Preface: Enabling the Knowledge-Sharing Culture

Knowledge services is an approach to the management of intellectual capital that converges information management, knowledge management, and strategic learning into a single enterprise-wide discipline. The purpose of knowledge services is to ensure the highest levels of knowledge sharing within the organization in which it is practiced, with leadership in knowledge sharing the responsibility of the knowledge strategist. This book is written to provide guidance for the knowledge strategist and to serve as a reference for that management employee.

The knowledge strategist uses knowledge services as a framework for creating (or strengthening) the organization as a knowledge culture. In the knowledge culture, the entire enterprise benefits from excellence in knowledge sharing, an outcome characterized as successful knowledge development, knowledge sharing, and knowledge utilization (often designated with the acronym “KD/KS/KU”).

In establishing knowledge services as a strategic framework for the twenty-first century organization, successful knowledge sharing becomes the norm, the standard. With successful knowledge sharing in place, the organization prospers and its mission is more easily and readily achieved than it would be otherwise.

In the workplace, one issue increasingly challenges all knowledge workers: the management of intellectual capital. That is, the facts, truths, or principles the organization’s people know. This challenge continues to be of concern to organizational managers and enterprise leaders. It represents an enormous and costly drain for organizational management, particularly with respect to what might be referred to as the intellectual elements of the workplace. In the modern workplace, the management of intellectual capital continues to frustrate the best intentions of those responsible for organizational success (however organizational success is defined).

In many organizations, knowledge is not shared as well as it should be, and that impeded sharing is a very expensive weakness in any organization’s management structure. This corporate knowledge (in the classical sense of the word “corporate”) is recognized as collective knowledge. It is developed, shared, and expected to be used for the benefit of the organization in support of the accomplishment of the corporate or organizational mission. When knowledge is not shared, the quest to accomplish that mission is seriously impaired or, at best, inhibited and delayed.

The challenge of managing organizational knowledge is not new. The need to give attention to managing information, knowledge, and strategic learning and to establishing a framework for knowledge sharing has been a problem for management thinkers for longer than any of us can remember, and we continue to
struggle with seeking solutions for making knowledge sharing easier and – in organizational terms – more productive.

We seemed to have found a solution several decades ago, with the introduction of knowledge management into the information management function. Knowledge management promised much. While enterprise leaders were a little slow in accepting the value and purpose of knowledge management (soon given its own acronym and eventually referred to simply as “KM”), there was considerable interest among some who worked with information, knowledge, and strategic learning. There was even enthusiasm – to a limited degree – within the wider population of knowledge workers, those members of the workforce who undertake such activities as writing, analyzing, and advising. Or, as expressed more broadly, employees in the workplace whose duties require them to use their knowledge, to earn their living by – as the work is often described – thinking, not by doing.

When KM came on the scene, there was more than considerable interest among one group of knowledge workers, those whose work is especially defined as “thinking.” These were the academic scholars and, in particular, members of the academy whose subject specialty was management science. This group embraced KM with enthusiasm, generally raising the interest of many of us with any connection to information management and strategic learning. We were just as pleased. We truly thought KM was going to lead us to that knowledge-sharing nirvana we were all seeking for our organizations.

It didn't work out that way, as we now know all too well. Many in the workplace, especially middle- and upper-management employees as we went through the final years of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, simply could not focus – with any useful perspective – on how a concept such as knowledge could be “managed.” This hindered, but didn’t prevent KM from developing; further evolution of KM awaited. Corporate blogger Jim Hydock, writing in 2015 about vendors at a professional conference for specialist librarians, referred to KM as an “artifact” of the last two decades or so, noting that KM had been “often maligned” (which was the case). But Hydock also optimistically noted that KM was now looking “refreshed” and in many ways reflected “a more mature model” (Hydock, 2015).

Despite that optimistic observation about KM, the fact is that organizational managers still seem to find themselves in a difficult situation with respect to knowledge management. There continue to be problems with KM being accepted in the management community and the concept is indeed “often maligned.” Those of us working with information management, KM, and strategic learning recognized that it wasn't being accepted within the management leadership community as we had expected. We (and many of our organizational leaders) were
frustrated that it was not leading us to where we wanted to be, so we began to look for another solution for managing intellectual capital, for helping us meet the knowledge-sharing challenge.

