

A word from our regional offices in Moscow and Nur-Sultan

'Innovating and making progress from locked homes'

Different practices in the field of epidemiology

It is not unusual for veterinary epidemiologists to implement surveillance, testing, tracing, monitoring and control measures when faced with an animal disease. Our public health colleagues in some countries affected by SARS-CoV-2, faced the disease in a very challenging way, particularly in the first phase of the pandemic, when we saw an exponential spread of infection, starting with the People's Republic of China and then throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States of America. The number of cases doubled many times each month, sometimes even within a week. By promoting behavioural changes within the population, many countries got the infection rate to plateau and even decrease, and without changes in personal behaviour, it is believed that most of the world's population would have been infected.

First impressions

Suddenly, for the first time in our lives it was not easy to see, meet or even reach our colleagues, friends and family members. Thus we spent some time at the beginning of the pandemic trying understand what was happening and to invent some rational way of managing our lives, both private and professional.

More than ever, we were doing uninspiring things first thing in the morning: intensive usage of our gadgets to stay connected, looking at new e-mails and social media feeds, watching the news of new cases (infections, deaths..) on TV. Unfortunately, at a certain point in time, these nameless statistics started to be attached to the names of people we know...

To distract from these things, we have spent time in the kitchen trying new recipe or those we didn't have time to cook before or adapting our fitness regime. But alongside this, we wanted to continue our business and intellectual projects. Luckily, the OIE provided technologies which improved our ability to communicate with immediate colleagues, as well as those from other regional headquarters, veterinary authorities, and partners. Despite the fact the epidemiological situation changes every day, there is a lot of information available, sometimes contradictory, and it can be hard to identify the proper way of doing things or how to best support our colleagues.

Consolidation

Since this pandemic began, it has been often said that it will change everything, and that nothing will remain the same. We now see global innovation as the key factor for limiting the damage caused by COVID-19, which includes innovation in testing, treatment, vaccines and policies to limit its spread while minimising the devastation to economies and well-being. On 10 April, we also witnessed the formation of a new alliance which we could not have imagined in January: Apple and Google. These corporations, which have access to a total of 3.5 billion devices worldwide, agreed to work together on a new App to help countries and services to get out of lockdown, and more importantly to develop a high-tech network for tracking infection, in an attempt to save human lives, and also economies.

In our micro-environments, we also could identify how to be more effective and innovative on a daily basis.

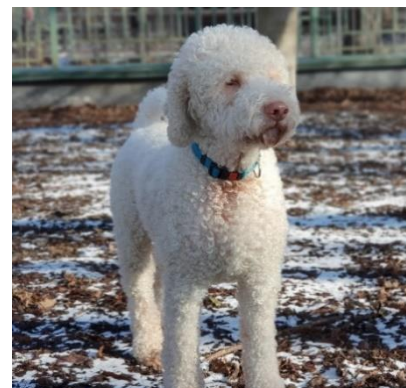
Adaptation

We have learnt from each other every day during this global health crisis and have started to make small daily improvements: from the morning routine to efficiently responding to colleagues and their e-mails (or SMSs),

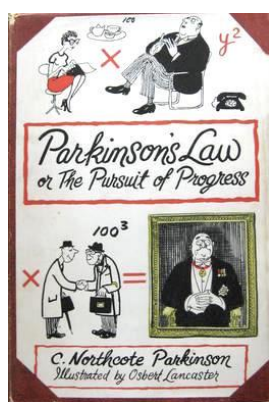
from reading relevant articles or books to organising and participating in virtual events, from meditating or exercising to conversing with colleagues in other countries and cities, from writing articles or painting to exchanging views with friends at WHO who have faced serious difficulties. We have also learnt what works best for us in the current circumstances: we do not need to spend hours commuting, we do not have long, non-productive and time-consuming meetings and if we get up early enough, we will avoid distractions from other family members who have also been locked in the house for almost two months.

Cuddling with your pets is something very important, believe me

I can't tell you the difference Leo has made to our lives, he is the sweetest thing ever: he loves to play, loves to be pampered, loves to give pure love. During the long quarantine hours, we have been privileged to go out with him for a walk (okay, to play in the park when there is nobody in proximity), while others were stuck indoors. How lucky are we to have a dog in the first place, am I right?



