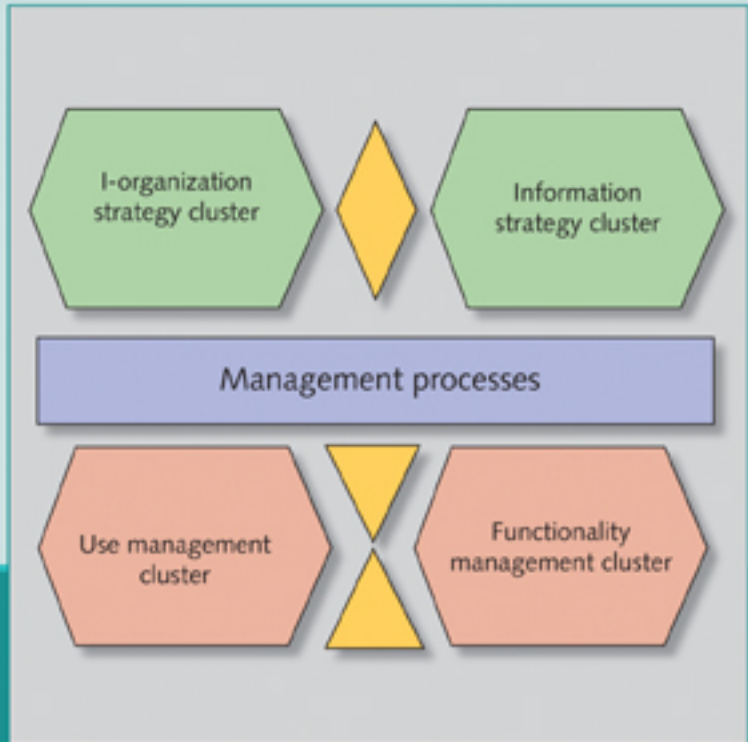


BiSL

Business information Services Library



BiSL
A Management Guide

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BiSL

A Management Guide

Remko van der Pols

Yvette Backer



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Foreword

Effective management of business information is critically important for today's organizations, covering all the activities for controlling information provisioning. This is the domain in which managers of business information, system owners, product managers, information managers and Chief Information Officers (CIOs) operate.

This Management Guide describes BiSL, Business information Systems Library, a framework for business information management and information management. BiSL is a public domain standard that is consistent with the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) and Application Services Library (ASL).

The information in this Management Guide helps managers to adopt a professional approach to the management of their business information. It draws on the practical experiences of organizations that are using this framework and builds on the lessons learned from those experiences. It provides a description of the framework, together with a detailed definition of a standard for business information management and information management.

Remko van der Pols,
Yvette Backer

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Business information management and BiSL

1.1 Introduction

The book *BiSL, a framework for business information management* produced the first public domain standard for business information management available to everyone. BiSL, Business information Services Library, describes the processes of business information management and, supported through the use of *best practices* and aids, completes and improves these processes. This *management guide* describes this process model in an accessible manner.¹

1.2 What is business information management?

Organizations carry out business processes and various production means are used. Examples of these include:

- organization and the managing body,
- money and other financial means,
- personnel,
- buildings and other types of property,
- machines,
- information provisioning.

Business information management deals with the final of these production factors: namely information provisioning. Contrary to widespread belief, information provi-

1 A note regarding the terminology used. There are many various ideas as to what business information management and information management are. We shall therefore be dealing with this in detail in this chapter and describe the domain of business information management. One of the conclusions will be that business information management and information management belong to the same domain, which we call for the sake of theoretical correctness the domain of business information management. In other words, wherever reference is made in this management guide to business information management, this shall implicitly include information management.

sioning is considerably more than just IT (information- and communication technology). IT is the entire technical means used to carry out information provisioning. IT is a realization and an implementation of *a part* of the information provisioning. Information provisioning deals with the information used to carry out and manage the business process and to manage the organization. For this, IT is often used, as are procedures, work instructions and manual administration; people are also a part of this.

