

What is claimed:

1. A method for determining an exchange value, comprising of:
 - a point;
 - a distribution of information items;
 - a step for generating a second distribution of information items, wherein the distribution and the point are used;
 - a step for computing a distribution difference between the distribution and the second distribution, whereby the exchange value for the point is the distribution difference.
2. A method for determining an exchange value for multiple points using the method of claim 1, further comprising of:
 - a set of points;
 - for each point in the set of points compute the exchange value using the method of claim 1, wherein the computation uses the point and the first distribution;
3. A method for comparing or ranking at least two points using the method of claim 1, further comprising of:
 - a first point;
 - a second point;
 - a step for computing the exchange value for the first point and the second point, wherein the exchange value is computed using method 1;
 - a step for comparing or ranking the first point and second point using the exchange values computed.
4. A method for ranking information items, wherein the information item value pair for a first item and a second item are compared using the results of the method in claim 3.
5. A method in an iterative process using claim 3, comprising of:
 - a first region;
 - a step for determining a set of points;
 - a step for ranking the points, wherein the step for ranking uses the method in claim 3 to compare at least two points;
 - a step for generating a second region, wherein the step for generating uses the first region and one or more of the points, wherein the points used are selected in rank order;

a step for computing a success metric for the first region and the second region, whereby the success metrics are used to compare the first and second region.

6. A method for generating an include region using the method of claim 5, further comprising of:
 - an initial first region;
 - a first step for computing the success metric for the first region and the generated second region using the method of claim 5;
 - a step for evaluating when the second region improves the first region; and
 - repeating the first step when the second region improves the first region, wherein the second region becomes the first region; and,
 - stopping when the first region can not be improved, whereby the first region is the include region.
7. An apparatus for determining an exchange value, comprising of:
 - a first distribution of information items;
 - a point;
 - a means for generating a second distribution, wherein the means for generating uses the point and the first distribution;
 - a means for computing an exchange value for the point, wherein the means for computing uses the first distribution and the second distribution;
8. A region generator apparatus using the apparatus of claim 7, comprising of:
 - a first region;
 - a means for determining a set of points;
 - a means for ranking the points, wherein the means for ranking uses the apparatus of claim 7 to rank at least two of the points;
 - a means for generating a second region from first region and at least one of the points, wherein the points used are selected in rank order;
 - compute a success metric for the first region and the second region;
9. An apparatus for determining an include region using the apparatus of claim 8, further comprising of:
 - an initial first region;
 - use the region generator apparatus of claim 8 to generate the second region and success metrics;

repeat the use of the region generator when the second region is preferred to the first region, wherein the second region becomes the first region; and
stop if no second region improves on the first region, whereby the first region is the include region.

10. A method for selecting and ranking information items for presentation to an information consumer using the method of claim 6, comprising of:
 - a collection of information items;
 - use the collection as a master distribution;
 - generate an include region for the master distribution using the method of claim 6;
 - use the include region to determine a subset of the collection to present to the information consumer.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the subset of information items is sorted using the exchange value.
12. A method for comparing alternative metrics, comprising of:
 - a set of information consumers;
 - a first set of metrics;
 - a second set of metrics;
 - a step for determining a first include region using the first set of metrics and a second include region using the second set of metrics for each consumer in the set of information consumers;
 - a step for computing a shift change value for each consumer in the set, wherein the step for computing uses the first include region and the second include region;
 - a step for computing a shift impact metric using the shift change values computed, whereby the two sets of metrics can be compared.
13. A method for determining the impact of a demand shift or distribution shift or other shift in metrics using the method of claim 12, further comprising of:
 - compute the shift impact metric using the method claim 12, wherein the first set of metrics are the initial metrics and the second set of metrics are the post shift metrics, and whereby the impact of the shift in metrics is determined.
14. The method of claim 13, further comprising of:
 - a step for determining a set of information consumers impacted by the shift in metrics.
15. An apparatus for determining the impact of a shift in metrics, comprising of:

a set of information consumers;

a means for determining a post shift include region for each consumer in the set;

an initial include region for each consumer in the set;

a means for computing at least one shift change value for each information consumer, wherein the means for computing uses the initial include region and the post shift include region;

a means for computing at least one shift impact metric using the shift change value for each consumer, whereby the impact of the shift in metrics is determined.

16. An apparatus for evaluating a change to an information exchange using the apparatus in claim 15, further comprising of:

a demand shift or distribution shift predicted from the change;

at least one threshold value;

using the apparatus in claim 15 to determine the shift impact metrics; and

choosing the change, if the shift impact metrics exceed the threshold values.