

# The Knowledge Nexus

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## The Special Library of the Future

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*Solo Librarians, Knowledge Management, Leadership and Management Divisions*

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# Questions

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- What is the role of specialized librarianship *vis-à-vis* the broader library and information science (LIS) profession?
- What are the perceptions about specialized librarianship
  - among our clients and users?
  - among our managers and supervisors?
  - within the profession?
  - in society at large?
- What does the future hold for specialized libraries?
- Is there a future?
- How can we, as information professionals, ensure there is a future?

# Specialized Librarianship

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1909

- John Cotton Dana founds Special Libraries Association (SLA)
- Members to provide “practical and utilitarian” information to support research for...
- Business, government agencies, science and technology, medicine, law, museums and the humanities

# Specialized Librarianship

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ca. 1914

- SLA leadership chooses motto
- “Putting Knowledge to Work” becomes (and remains) continuous driver in association’s history

# Specialized Librarianship

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1938

- Specialized librarianship embraces a *militant* offensive, “to *present* the specialized knowledge stored in our specialized libraries...”
- Specialist librarians are offered—and accept—the *power* to work with knowledge, to ensure that scientists, engineers, chemists, all knowledge workers achieve their knowledge objectives

# Specialized Librarianship

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1943

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt addresses specialist librarians as “the guardians of our technical knowledge,” praising them as they work “anonymously and unsung” ...
- “...doing your job along with the army, the navy, and the air forces on America’s front line.”

# Specialized Librarianship

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## 1950s – 1960s

- ❑ Rise of information “glut”—scientists and leading researchers cannot handle enormous quantities of information being generated
- ❑ Management of knowledge reaches crisis point
- ❑ Demand for guidance in identifying “best sources” of information and best methods for managing and using knowledge

# From Specialized Librarianship to Knowledge Services

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## 1970s

- Search for methodology for “controlling” information continues (especially for research in science and technology and defense)
- New demands for synthesis and analysis—specialist librarian no longer a “guardian” or “gate-keeper”
- Role of information professional (*né* special librarian, *soon-to-be* knowledge services professional) now begins to include advice, participation, “insourcing” with R&D

# From Specialized Librarianship to Knowledge Services

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## 1980s

- ❑ Increased computing power
- ❑ Thomas Stewart identifies and brings attention to value of “intellectual capital”
- ❑ Information management (informatics, specialized librarianship) enables sophisticated information capture and retrieval
- ❑ Vendors begin to introduce products specifically designed for specialized libraries

# From Specialized Librarianship to Knowledge Services

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## 1990s

- ❑ Intellectual capital recognized as organizational asset, transitions into “knowledge management”
- ❑ KM established as operational management methodology, links to informatics and electronic capture
- ❑ Organizational, strategic learning begins to appear as critical tool for enabling knowledge sharing
- ❑ Management attempts to connect electronic capture of KM elements with knowledge sharing, performance, and strategic learning

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Introducing...

# ***Knowledge Services***

The Convergence of:

Information Management

Knowledge Management

Strategic (Performance-Centered) Learning

# Knowledge Services

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- Knowledge services is an *enterprise-wide* management methodology/service delivery function that enables companies and organizations to achieve excellence, both in the performance of internal staff and in interactions with external customers.



# Knowledge Work in Today's Business/Research Environment

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The work of most employees in the business/research environment is *knowledge work* – the successful organization is a *knowledge-centric* organization

The new workplace environment requires a new kind of knowledge work - the work of conversation (sharing), analysis, and synthesis.



# What's So Special About Knowledge Services?

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Founded on Knowledge Development/Knowledge Sharing (KD/KS)

“... a framework for service delivery that embodies the highest objectives of knowledge management and combines them with the basic principles of the learning organization and the teaching organization.”

