

What is Documentation?

How is Documentation created in Vox Pupuli?

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Who Am I?

- Sol (Martinez Demarco)
- Pronouns: they/them
- Nationality: Argentine
- Current residence: Germany
- PhD student in Social Sciences
 - Topic: ignorance in FLOSS communities



Outline

1. Recap on CfgMgmt presentation:
 - ✓ Brief intro on Ignorance/Non-Knowledge in Social Sciences
 - ✓ Brief intro on the case study on Documentation
2. What is Documentation?
 - ✓ According to Library and Information Sciences (LIS)
 - ✓ Types, Functions and Dimensions by Software Engineering
 - ✓ For a Technical Writer
3. Multiple Choice: What do you think of these perspectives?
4. Open Questions: What ignorance do you want to keep? How would you prevent/mitigate it?
 - ✓ OpenVox Server and OV DB: What do you want to “document” about the decision?
 - ✓ Slack/IRC: What do you preserve of the Q&A?

Non-knowledge in social sciences

❖ What is non-knowledge?

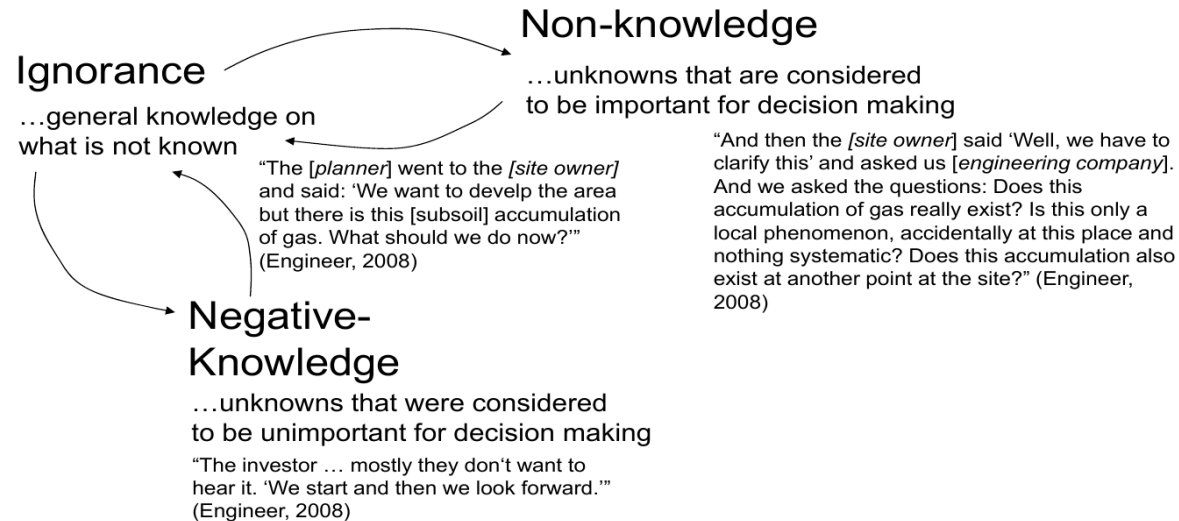
- **Ignorance Studies** focuses on the *social production of ignorance*.
- If **knowledge** is the product of socially constructed true beliefs, *ignorance* is also the product of specific perspectives or systems of beliefs.
- Therefore, if **knowledge** is necessary, useful or provide power, *ignorance* can be and do the same.

❖ What types of non-knowledge exist?

There are several taxonomies, but not a single accepted one. Social scientists pick or develop one based on the empirical material.

Non-knowledge in social sciences

Knowledge – non-knowledge dynamics – A dynamic concept of ignorance



Developed from Gross 2007, Bleicher 2012

Joanne Roberts

Source of ignorance	Type of ignorance	Example
Absence of knowledge	Unknown unknowns	Ignorance that is beyond anticipation. Recognized in high risk sectors such as aerospace, where they are known as 'unknunks'.
	Known unknowns	A known incompleteness of knowledge, at various levels of the organization, which can lead to the outsourcing of exposure to such ignorance or can direct R&D efforts.
	Knowable known unknowns	Knowledge that is not central to the organization's core competencies. Access to such knowledge can be outsourced to save on the organization's cognitive resources. For instance, many organizations outsource business services like advertising and legal service.
Ignorance about existing knowledge	Unknown knowns	Unrecognized tacit knowledge, such as that embedded in routines and practices. We often know more than we can articulate – such knowledge may be evident in intuition, instinct, and business hunches.
	Errors	Mistakes caused by human error or systems failures. For instance, one of the most common medical errors is the prescription of the wrong dose of medicine. In certain circumstances, this type of ignorance can be fatal.
Ignorance from suppressing knowledge	Taboos	Organizational cultures can enforce certain behaviours and knowledge to the detriment of others making some behaviours or knowledge taboo.
	Denials	The refusal to recognize major changes in the business context, which require the adoption of new business models. For instance, many retailers that denied the importance of online shopping in the early years of the Internet are now finding that their competitiveness is severely curtailed because of this earlier denial.
	Secrecy	Trade secrets, like the recipes for Coca-Cola or Kentucky Fried Chicken.
	Privacy	Confidentiality agreements with employees, customers and suppliers.