I took up the challenge, and in 2000 and 2001 I began to put forth the concept of knowledge services (St. Clair, 2000 and St. Clair, 2001). Whether anyone else was working with the term, I never found out; in any case, what I called “knowledge services” was a very specific solution for organization management, put forward for the purpose of enabling better knowledge sharing within organizations. As it turned out, knowledge services was not that far removed from KM, and as the elements of knowledge services began to fall into place, it became clear that perhaps what we had now was closer to KM than we had expected. As we played with knowledge services and worked with this new approach, we were aware that we had included KM, even from the beginning as we struggled to find a successor or a discipline for working beyond KM. It was one of the three “legs” of the knowledge services “stool,” along with information management and strategic learning. So perhaps knowledge services was a new solution for sharing knowledge, and one which still retained KM as an essential element.

Whatever the connection, it did not take long to come up with a definition, a way of thinking about – and speaking about – this new management discipline we were ready to put to work for strengthened knowledge sharing. We identified knowledge services as an approach to the management of intellectual capital that converges information management, KM, and strategic learning into a single enterprise-wide discipline for the benefit of the business or organization in which it is practiced. As a management discipline, knowledge services connects with organizational success as knowledge workers seek to improve knowledge sharing in the company or the organization. It enables (or strengthens) knowledge sharing as the parent enterprise moves forward in the achievement of its organizational or business mission, establishing the environment for that KD/KS/KU mentioned above. In this connection, it is important to note that knowledge services as a management methodology is spoken of as a single entity, a compound subject, as we refer to such parts of speech in English grammar. As such, we apply the singular verb when we speak of knowledge services. Knowledge services is . . . .

Thus my rationale for writing Knowledge Services: A Strategic Framework for the 21st Century Organization: I want to provide readers – especially managers and organizational leaders who know of but are not comfortable with KM as a management framework – with structure for the implementation of knowledge services as a management and service-delivery methodology. In my first book on knowledge services, Beyond Degrees: Professional Learning for Knowledge Services, I put forward a number of “directions” (as I had done with a number of journal articles, presentations, and learning activities prior to that book’s
Preface: Enabling the Knowledge-Sharing Culture

publication) designed to aid managers and information professionals in their approach to knowledge services (St. Clair, 2003). As I will describe later, that book was designed for a very different readership than this book and its purpose was singularly different. Now it is time for another book, prepared for a wider readership (dare I say a more universal readership?).

With the present work, I offer a specific framework for enabling any organization – for-profit, non-profit, or not-for-profit – to benefit from applying management, leadership, and knowledge services principles to the management of information, knowledge, and strategic learning in and throughout the organization. It is my intention to demonstrate how these principles – when thus applied – will provide particular value to the organization. Within this framework I include not only prescriptive directions for applying knowledge services. I give attention to the philosophy and history of management and leadership and their connection with information and knowledge services, specifically as they affect one’s performance as a manager and leader in the knowledge services workplace. It is with this background, when combined with management and leadership skills, knowledge sharing, and the value of developing a knowledge services strategy, that the organizational knowledge culture can be built, or strengthened if it already exists.

When I suggest that this framework and these principles are designed to enable any organization – for-profit, non-profit, or not-for-profit – to benefit from their application I am quite serious. That inclusive point of view is deliberate and willful, for it is my purpose in this book not only to describe and provide prescriptive direction for managing knowledge services. I also take this opportunity to use his own statement about organizations to introduce Peter F. Drucker, my long-time mentor (although he never knew it and he has been dead for ten years), referred to often in this book. I have long advocated that any organization – and particularly those which formed the organizational background for most of my career – must be managed in what I referred to as a “business-like” manner, very carefully noting every time I stated the idea that I was not advocating that all organizations are for-profit businesses. Not at all. I was simply recommending that business management can provide valuable and useful insight, tools, and techniques for the management of any entity, any organization, any enterprise, for-profit or otherwise.