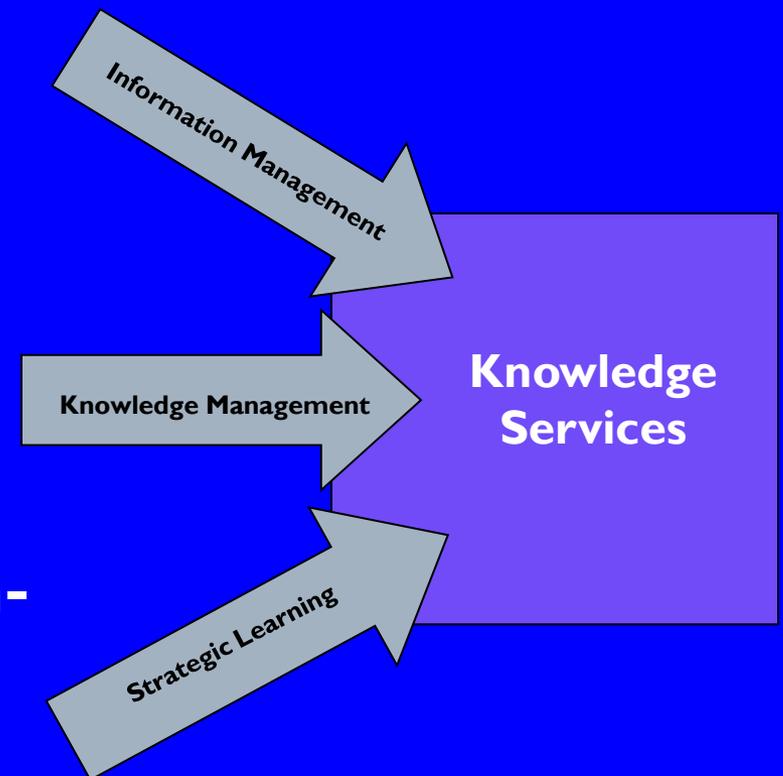


Guy St. Clair  
*Beyond Degrees:  
Professional Learning for Knowledge Services*

# Knowledge Services Defined

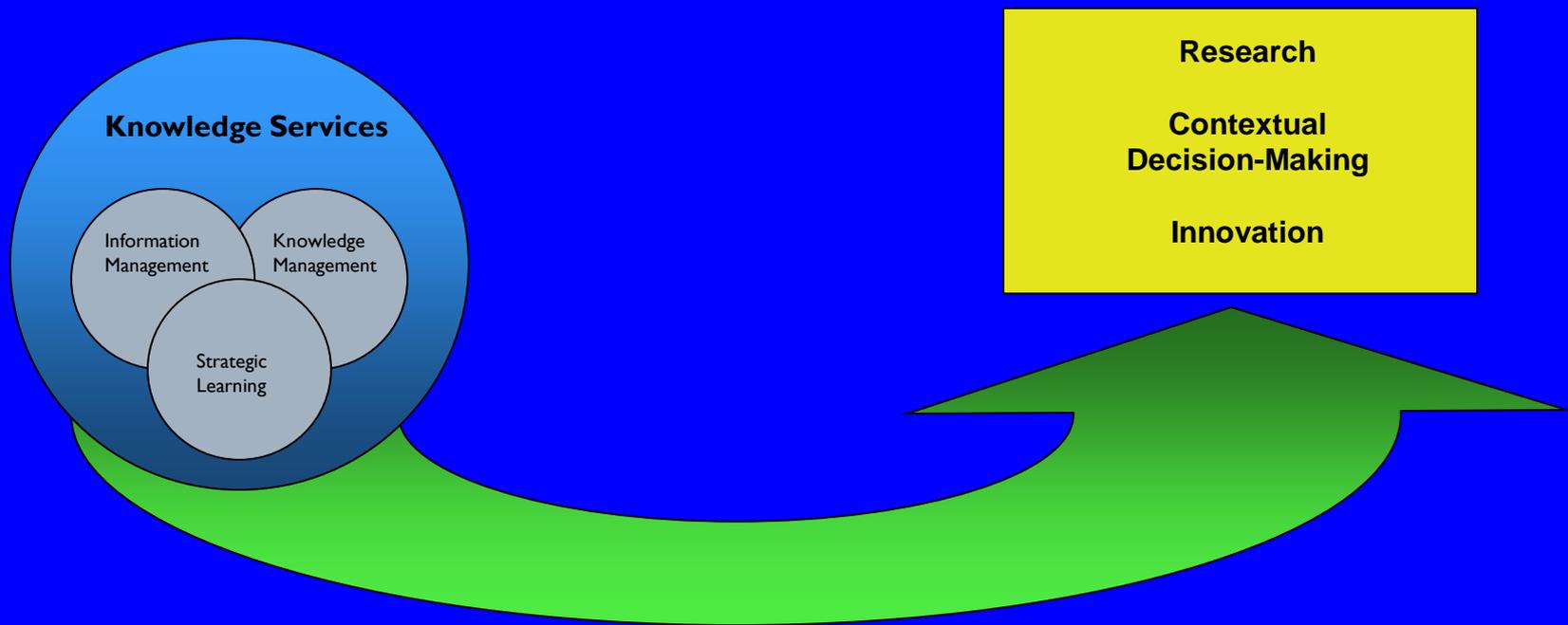
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Knowledge services converges information management, knowledge management, and strategic learning into a single overarching function that enables research, contextual decision-making, and innovation.

