

KO vs. KM Governance

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What are the key components of knowledge organization (KO) governance and how does governance for knowledge management (KM) differ from governance for KO. As a thought experiment, this essay 1) discusses some differences (and relationships) between KO and KM, 2) presents the “Four Pillars of Governance” as a high-level information management governance model, and then 3) suggests how knowledge organization and knowledge management would be characterized in this model.

KO vs. KM

What are some of the differences between knowledge organization and knowledge management? Knowledge organization is primarily concerned with the definition of how content assets should be tagged so that they are accurately categorized. The main use case for this activity in knowledge organization is broadly for access and discovery, or search. On the other hand knowledge management is primarily concerned with the curation of assets in order to provide organizational value. That value is normally defined in terms of the strategic use of those assets, and typically talked about in the context of sharing knowledge. Thus knowledge management is more concerned with the curation of assets for the sharing and application of knowledge. Table 1 summarizes some of the differences between knowledge organization and knowledge management.

Knowledge Organization	Knowledge Management
❖ Organise information in business applications using processes that produce useful and accurate categories of information.	❖ Manage information and other forms of knowledge as strategic resources and encourage sharing of knowledge.
❖ Is concerned primarily with categorization of assets for access and discovery.	❖ Is concerned primarily with curation of assets for sharing and application of knowledge.

Table 1-Differences between KO and KM.

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Information Management Maturity Continuum

An interesting point about knowledge organization versus knowledge management is that they reflect different activities in an organization, and these activities are often carried out by different (and sometimes competing) groups within the organization. But you can't have knowledge management without first having knowledge organization. That is, you have to have "stuff" to share, and it needs to be described and categorized in a way that's useful, before you can really share it. Interestingly, knowledge management applications usually provide new requirements that can change the way knowledge or assets need to be organized. Thus the two activities—KO and KM—have an impact and inform each other in a virtuous cycle.

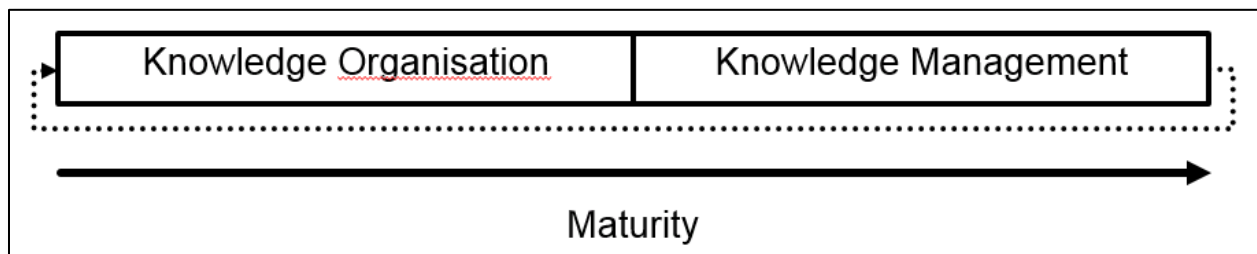


Figure 1-KO and KM on an information management maturity continuum.

Figure 1 shows knowledge organization and knowledge management activities on a maturity continuum. In this context, knowledge organization could be viewed as an earlier stage of information management maturity, and knowledge management as a more mature stage. This interaction between them can be viewed as an even more mature stage. While this illustration suggests a duality between knowledge organization and knowledge management activities, they really operate on a continuum. There's some blurring between the two activities, and a lot of interaction between them as well. This is something to think about as part of this "thought experiment".

Four Pillars of Governance

This section is a brief explanation of each pillar in the high-level information management governance model. Figure 2 illustrates the four pillars of information management governance. The four pillars are: value statement, roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures and communications.

