidentally, also his best friend's aunt. He asked her if by bathing street dogs the risk of disease in the community would decrease. She answered that she volunteered every weekend because she wanted the dogs to be healthier and feel better. She also noted that in order to control diseases from street dogs, there should be better vaccination programs in the community. The next week, my friend started researching about public policy and continued volunteering on Sundays.



**Us**

In the every day action, where there are leveraging among ourselves, what we want to achieve and time: Where should you focus your efforts? What are you good at? What activities make you happy? Who are the people most related to your cause? Who are they? Where are they? Where will your efforts bring the best outcomes? Where will your efforts bring the best of your organization's outcomes?

The journey is always evolving and there is always a place for each of us. Activism involves us in such a way that execute balancing acts every day, with our energy, talents, words, actions and time. And, much of this balancing act has to do in finding out where we, as

individuals, can do the best of jobs and the most fit for ourselves.

My friend kept in tough with the dog bathing volunteers for many years. Two hears after his first research on street dogs, the local government officials appointed a team and assigned budget in order to vaccine street dogs. After a year of studying medicine, he went on to college to study economics while actively participating in animal rights NGOs physically and virtually. He wants every citizen to know what he had learned that day he researched asking the local government officials about policies and plans to manage street dogs. And he is currently working with web programmers and college communication students in open government initiatives.

# Going back to the basics ... an analog story about Us

By **Juan-Manuel Casanueva**

After some years of being involved with many amazing digital activists and other kinds of wonderful people that really want to change the world, I think I have discussed thousand of hours about politics, citizen engagement strategies, the current world order, non-profit management, activism's role in society, monitoring and evaluation, ICT's role in social empowerment, NGO leadership and communication tactics. I remember dearly a very long afternoon in which some colleagues and I unscrambled bits and pieces of all the impact assessment techniques and evaluation methodologies we could think of so that we could clearly express the challenges of activism impact assessment. As it commonly happens, some of us went back into the basics of sociology and anthropology while, on the other side of the table, another group had already running assessment quantitative models in complex spreadsheets.

After the fourth hour of discussions,

notes scribbling and outlines, we all took a break leaving the crowded room for an open air terrace. Some of us were quite tired from the late working session and started sharing every day life anecdotes, laughs, stories and even frustrations. A friend was very worried because her social media campaign was hitting the target audience as she had planned. We tried to cheer her up while heading keep the conversation as far as possible from digital activism. Fortunately, another colleague told us that he was very excited because his dog had given birth to four beautiful puppies. He eagerly talked about all pregnancy period with much detail and just when he was going to go about explaining how he had helped the veterinarian during the birth process, another friend asked him if he would prefer to accomplish another career instead of digital activism.

That question had such an echo that it bounced along all the monitoring and

evaluation theories we had studied and, most importantly, it hit our own lives.

**Us**

Stop for a minute and ask your self: Why are you a digital activist? Really, what drives you to fight for a better world and use digital technologies to achieve that? Were you born as an activist or did it grow in you? Was it destiny or a simple life choice?

Avoiding any written answers to the questions stated above, it is very nurturing to swim among all the complexities of human beings and try to identify what motivates us to become activists.

My friend had not been a veterinarian because the thought he lacked the skills to study medicine and had leveraged his passion for animals through activism, starting to fight for animal rights and slowly becoming a powerful rights advocate. And, interestingly enough, he had started his activist career when he received a paper flyer from a group of

# Best Practices for Online Activist Librarians

By Mauricio Fino Garzon



**Librarians and digital natives have the key to "open the door" by Maolibrarian CC-BY-NC-SA <http://flic.kr/p/9yttPN>**

**L**ibraries are changing, they are no longer book warehouses covered with dust and spider-webs, they are neither those places where children were sent when punished, but instead are becoming a more dynamic space that serves the needs of its users.

Technological development, has forced libraries to reconsider the services that were traditionally offered, and instead try to ensure and expand information access, knowledge management, bring art and culture closer to the surrounding community, reading and writing promotion, reference & information services as well as user training with non-formal education activities like computer and digital workshops and Media and Information Literacy programs.

These changes are visible even in the infrastructure itself, the physical, architecture and design, as well as technological,

with new reading gadgets or ways of accessing information and roles in the information profession have diverged from the traditional librarian role. So, the changes are due in big part to the work of the librarian, who has also transformed and now worries about the quality of life of his/her users. In my own example, the custodian of information has been an activist (and a community advocate) since he can remember, and now more than ever with the new technological tools and the massification of the Internet and its capacity to mobilise, his causes have taken on a global scale.

For this reason, it was a few months ago that I started writing about informational activism and the role of information professional in modern times, as well as the information ethical aspects of information, and the freedom of expression that is woken up when information is taken to the limit (I am making refer-

ence to the wikileaks example, as well as the Internet shutout the Egyptian activist faced) Now I find myself writing about good or "better" practices (as it was translated from the English) within this sub-theme. Before beginning, to remove all doubts I quickly Googled "Best Practices" which took me to various very simple definitions like the Wikipedia entry, and thanks for the serendipity and that strange relationship between librarians and it in the process of information retrieving, I arrived by coincidence to Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki, a site which collects ideas, methodologies and successful experiences for all type of librarians.

The best description to this helpful service is as it appears on their website "All over the world, librarians are developing successful programs and doing innovative things with technology that no one outside of their library knows about. There are lots of great blogs out there sharing information about the profession, but there is no one place where all of this information is collected and organized. That's what we're trying to do".

It is worth mentioning that all contents on the website are licensed under CC BY-NC-SA. In this way, Library Success becomes a catalyst and reference tool for people who work in the field, especially through the categories that organize the knowledge in a structured way. For example, in my case I'm interested on "information developing skills" so I can view / edit information in the section Reference Services and Information Literacy.