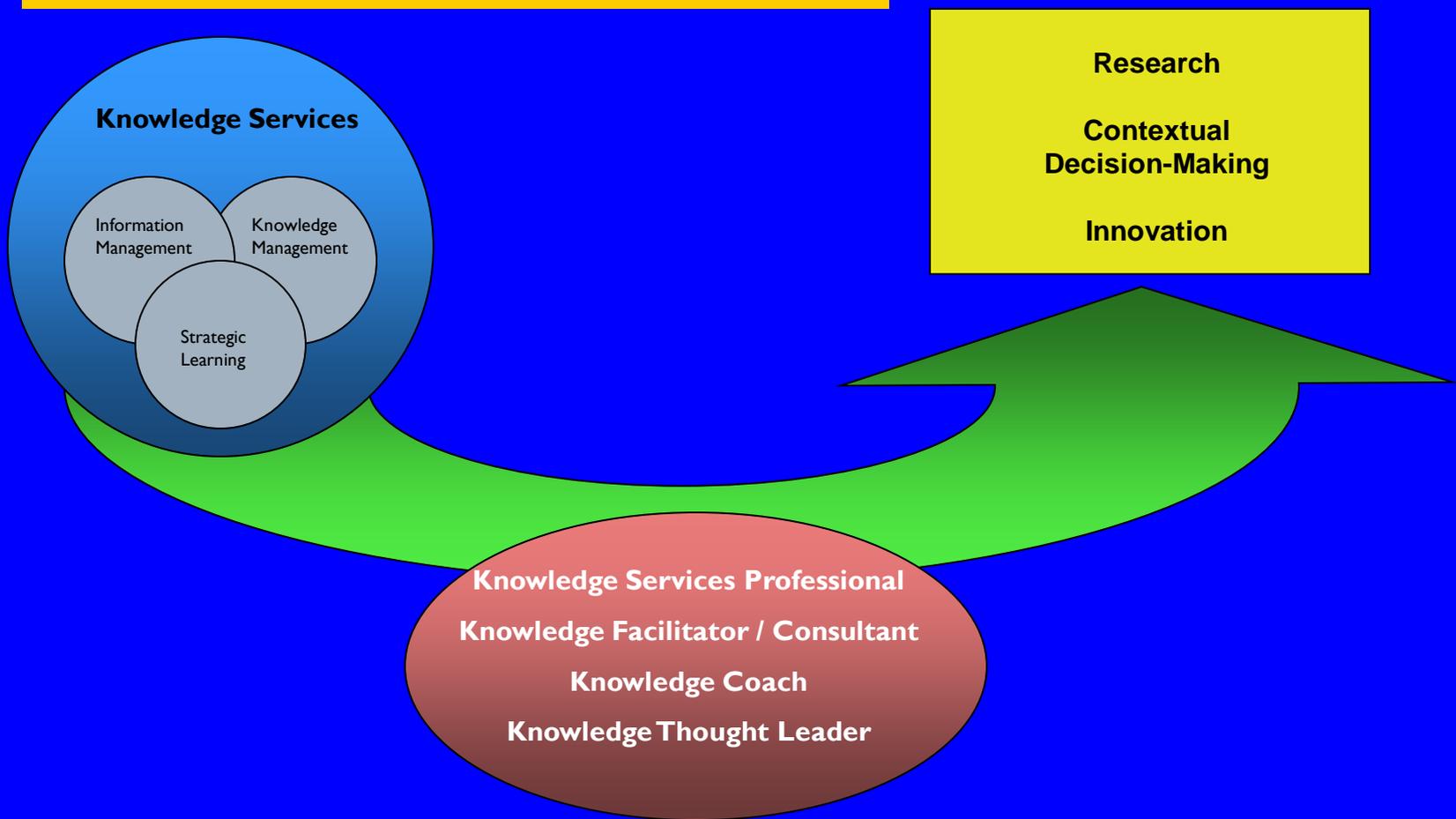


# Knowledge Services

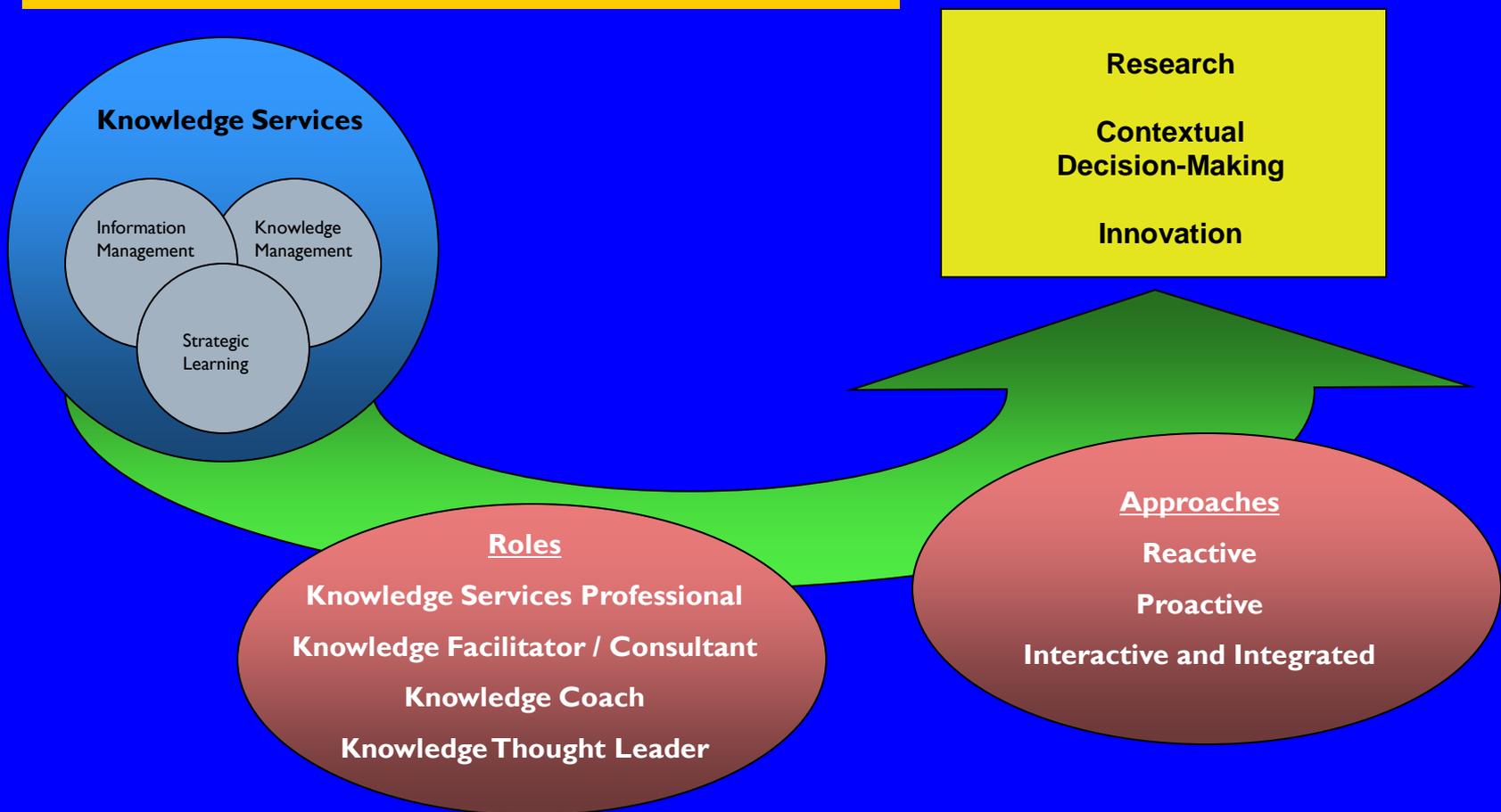
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# Knowledge Services



# Knowledge Services



# The Emerging Library Environment

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## □ The Realities

- Radical changes in information- knowledge- and learning-seeking behavior, with new research methodologies: “From collections to connections”
- Real estate issues: the migration from print to electronic content and collections is coming fast
- Management issues: library and library-like organizations are under tougher scrutiny:
  - As an operational function, the library is a means to an end
  - Always asking, is there a better (cheaper) way to achieve the same end, accomplish the same objective?

# The Emerging Library Environment

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## □ The Opportunities

- Librarians—as knowledge services professionals—can have a major role in managing the strong (and strengthening) relationship between technology and knowledge
- New employee expertise: move from purchasing and organizing materials to curating/managing content (it's a role that will be enterprise- and community-wide sooner rather than later)



# Assessing the Current Situation: What's Our Role?

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- What is the contribution of specialized librarianship in today's knowledge-centric workplace?
  