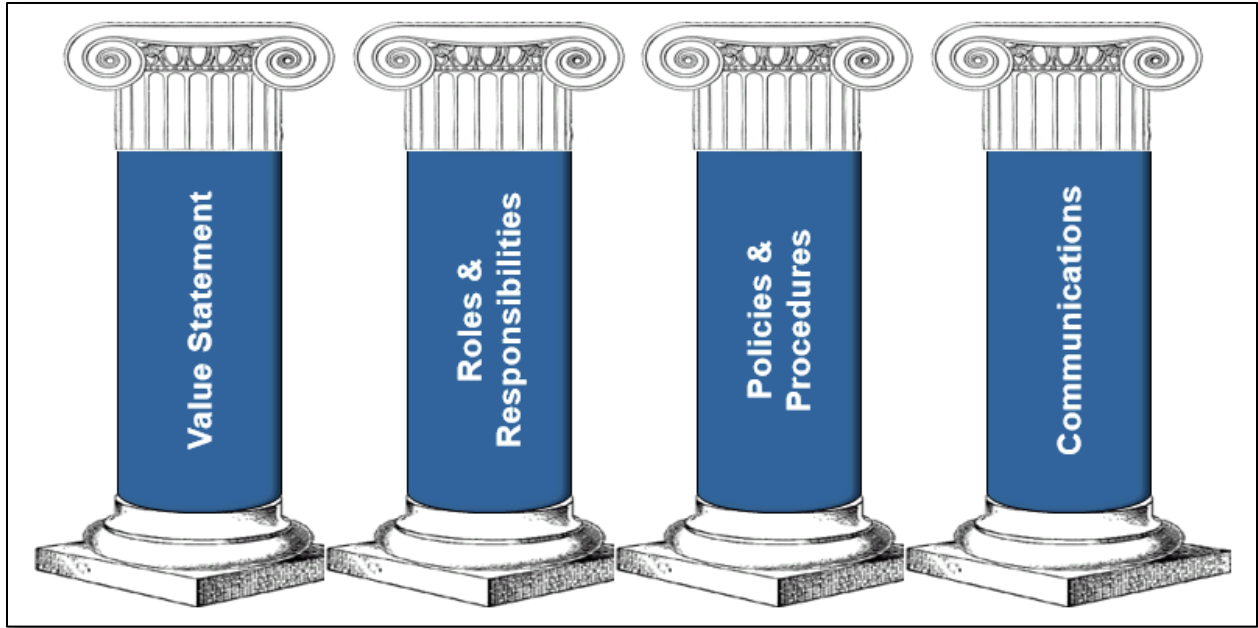


Figure 2-The four pillars of information management governance.

- Value statements are statements about the overall goals and objectives of an application or activity. In this first pillar there needs to be a description of what it is that is trying to be accomplished and why—what the benefits are to the organization.
- The second pillar is roles and responsibilities which describe the kinds of things that need to be decided in order to obtain those goals and objectives.
- The third pillar is the policies and procedures which are the definitions of the processes required to support the decisions that then enable and support those goals and objectives.
- Finally, the fourth pillar is communications which is concerned with clearly explaining the definitions of the processes that describe the decisions that enable the goals and objectives.

These pillars have a top down (or bottom up) relationship to each other. This construct is useful to look at some of the similarities and differences between knowledge organization and knowledge management.

KO Governance

Pillars	Objectives
Value Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve search. ○ Be responsive to target audiences. ○ Provide capability to measure results. ○ Mitigate risks. ○ Facilitate complete and consistent content tagging. ○ Enable taxonomy oversight, monitoring and improvement.
Roles & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decide what metadata fields should be required to tag content. ○ Decide whether or not a controlled vocabulary is required for a metadata field, and what vocabulary should be used. ○ Decide the source for a controlled vocabulary and how should it be validated.
Policies & Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Define the process to add, edit or delete metadata fields or controlled vocabulary terms. ○ Define the editorial guidelines on how to form labels.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain the process to request a change. ○ Explain governance roles and responsibilities, including overall goals of the KO strategy, and decision-making process. ○ Present the value of KO in a meaningful and concise manner.