**Best practice: Librarian and digital natives are "rethinking the library"**

**A**ccording to Samek "the rethinking of library tasks and goals is a work in progress through the 21st century and uses activism as one of



**Librarians in action at GV Summit 2010 by Maolibrarian CC-BY-NC-SA <http://flic.kr/p/9yu2Nd>**

its main tools" (Samek 2006). Recognizing the digital divide and social (even what Henry Jenkins has been calling the "participatory divide") new technological developments have been implemented and appropriate in recent years in libraries (also in archives and museums), this work has provided spaces available for digital natives that implicitly are requiring a more social library and that is precisely what the new devices and Web 2.0 tools are making possible. I mean hybrid libraries that are supporting: collaborative work tools for librarians, online catalogs that integrate information from the library with users (OPAC 2.0), interfaces and services for mobile devices (i.e. augmented reality utilities, e-books and e-readers loans service), among others (Gutiérrez, 2011).

I've noticed that in events such as conferences, seminars, etc are places that serve to publicize best practices and share my experiences. For example,

the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) will hold an event in London in June that will be focused on new information professionals under the theme "Professionalism and Activism in a Time of Downturn" which seeks to bring together good practice and explore issues relevant to the overall theme.

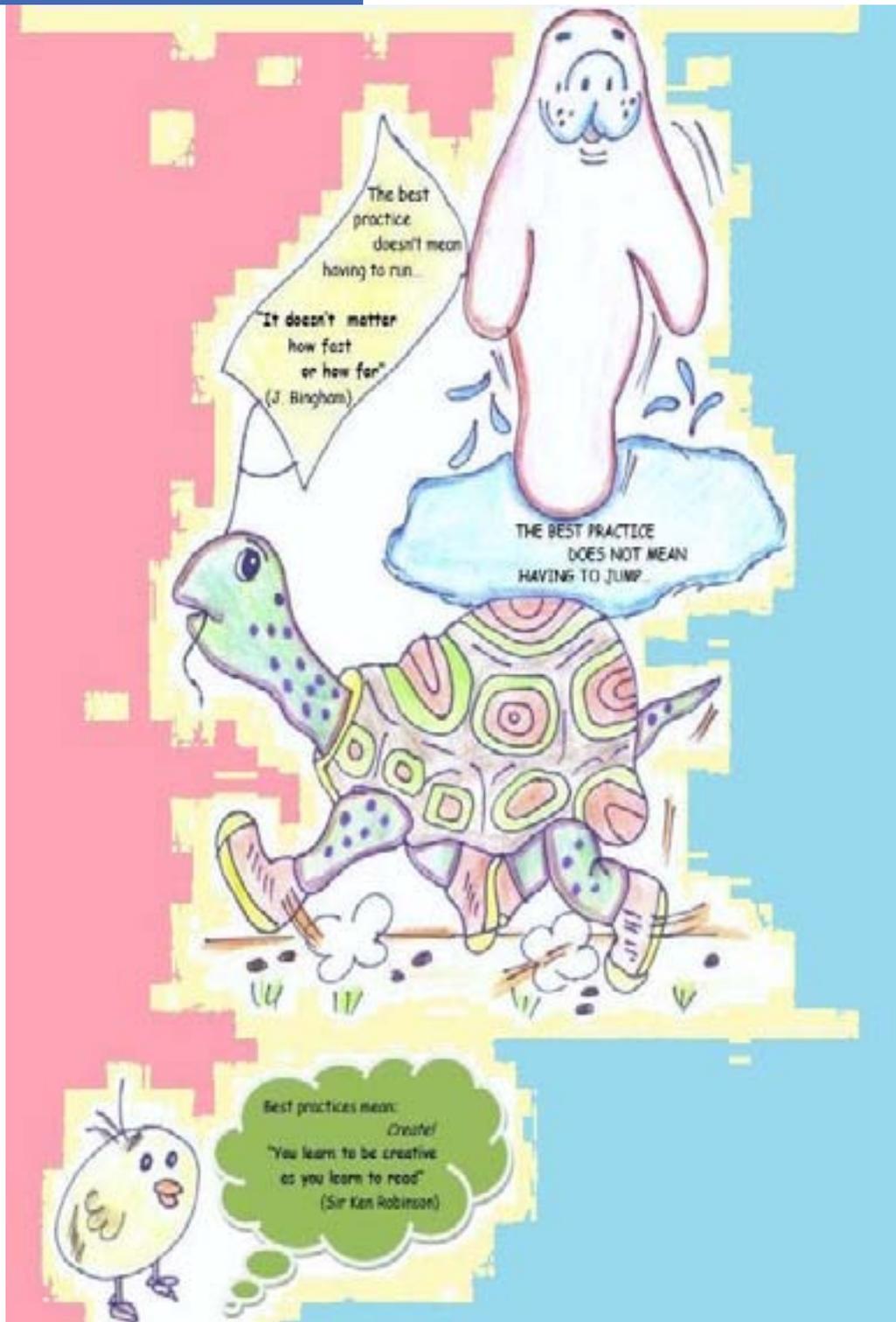
Just like there isn't a precise formula to apply best practices and the standardized processes, libraries are not made from the same mold, and what is adequate in one context and for a group of users does not adjust exactly to other communities. However, these successful experiences are those that permit use and reuse knowledge to create new ideas and generate actions that empower people to mobilize their own causes.

Think about this, if a librarian may have an impact that can transform his/her community, just imagine hundreds

of them around the world sharing their good practices. Pretty cool huh. ¡Librarians are awesome!

#### CREDITS

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Fernanda Tusa

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**Topic:**

***Revolutions in the Middle East & Africa:  
Why are some successful and some not?***

**Send all correspondences to: [jamesmlambo@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmlambo@gmail.com)**