Good books and innovations



When we recently started brainstorming on how to develop an efficient and accessible system to manage all relevant incoming and outgoing documents (e.g. official letters, rulebooks, protocols) and their archiving in the Moscow office, Dr Marina Sokolova, our new colleague, who joined us several weeks ago, reminded me of one of my favourite books *Parkinson's Law on the Pursuit of Progress* written by Cyril Northcote Parkinson on preventing bureaucracies from expanding over time.

At that point, we realised that we could share not only titles of favourite books, but also references, quotes and thoughts on the authors. Besides, why not to use the experience of characters in daily life, both private and professional?

From these discussions onwards, it became clear how communication with other colleagues in our small team can unleash the power of serendipitous creativity that we often can't generate individually, even when it comes to standardisation of office procedures!

Pragmatism

Anyway, during the last several months, we have collaborated with OIE colleagues and hierarchy to identify the most appropriate, harmonised protocol to be implemented in our office, for document management, both electronic and in hard copy. *Parkinson's Law* helped us to discuss this concept from our homes only.

The underpinning idea of the protocol was not to print all files, or to have paper records taking up valuable square footage in offices, making it difficult to stay organised. On the contrary, in today's digital world, and with *OIE IT Master Plan*, an integrated spirit of environmental protection and minimal usage of printers, we wish to establish easy procedures and software to improve both the organisation of work and accessibility of any of our documents, not only now but in the future.

Theory of document management systems

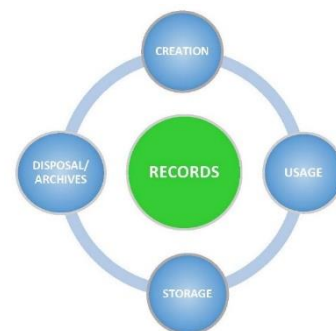
Document management systems (DMS) are essentially electronic filing cabinets any organisation can use as a foundation for organising all digital and paper documents. All hard copies of documents can simply be uploaded directly into the DMS with a scanner, but there's the possibility to enter metadata and tags to simplify the identification of stored files, including video and audio records (e.g. Zoom video recordings). Ideally, it is a combination of an on-premises and Cloud-based solution (say with OneDrive access).

With this article, we would like to share our current work on this project, but also to initiate wider consultations with other OIE colleagues. In the beginning, we want to define several key elements of such a system:

- **Document management:** tracking and storing electronic documents and/or images of paper documents, keeping track of different versions modified by different users, and archiving as needed. DMS is a technology that provides a comprehensive solution for managing the creation, capture, indexing, storage, searching, mobile access, retrieval, ease use, and disposition of the records and information assets of our office. The system should also ensure proper security of data.



- **Records management:** this is the process of maintaining the records of an office from the time they are created up to their eventual disposal. This may include classifying, storing, securing, archiving, and deleting records. Records management allows you to know what you have, where you have it, how long you have to keep it and how secure it is.
- **Archiving:** this is the process of moving files that are no longer actively used to a separate storage device. Although archived, these files are still important to our offices, and might be needed for future reference



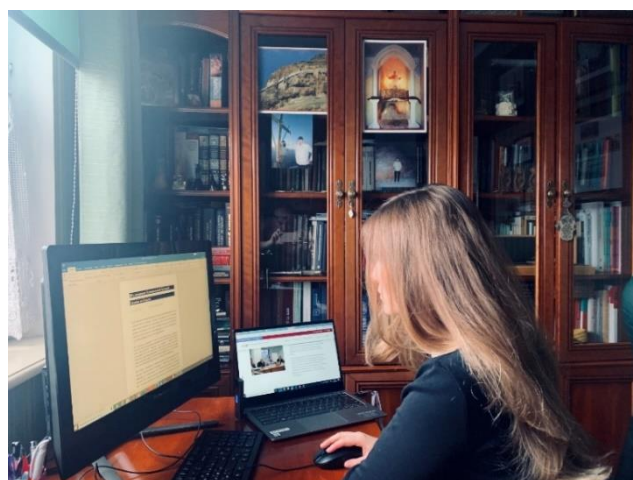
or historical purposes or must be retained for regulatory compliance and audit. Ideally, all archived documents should be available for long-term retention but also indexed and searchable so that files can be easily located and retrieved. As part of the information lifecycle, archiving is an important and final stage. Keeping too much old information available online consumes valuable storage which could be better used for newer information, increases the number of irrelevant search results returned, and adds to the effort required to maintain, move, migrate and reclassify content.