Table 2-Key KO governance components.

What are some of the key goals and objectives that are associated with knowledge organization? As suggested before, there is a big use case called “search”. The objective behind organizing content, developing metadata and taxonomy or controlled value schemes is to be able to improve search, and other types of things that are related to it, including the ability to measure and obtain benefits that would be related to search. One of the big objectives is the ability to facilitate complete and consistent content tagging. Because it’s one thing to set up a scheme for categorizing content, but it is only going to meet its goals if that can be done in a complete and consistent way. So the goals of knowledge organization are to improve search by tagging content in a complete and consistent way.

In terms of the roles and responsibilities – what are the kinds of things that need to be decided? It needs to be decided what the tagging is going to be – what are going to be the fields? Which ones are going to be required? Which ones optional? It needs to be decided whether or not there’s going to be controlled values that are associated or required for a field, and what vocabularies those should be. If a controlled vocabulary is going to be used, it needs to be decided what the “gold

standard” is going to be for that vocabulary, and how to make sure that only those values get used, and that those values get used correctly. So by making these decisions, the knowledge organization goals and objectives are enabled.

What then needs to be defined as a result of those decisions? The add, edit and delete process for the metadata fields or tags needs to be defined; and the controlled vocabulary terms that are going to be used, how they are going to be populated, and what are going to be “the rules of the road” or editorial guidelines. The policies and procedures focus on describing the decisions that are going to support and enable the goals and objectives of knowledge organization.

Finally, explaining and communicating what all of these things are – communicating these definitions, the decisions, and the overall objectives of what needs to be done in the context of knowledge organization.

Table 2 summarizes the key components of knowledge organization governance—the focus is on search, and complete and consistent tagging; and the pillars that are needed to support these types of goals and objectives.

KM Governance

Pillars	Objectives
Value Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote and share key organizational learnings. ○ Improve individual and organizational performance. ○ Provide for measurement and accountability for results. ○ Obtain competitive advantage. ○ Mitigate risks. ○ Promote innovation.
Roles & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decide the criteria for new KM applications and services. ○ Decide the criteria for assets to include in KM applications and services. ○ Decide the criteria to evaluate KM applications and services.
Policies & Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Define the process to add, evaluate and improve KM applications and services. ○ Define the process to add, edit and delete assets from KM applications and services.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain the process to build, evaluate and improve KM applications and services. ○ Explain governance roles and responsibilities, including overall goals of the KM strategy, and decision-making process. ○ Present the value of KM in a meaningful and concise manner.

Table 3-Key KM governance components.

Turning to knowledge management, the overall goals and objectives are all organizationally focused. They're not focused simply on having good search – they're concerned with organizational outcomes, measuring them, and obtaining certain benefits.

In terms of roles and responsibilities, what are the kinds of things that need to be decided? What needs to be decided are the criteria for choosing applications and services and evaluating them based on whether they are likely to obtain the goals and objectives.

What needs to be defined in order to enable those decisions to be implemented so that applications can be added, evaluated and improved? In particular, in order for knowledge management applications to work, assets need to be curated. Processes need to be defined for adding, editing and deleting assets from applications.

From a communications perspective, all of these things need to be able to be explained clearly both to the people who are carrying this out as well as those who are going to be using and evaluating KM applications. It is necessary to be able to explain what the procedures are that have been defined that support the decisions that have been made that enable the goals and objectives of knowledge management.

Table 3 summarizes the key components of knowledge management governance—the focus on strategic, organizational outcomes and effective content curation; and the pillars that are needed to support these types of goals and objectives.

Takeaways

Knowledge organization governance is focused on metadata fields and values, and how to obtain complete and consistent tagging of assets. Whereas knowledge management governance is focused much more on the curation of assets, and how to obtain organizational value from them so that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. It’s very focused on organizational values as opposed to knowledge organization which is focused a lot more on the metadata and taxonomy, and how to get the tagging on the content items in the first place.