It was from Drucker’s 1978 Adventurers of a Bystander that I took my inspiration for this concept although – truth to tell – it had been part of my professional thinking since I started my career. In the 1978 book, Drucker describes how when he was thirty years old he had published his first major book. It was The End of Economic Man – The Origins of Totalitarianism, published in 1939, and in the book he attempted, as he described it, “to analyze the roots of Nazism and the decay of
Europe’s liberal and humanist traditions.” By the time the book was published, though, he had “for quite some time been thinking of, and working on, a book that would deal with the future rather than the past, a book that would tackle the political and social integration ahead, assuming that Hitler would ultimately be defeated.”

It was in his description of the later book, his book that “would deal with the future rather than the past” that I found my inspiration for my work and my professional career:

This book – published three years later under the title *The Future of Industrial Man* – first discerned that society was moving toward a society of organizations – we now call it “post-industrial society” – and that the question of status, function, and citizenship in these organizations and of their governance, would become central questions of the post-World War II world. *The Future of Industrial Man* was the first book that saw what by now has become almost commonplace: that the business corporation – or indeed any organization – is as much a social organization, a community and society as it is an economic organ. This book also laid the foundations for my interest in the management of institutions, and made it possible for me to start on the study of management.

With regard to the intended readership for *Knowledge Services*, some background may be in order. In the years leading up to the publication of my earlier knowledge services book, most of my work had focused on a wide-ranging but essentially single profession or line of work. I had been educated in the library and information science field, and although in the early days of my career my work as a management consultant took me away from library and information science fairly quickly, the influence of that line of work continued quite naturally as part of my professional thinking when I researched and wrote *Beyond Degrees*.

As part of this strong connection with library and information science, Dale Stanley has been – and continues to be – a strong influence. As a scientist and as a librarian, and as my closest colleague in the development and continued exposition of my ideas about knowledge services, Dale has been a partner in the work of SMR International and together we have shared in the experiences of working with much of the content about knowledge services that is shared here (he is quite naturally referenced frequently throughout this book).

Probably because my career had taken me considerably beyond library and information science, I began to realize in the late 1990s that there were elements in the overall concepts of knowledge management that were inhibiting its broad acceptance. As noted, I had continued to maintain a certain connection with library and information science. Although I seemed to be thinking more about KM and its role in the organization than about library management, I was obviously continuing to have some affiliation with librarianship.
Indeed, in 2005 – just two years after that first book on knowledge services had been published – I was invited to write the preface for a collection of essays about current issues in library and information science studies. In that essay, I again referred to knowledge services and incorporated into my definition the information, knowledge, and strategic learning attributes embedded in library and information science (they were already there – they had always been there). It just seemed natural to connect knowledge services and library science:

Library science [I wrote in 2005] has broadened to embrace information science, using many of the organizational principles developed earlier as library science and now concerned with gathering and manipulating and storing and retrieving and classifying any form of information that has been recorded, in any format. But that simple transition is not enough now, for the modern seeker of knowledge wants more, to identify not only what has been captured and recorded but how it has been (or can be) used. Such an expanded and anticipated objective has brought about an even further broadening, if you will, of library and information science. Today we speak of librarianship, information management, knowledge management, and their overarching connection with learning, and we gather this entire realm of knowledge seeking into the discipline of knowledge services. This new discipline – the convergence of librarianship, information management, knowledge management, and learning – builds on the basic foundations of library science – as a science for the organization of knowledge – to lead the user in his or her quest. (St. Clair, 2005)

So knowledge services began with this very natural connection with libraries and information science. Of course I hope the present book will be used in the management of libraries, particularly in specialized libraries. It has long been my belief that with few exceptions, the management principles that apply in the world of organizational management also apply in what some describe as the “softer” areas of academia, non-profits, and not-for-profit entities such as libraries, universities, research facilities, historical societies, membership organizations, and the like. Like all other organizations, these must be managed in a “business-like” manner if they are to be managed successfully – as must also be each of their internal sections or business units. So there is content in this book that will be of use to managers in any of these fields, and will continue to be of value to library managers and those with management responsibility and authority for research and other information management organizations.

Connected to these thoughts, Knowledge Services is being published for a relatively new De Gruyter Saur series, designed to include books for which the authors are chosen “to provide critical analysis of issues and to present solutions to selected challenges in libraries and related fields, including information management and industry, and education of information professionals.” The series title is “Current Topics in Library and Information Practice,” and – from my point
of view – having the book published in this series makes much sense, considering the origin of knowledge services.