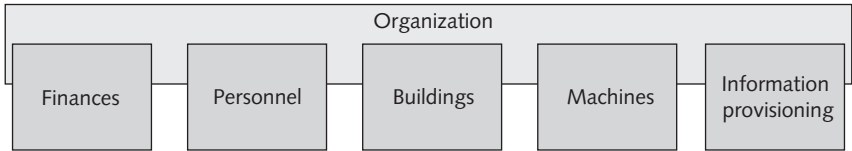


Figure 1 *The production means within an organization*

Business information management is the part of an organization that deals with the management of information provisioning, its design and adaptation, and maintaining and monitoring the working of information provisioning. This is not a question of technology but logic and its logical use.

Types of management

Business information management therefore monitors the business approach to information provisioning. In most organizations this information provisioning also has an IT component that relates to the technical means used to deliver this. These means are managed and developed by another type of organization, the IT function. There are a few different types of management within the IT function. There is commonly a division that distinguishes between the so-called technical infrastructure management and application management.

Technical infrastructure management provides and manages the technical infrastructure. These are the physical means, typically including standardized facilities, on which information provisioning operates. This therefore deals with servers, PC's, networks, printers, operating systems (such as MS Windows) and standard software such as browsers, word processors etc. Here, people fulfil positions such as network- and system administrator. Application management deals with the maintenance, use and adaptation of applications including business packages such as SAP, Oracle and Exact. Here, people fulfil positions such as (functional or technical) designer, data analyst, programmer and tester.

Two standards are of importance for the process organization of the management and organization of the services within IT functions: ITIL and ASL. Figure 2 shows the domains and the areas of influence of BiSL, ASL and ITIL.

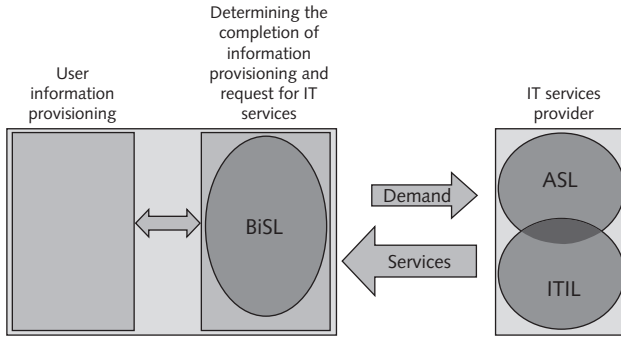


Figure 2 Process standards for management and relations between these

The place of business information management

Business information management is part of the user organization. There are of course exceptions to this rule: it is sometimes arranged by the internal IT function. Business information management is a function that deals with:

- support in the use of information provisioning,
- mapping out the needs for information provisioning or changes in this,
- translating and formulating these needs into a concrete demand for IT support (i.e., the solution from the user's perspective) and non-automated information provisioning,
- deciding what is and what is not to be done, when it is to be done and the level to which it will be carried out,
- determining and drafting the long-term perspectives of information provisioning.

Business information management does not require expert knowledge of IT. One could say that business information management understands the business processes and this is combined with a feeling for and understanding of IT and the control of IT. Business information management can also be considered a widely qualified purchasing function of information provisioning, acting as the principal for IT functions.

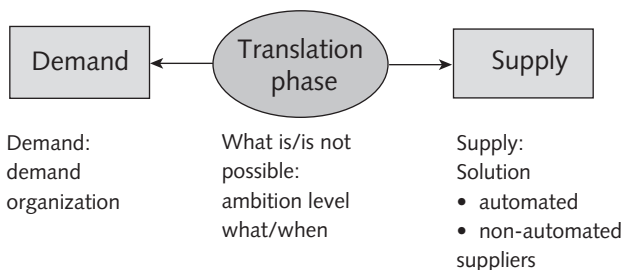


Figure 3 The translation phase between demand and supply

As mentioned earlier, information provisioning includes more than just an automated part. Non-automated information provisioning (whether or not formal) is at least as important. This is formed by procedures, work instructions, and regulations on how to use information systems, together with manual or semi-automated administration such as spreadsheets and card-index boxes.