- How are specialized libraries perceived
  - by clients and users?
  - by managers and supervisors?
  - in society at large?
  - within the LIS profession?

# Perceptions about Special Libraries

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- With users and clients, specialized libraries are well thought of, by users and clients who know about services provided and avail themselves of those services
- With management, the specialized library is simply another operational function, a means to an end
- In the larger society, a sort of benevolent ignorance, but that changes when specialist librarian expertise resolves organizational issues (especially issues related to mission success)

# Perceptions about Special Libraries Within the LIS Profession

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- Except for medicine and law, little interest within the larger LIS profession in specialized librarianship
  - Generally not taught as a specialty in LIS graduate programs (but sometimes included in general management-type courses)
  - Popular *U.S. News & World Report* annual listings of best graduate programs do not include specialized librarianship except health librarianship and law librarianship—and these are stand-alone categories, not designated as “special” libraries or as part of specialized librarianship

# Knowledge Services: Libraries and Beyond

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## □ The library workplace

- Academic libraries
- Public libraries
- School libraries and media centers

## □ The knowledge services workplace

- Special libraries
- Information, knowledge, strategic learning support in non-library affiliated knowledge-centric organizations, business, etc.

# Knowledge Services: The Emerging Workplace

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- Special libraries/information centers/knowledge centers, etc. (13% of LIS graduates)
  - Provide library services within corporations, research organizations, government agencies, etc.
  - Focus on specialized (usually subject-specific) research – “practical and utilitarian information”
- Other research/information-focused environments
  - Non-library but heavily knowledge-centric
  - Support organizational, mission-specific needs

# Knowledge Services: Developing the Emerging Profession

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- Beyond LIS, large (and growing) community of knowledge-centric organizations
  - Demands huge body of employees with LIS and LIS-type education, skills, and research-focused background
    - Staff positions
    - Management/leadership positions
  - New service function: Liaise between information science/information technology and user needs
  - Employees (professional?) must be educated to and prepared to analyze/synthesize/interpret

# Knowledge Services: Developing the Emerging Profession

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- Relates to new discipline of *services science*
  - Melds technology with an understanding of business processes and organization—crucial to the economy's next wave (*Business Week*, January 21, 2005)
  - Shortage of skills where they are needed most, to liaise between technology and KD/KS
  - Uses innovation and organizational development to benefit all stakeholders
  - Builds on understanding knowledge-use and user behavior

# Knowledge Services: Developing the Emerging Profession

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- The *function* is organizational (not entertainment, not self-help, not “missionary,” etc.)
- John Cotton Dana: “practical and utilitarian”
- The functional purpose is mission-specific
  - “Give them what they need”
  - What’s the operational impact?
  - No more going solo
    - collaboration is critical
    - collaboration is required

# Knowledge Services: A Natural Environment for Collaboration

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## □ The collaborative impulse

- Collaboration is a principle-based process of working together, producing trust, integrity, and breakthrough results by building true consensus, ownership, and alignment in all aspects of the organization...
- Put another way, collaboration is the way people naturally want to work...
- Collaboration is the premier candidate to replace hierarchy as the organizing principle for leading and managing in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace...

–Marshall, Edward M.

*Transforming the way we work: the power of the collaborative workplace*  
(New York: American Management Association)

# Knowledge Services

## Critical Factors

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- Matching knowledge services with the collaborative impulse—what’s required?
  - Trust
  - Collaboration (and no disincentives for collaboration)
  - Collegiality
  - Concentration on relationship building
  - Part of everyday work life / not “extra” to “regular” your desktop.”)



# Knowledge Services

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## Knowledge Leadership

As knowledge services professionals, our job is to smooth the progress of research management, contextual decision-making, and innovation in the company, organization, or enterprise where we are employed.



# Leadership: Meeting the Needs of a Knowledge-Centric Workplace

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## □ Societal

- Strengthen the link between knowledge and technology

## □ Workplace

- Develop and make use of LIS skills for managing and servicing the new environment created by that strengthened relationship—exploit the synergy
- Identify and predict new service provision requirements—product development a given
- Be prepared to meet added value expectations in every transaction

# Leadership and Management: Identifying Customer/User Needs

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- What does the customer/user want?
  - To search across a *single* interface through a variety of information sources
  - Expanded online content
  - More access to all enterprise content via a commercial (“Google-like”) search engine
  - A “wizard” (electronic? human? both?) to help choose the best tools for a topic

In other words, when intermediation is required (and chosen by the user), it is expected to be a highly customized, “just-for-you” service—strategic learning thus becomes the knowledge services function’s primary role.