Figure 34.1 Sources and types of organizational ignorance
Source: Developed from Roberts (2013)

Case study: Documentation

January 2026 - On the Vox Populi Slack

<Person A> We really need an overview of all the repos that publish to voxpupuli.org/\$repo

<Person A> Some have really good documentation that just nobody knows

<Person B> @Person A: I assume you set that up -- feasible to map to something like voxpupuli.org/docs/projects/* and also generate an index at voxpupuli.org/docs/projects.html?

...

<Person B> ah, it's just the built-in gh pages mapping

...

<Person A> And some repos have docs that we didn't publish

What is Documentation?

According to Library and Information Science

- End of 19th/beginning of 20th century there was a growing numbers of scientific and technical publications: How to manage them?
 - “Document” is the fundamental unit of work.
 - The organisation, preservation, verification and transmission of knowledge is only possible through “documents”.
 - A “document” has three characteristics:
 1. Materiality: it allows something to be experienced or referenced;
 2. Cognition: mental acts of intention and interpretation, which enable it to be meaningful for someone; and
 3. Sociality: socially acknowledged and institutionally authorised as a medium for information.
- Nowadays, if an Information Retrieval System only proves the existence and/or provides the whereabouts of “documents”, is this actually the “information” searched for?
 - That is, knowledge is not changed or informed, but some data about where to obtain it is provided.

What is Documentation?

According to Library and Information Science (cont.)

- ❖ The *neo-documentary turn* argues that “information” has many meanings, and LIS considers a “document” as “information-as-thing.”
 - A “document” is an object (a thing) that is perceived or asserted as recorded evidence of some belief or process.
 - A “document” represents concepts and knowledge that are valid in different or specific contexts.
- **Documents** are material (even if digital), constitute aid for human memory, support communication across time and space, ensure personal learning and understanding, and contribute to intersubjective or social construction of meaning.

What is Documentation?

Types, Functions and Dimensions of Software Documentation

- ❖ At least a minimal amount of qualitative good software documentation is needed for the continuity of the development and maintenance of the software until its retirement.
- ❖ **Software documentation** [is] a process [an artefact] whose purpose is to communicate information about the software system to which it belongs (...) documentation establishes communication among all involved parties and levels their knowledge about the project, aiming to transfer and share knowledge (Pinho et al., 2024, p. 3).
 - But, the formats of the “information” about a software system are:
 - ✓ Digital/Physical documents,
 - ✓ Software development tools, and
 - ✓ Verbal communication.

What is Documentation?

Types, Functions and Dimensions of Software Documentation (cont.)

❖ **Purposes** of software documentation:

- a) Provision of complete and accurate information, including the definition/description of software;
- b) Support communication (internal and with external partners);
- c) Upholding organisational memory;
- d) Supply evidence for auditing;
- e) Facilitation of training, code reuse and maintenance;
- f) Transmission of information about known problems and solutions.

What is Documentation?

Types, Functions and Dimensions of Software Documentation (cont.)

- ❖ Types of “information” to be considered for DevOps “documentation”:
 - a) Stakeholders’ concerns,
 - b) Risks, constraints and context,
 - c) Requirements and specifications,
 - d) Source code and annotations in the source code,
 - e) Commit messages,
 - f) CI/CD playbooks,
 - g) Metrics or lists of indicators,
 - h) Principles, values and beliefs,
 - i) Practices, processes and procedures,
 - j) Tools in use,
 - k) Knowledge and competences,
 - l) Assumptions,
 - m) Design decisions and rationale.

What is Documentation?

For a Technical Writer

- ❖ A **narrative infrastructure** is a shared story that makes the project understandable:
 - For (future) you, maintainers and newcomers.
 - ✓ What is the project about?
 - ✓ Why it exists?
 - ✓ Who is the project for?
 - ✓ How to contribute meaningfully? What counts as a good contribution?
 - ✓ What is a priority?
 - ✓ What is the project roadmap?
 - Treat README as a front door and contributing.md as the butler welcoming people.
 - Practices (routines and processes) keep the story alive.
 - Regular sync sessions for onboarding, maintenance, and general updates.

What do you think?

a) Do you agree with the definition by LIS?

- Does information and documentation mean the same to you?
- Do documents represent information or are they information?

b) What do you consider the types, functions and dimensions most useful for you?

- Do you think that software documentation also implies verbal communication and software tools?
- Do you have in mind all the purposes of documentation when producing it?
- How do you document any of the different types of information mentioned?

c) Do you have a narrative in mind?

- For example, since OpenVox emerged, it is associated with a phoenix.
- To put in practice:
 1. Can you tell the story in one sentence?
 2. Is the story consistent across the community?
 3. Is the story visible? Where can people find it?