For operational activities, OIE Regional Representation in Moscow started to use OneDrive for some elements of its DMS, predominantly for the sharing of working documents between team members and colleagues in other regional and sub-regional offices and for archiving some files (instructions, decisions).

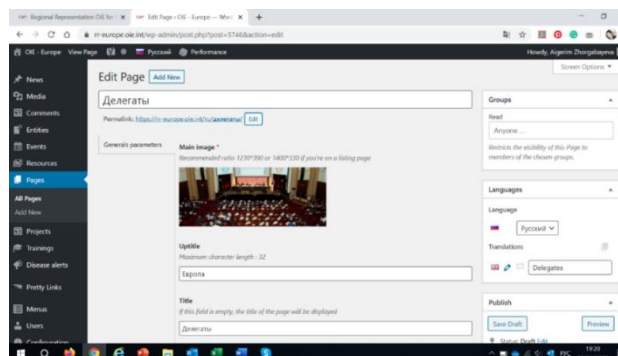
For colleagues who want to learn more on these topics, we will be happy to share with you insights, resources and book references.

European offices committed to launching the OIE regional website for Europe in Russian

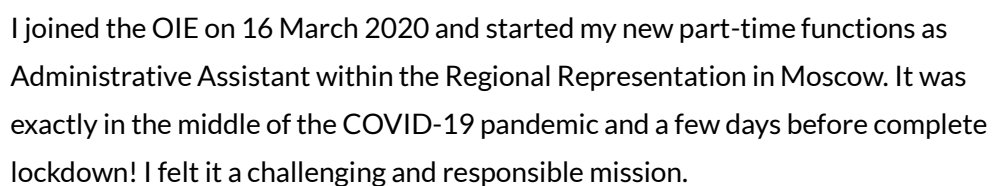
Each crisis creates new opportunities. At this difficult time of pandemic and lockdown of almost all our cities, by working from our homes and not meeting our colleagues, we identified the need to strengthening our connections with our sister regional European offices. Regular communication with colleagues not only work related but also to check the situation in their cities, how they are doing and what measures are in place as a result of pandemic. We decided to use some of our time for the translation of the OIE website for Europe into Russian, which is not only important in regular activities, but also for sharing information about COVID-19, such as questions and answers. We will take advantage of our skills as Regional Communication Correspondents in this



More than 11 countries in the European region use Russian as their only international language for official and business communication, which is additionally the only language through which veterinary authorities get and understand news and standards from the OIE, and to share it with networks of Veterinary Services. A regular update



First impressions and challenges I met during my first month working at the OIE in its Moscow office



The OIE is one of the most respected organisations in Russia, and I believe worldwide. It was so exciting to start working with Dr Budimir Plavsic whom I knew from scientific articles. My first task, agreed via Zoom, was quite an analytical one - to pick up COVID-19 information related to our region on a daily basis and make notes to share with the dynamics of the situation in policy, healthcare, control measures and scientific areas. (This working file upon request). That was a good start for me since I am a biologist who completed my PhD at Moscow State University, and then for many years worked as a scientist in the 11 years prior to starting at the OIE, I was Senior Advisor for Science and Health at European embassies in Moscow. A wide range of my responsibilities comprised epidemiology, management, logistics and analytics in fields like veterinary medicine and antimicrobial

believe consultations through videoconferences will be our everyday practice for many months and years to come. We appreciate OIE IT colleagues' work to standardise the Zoom tool, it is working perfectly.

Some people suffer from self-isolation, but not those who engage in their hobbies. In previous issues of the *In-house Times*, there were a number of stories of how our colleagues enjoy the opportunity to spend their spare time, and I am no exception. I have no pets, but I have a collection of James Herriot books (he was a famous writer and veterinarian :)). However, I would also like to share with you my other hobby: plants. I feel the tingle of wonder at seeing how the seed of a tropical fruit planted in a small pot on a windowsill transforms into a small bush or tree. Just looking at it takes me back to my favourite holiday destination. :)

These are some specimens from my 'plantation': lychee, avocado, kaffir lime, and traditional spring hyacinth if you are not against its strong fragrance. :)



We wish to thank our colleagues Budimir Plavsic, Ekaterina Panina, Aigerim Zhorgabayeva and Marina Sokolova for their valuable contribution.

■ OIE In-house Times – 8 May 2020