Chapter II

Knowledge Management as a Discipline

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Abstract

This chapter presents arguments that show that knowledge management (KM) is a discipline. Kuhn's (1996) criteria for being a discipline are used as a framework for providing information showing KM to be a discipline. It was found that KM has interesting research questions, journals specific to KM, a body of accepted knowledge, professional societies, its own jargon and ontology, and its own degree programs. It also is concluded that KM is a young and growing discipline.
Introduction

Is knowledge management (KM) a discipline? Why do we care? Members of the KM community want recognition as a discipline and not as just a subset of the information systems community or as a subset of the organizational behavior community. While KM clearly relies on information systems, it is also a fusion of many disciplines and borrows from many more. The KM community believes that KM is a discipline in its own right, although admittedly, a discipline that heavily overlaps the IS and organizational behavior disciplines. Why we care was discussed in Chapter I but bears repeating; being recognized as a discipline gets us dedicated degree programs, continuing streams of students, and recognition of our research. This is important, as we need this recognition and resources in order to better serve the business community and to help organizations improve effectiveness.

Spiegler (2000) suggests that KM is just a new name for an old IS idea. While the idea may be old and does originate within IS, we believe that KM has emerged as a discipline based on new technologies, methodologies, and theories proposed and used by the KM community. To support this assertion, we refer to Kuhn (1996), who lists several criteria that define a discipline:

- Formation of specialized journals,
- Foundation of professional societies (or specialized interest groups [SIGs] within societies),
- Claim to a special place in academia (and academia’s curriculum),
- An accepted body of knowledge for group members to build upon, eliminating having to build their field anew with each paper, and
- Promulgation of scholarly articles intended for and addressed only to professional colleagues, those whose knowledge of a shared paradigm can be assumed and who prove to be the only ones able to read the papers addressed to them (i.e., a specialized ontology).

We believe that KM meets these criteria, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

Formation of Specialized Journals

Established IS journals such as *MIS Quarterly*, *International Journal of Project Management*, *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies*, *International Journal of Management Science*, and the *Journal of Global Information Technology Management* have had special issues dedicated to KM over the last several years. However, journals dedicated to KM have been started. A search of the *Index of Information System Journals* has found several academic journals dedicated to general KM research (http://lamp.infosys.deakin.edu.au/journals/index.php). These include:
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