Open Questions

- a) Whose ignorance? The researchers or the responders?
- b) If the lack of knowledge is based on the data sources (specific people or documents), is it “real” the claim of non-knowledge or is it a deception?
- c) What could be the reasons for them alleging to not know?
- d) If the data sources seem to genuinely be unaware, how is that ignorance kept in place?

OpenVox Server and OpenVox DB: What do you want to “document” about the decision?

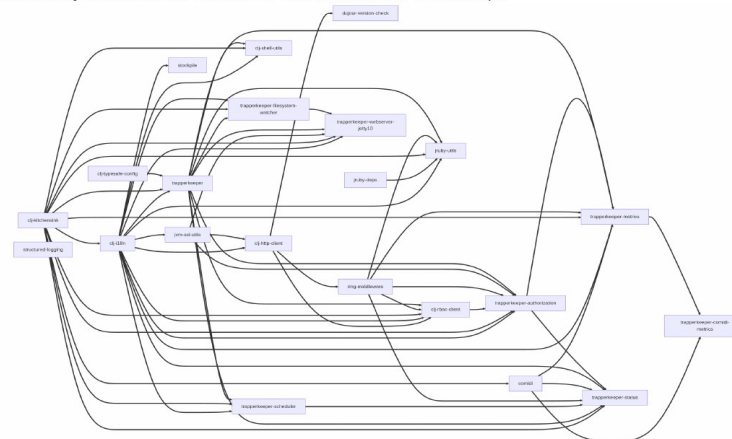
- Should we rewrite OpenVox server from Clojure to Ruby?

<https://cfp.cfgmgmtcamp.org/ghent2026/talk/7HGANT/> (CfgMgmt '26 – Marcus)

<https://github.com/voxpupuli/community-triage/issues/83> (CfgMgmt '26 – GH issue)

<https://cfp.cfgmgmtcamp.org/ghent2026/talk/XAHTHZ/> (CfgMgmt '26 – Tim)

List of all Clojure libs, we had to fork from Perforce, and their relationships



Slack/IRC: What do you preserve of the Q&A?

→ What are possible unknowns in the community? Do you have current unknowns?

“It’s 90% about some rarely executed procedures I believe. I still don’t remember how to release a module or a gem e.g. But we have some articles hanging around. Ideally, we should organise those in “runbooks”. [...]

*Luckily, I can almost always get answer in **Slack** in about a day.”*

(Interviewee 5, June 2026)



Slack/IRC: What do you preserve of the Q&A?



Compare all features

Free	Pro	Business+	Enterprise+
CURRENT PLAN	Upgrade Now	Upgrade Now	Contact Sales

Productivity and collaboration

Message and file history	90-day limit	✓
Channels	✓	✓
Search	✓	✓
Audio and video clips	✓	✓
Slack Connect	1:1 only	✓
Huddles	1:1 only	✓
Canvases	—	✓
Lists	—	✓
Customizable sections	—	✓
Templates	—	User-created

Compliance

Data retention policies	Up to 1 year	✓	✓	✓
Data residency	—	—	✓	✓
Data exports for all messages	—	—	✓	✓
Data exports for all messages from a single user	—	—	—	✓
Native data loss prevention	—	—	—	✓
Information barriers	—	—	—	✓
Legal holds	—	—	—	✓
Discovery API	—	—	—	✓
Audit logs	—	—	—	✓
Support for HIPAA compliance	—	—	—	✓

Thank you for working with me!

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Expertise-as-Infrastructure

→ Why did it take so long to have the documentation in place?

“That's what happened with [the] docs is we knew where we needed to go. We knew what needed to happen. We knew how we needed to restructure. We knew what we needed to focus on creating new docs about OpenVox. But because build pipelines and website presentation software are relatively easy, everybody had opinions about both of those things, and we got bogged down for months kind of arguing and debating the finer points [...] And then a couple of weeks ago, one of our employees just kind of looked at the problem and the people arguing and how it wasn't getting anywhere. And he just built something and deployed it and said, hey, we can start from this. And all of a sudden everybody's like, oh, okay, let's go.”

(Interviewee 3, April 2026)

Expertise-as-Infrastructure (cont.)

→ Why did it take so long to have the documentation in place?

“[The] first priority was to make OpenVox software collection buildable and release a few versions to iron-out all common issues. There were many unknowns about how we [were] going to do things. There [were] a lot of questions to answer, like:

- Where to store docs (each piece holds its docs in its own repo or all docs in one repo)*
- Where to publish docs (SaaS or self-hosted, voxpupuli.org or another domain, etc.)*
- Which solution to use to publish docs (Jekyll or Hugo or Mkdocs, etc.)*

[A] bigger question was which structure to follow. We decided to start with the last OS version of the documentation. It was a git archive of Puppet 5 times docs.”

(Interviewee 5, June 2026)