At the same time, we can assert that these “related fields” mentioned for the series connect with any organization, business, community, or institution in which people come together to achieve an agreed-upon objective and in which they share knowledge in the successful achievement of that objective. In my opinion, knowledge services is subject- and organization-agnostic, and it is of critical importance for us to recognize that the principles identified and offered in this book apply in any field; they can be studied and applied with success in any organizational setting.

One reason for this emphasis has to do with my own work and experience, particularly after I began to focus my career on a consulting practice created to advise about knowledge services for any organization and in any management environment. This work together with my writings and my teaching activities (in client workshops, seminars, and webinars and, particularly, at the graduate level in academia) have all demonstrated that there is wide-ranging applicability for knowledge services in every organization and in all subject specializations.

As it happens, this assertion is most effectively demonstrated by the wide variety of corporate and organizational clients who turn to knowledge services when they realize that knowledge management, in and of itself, is a difficult concept in many management environments. These organizational leaders require an enterprise-wide approach to knowledge strategy that is not limited to particular discrete “domains” that operate as exclusive management entities or silos. For these organizational leaders, the knowledge services strategic framework enables an enterprise-wide management direction for the development of knowledge strategy.

The overall structure of this book is based on lectures offered in courses I teach at Columbia University in the City of New York. In late 2010, I was invited to come to the university to work on the development of a new graduate program in a to-be-determined subject area having to do with information and knowledge services. Our work evolved into Columbia’s Master of Science in Information and Knowledge Strategy (IKNS), and I am very proud to have been one of the founders of the program, developed under the leadership of Dean Kristine Billmyer of the School of Professional Studies. I was part of an engaged and committed team of program development staff and as an employee of the university, I was honored to participate in the creation process for IKNS, working in program and course development, marketing, promotion, research, and overall planning. The program received its first graduate students in the autumn of 2011, and of course I was expected to teach a course. “Management and Leadership in the Knowledge Domain” was decided upon as my contribution to the teaching effort, both in the
IKNS program and, as luck would have it, also as a stand-alone classroom course, presenting my subject content twice each year to graduate students in other programs at Columbia.

In early 2015 I moved from IKNS to work with the School of Professional Studies Postbaccalaureate Studies Program, giving me the opportunity to teach my course for an even wider range of graduate students, including of course students from different graduate programs in the university as well as international graduate students in exchange programs, all taking my course as an elective. The course is now re-titled “Managing Information and Knowledge: Applied Knowledge Services,” and the content is generally the same as in the original course although, as with any academic course, small changes and points of emphasis are put in place each time the course is taught. It all leads to “spreading the word” about knowledge services as a strategic framework in organizational management to a much wider audience and, in this case, an extremely diverse audience. It is a very gratifying position, and one which strengthens my assertion noted above (and based upon the responses of the graduate students I teach) that there is wide-ranging applicability for knowledge services in every organization and in all subject specializations.

It is my goal in Knowledge Services to offer a practical approach to the application of this strategic framework in any environment. Certainly not all of what I write here is totally practical. I’ve mentioned earlier that I sometimes take a slightly theoretical approach to knowledge services, including some recognition of the historical and philosophical background of the management, leadership, and knowledge services principals we embrace for enabling our work. There is much value in learning about what has come before.

At the same time, though, there is a need for a certain level of prescriptive direction when we speak about knowledge services, since the topic is relatively new and since so much effort is put into dealing with knowledge-sharing in practically any organization, even those which are moving – with varying rates of success – into their structure and organizational role as a knowledge culture. Therefore, Chapter 2, Section 2.4 provides a knowledge services “road map” (the popular designation in today’s management community for the steps required for innovative actions). It is my sincere hope that this strategic tool will provide the checklist for any organization, regardless of the subject focus of the organization or the management structure already in place. I want our readers to use this road map to guide them as they move forward into knowledge services, and to strengthen knowledge services if our three-legged stool is already part of the organizational structure. If they do so, they will achieve success as knowledge strategists.

Guy St. Clair
15 April 2016