# Knowledge Services: Content Access and Management

The age of enterprise content management (ECM) is fast approaching

- Companies/organizations now require a comprehensive knowledge services strategy embracing *all* content (e.g., internal documents and records, digital assets, web content, project reports, unstructured information, artifacts, etc.)
- Tools are important but success comes with the expert (and sympathetic) human interface—the knowledge services professional—the best products enable both
- Open and non-threatening negotiation and collaboration with all stakeholders—including leaders in all the various “silos”—is critical

# ECM is Going to Happen

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Enterprise Content Management: managing structured and unstructured content across unconnected and various repositories and captured in a variety of formats

Why not move to *Enterprise Knowledge Services Management* and incorporate KD/KS?

Why not make your knowledge services function the enterprise-wide knowledge nexus?

# Knowledge Services: The Organizational Knowledge Nexus

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- Knowledge services converges
  - information management
  - knowledge management
  - strategic learning
- Re-focus the special library/information center as the organization's knowledge nexus
  - finding Information, knowledge, learning solutions that cannot be found through the services of any other functional unit
  - better yet, incorporate **all** information, knowledge, strategic learning solutions into the knowledge services function
  - knowledge central/knowledge “hub”
  - acknowledged as same

# The Knowledge Services Knowledge Nexus

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1. Identify others in the organization who are dealing with these issues—who will help you build a *knowledge hub* in the organization?
2. Define knowledge services very broadly
3. Initiate discussions, conversations
4. Develop your own personal awareness-raising campaign—become the organization's KD/KS guru

# The Enterprise-Wide Knowledge Nexus: What's the Need?

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- What is not now being accessed?
- What's being lost?
- What are the corporate/organizational costs?
  - Measure and react to the increasingly holistic role of (and need for) knowledge services in mission-critical success for the larger organization
- Is satisfaction with information/knowledge/learning that is “good enough” good enough for the enterprise?

# The Enterprise-Wide Knowledge Nexus: Why Share Knowledge?

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- ❑ To provide situation management expertise and advice, through the identification and distribution of benchmarking and due diligence efforts
- ❑ To identify and disseminate knowledge about best practices
- ❑ To provide for the development of a growing body of knowledge about agreed-upon subjects
- ❑ To comply, of course

# The Enterprise-Wide Knowledge Nexus: “Bigger-Picture” Benefits

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- The function encourages commitment (and the eventual participation of other stakeholders), through the broadcasting of information and knowledge among participants
- The function builds trust and brings a KD/KS culture into the stakeholder community, establishing that KS/KS is everyone’s responsibility and benefits all stakeholders

# The Enterprise-Wide Knowledge Nexus: How Do We Get There?

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## □ First steps

- Continue and enhance our role in strengthening the relationship between technology and knowledge
- Put ourselves forward as knowledge thought leaders in our organizations
- Re-conceptualize our function and transform our libraries into knowledge services centers
- Use the knowledge services construct—the convergence of information management, knowledge management, and strategic learning—to establish and manage the enterprise-wide knowledge nexus

# The Special Library of the Future

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- New approaches to the relationship between technology and knowledge, particularly the connection between technology and knowledge as developed and shared in the workplace
  
- Special library managers to take a larger leadership role in the parent organization
  - more self-sufficient users
  - demand for higher-level services

The Future of Special Libraries: The SLA Leadership Perspective

EOS International Summit

March 30, 2007

# The Special Library of the Future

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- Focus on collaboration and digitization
  - As least 80% of all journal issues will be digital (50% of conference proceedings)
  - Cross-search products will direct users to the correct index/database for general searches
  - Context-sensitive linking, with less dependence on the ILS
  - User-centric (not librarian-focused) management—mediated searching reserved as the option of last resort
  - Increased library connection to unstructured internal documents
  - Library goes to the user (not *vice versa*)

R. James King “The Future of the Special Library”  
*Information Outlook* September, 2004

# The Special Library of the Future

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With what we know about what we've been....

With what we know about what is expected of us....

With society changing....

With our workplace changing (and becoming more and more demanding)....

What will we be?

# What is Our Destiny?

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We must choose. Will we be....

The special librarians of the past?

Or will we be....

The knowledge services professionals of the future?

# *The Knowledge Nexus*

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The Special Library of the Future

*Thank You*

# Contact Information

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