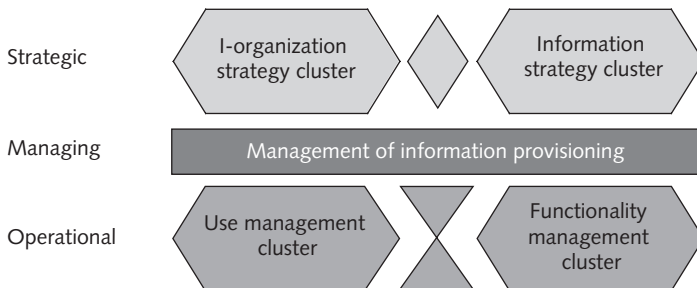


Figure 4 The three levels of business information management

Relations business information management and information management

Information provisioning purchasing is a function, an organization that manages the information provisioning and its use. There are three levels of this:

- The operational level– on this level, the use and the intrinsic design of information provisioning are managed. Here, the content and the completion of information provisioning are of central importance.
- The management level– this involves the management of such things as time, quality, money, agreements and contracts.

- The strategic level – on this level, information provisioning and its organization and management are designed on a more long-term basis.

It is clear that information management (which in many organizations is the function that deals with formulating policy regarding information provisioning) operates in the same domain as business information management. It can be said that information management is the guiding level of business information management. Equally, it can also be said that business information management is the executive level of information management.

For the sake of clarity of the argument in this management guide, we shall use the coordinating term 'Business information management' to indicate the entire domain. This therefore also covers the activities often indicated by the term 'information management'.

The field of force in which business information management operates

It can be seen from the above that business information management is important for the successful organization and operation of the business processes. Business information management must try to achieve the optimum between possibilities and impossibilities, offering the following four perspectives:

- This involves a business process and users in which information provisioning plays an important and often essential role. Businesses processes change sometimes and information provisioning must change with it. However, users cannot change as often or as fast, since it is normally not so easy to change one's way of working and the business process must continue during the change.
- Also in the control of IT and IT suppliers, business information management is often confronted with limitations. For example, an average organization has no control over Microsoft with regards to the functionality of its word processor.
- Business information management also deals with finite possibilities, capacities and qualities from one's own business information management organization.
- Finally, one acts within the policy and frameworks of organization, or within the frameworks that dictate external factors such as legislation and chain management. The frameworks are the starting point for business processes and business information management. However, business information management also realizes this policy: the information policy is made by business information management and the possibilities and impossibilities of information provisioning also have an influence on the policy of the organization.

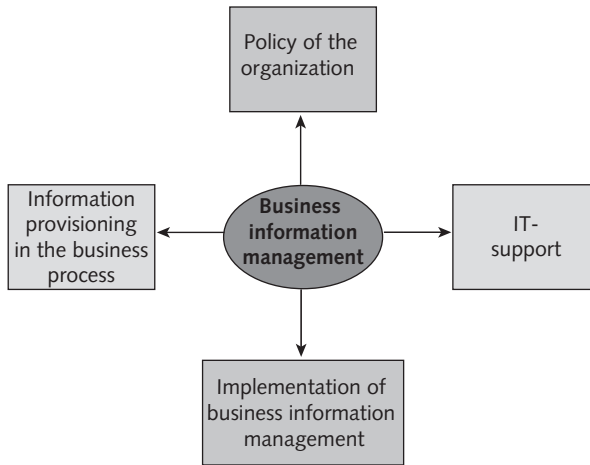


Figure 5 *The field of influence within which business information management must operate*

The organization of business information management

Seldom is business information management or the control of business information management to be found in one place within an organization. There are often several business information management functions or business information management is controlled from several places. This may seem undesirable but it is often logical and inevitable in many organizations.

In most organizations, the finance manager or finance director is responsible for the financial information provisioning of the organization. Similarly, the personnel manager or personnel director is responsible for the personnel information provisioning, the marketing director is responsible for an organization’s services to major clients, and the director of private sectors is responsible for the private market. For all these directors, information provisioning is essential for the day-to-day operation of the organization. For this reason, they wish to be able to control information provisioning directly, which means that they control business information management directly, or aspire to do so.

This is why an organization often has several information domains with the associated Business information management.

In the example shown in figure 6, there are five business information management groups. There is a group that deals with the logistical information provisioning, one that deals with personnel information provisioning and one for the financial information provisioning.

There is also, as in many organizations, a slightly different group for infrastructure; this includes work places and the standard infrastructure of the organization. There is also a corporate group, which deals with the overall policy of the organization in the area of information provisioning.

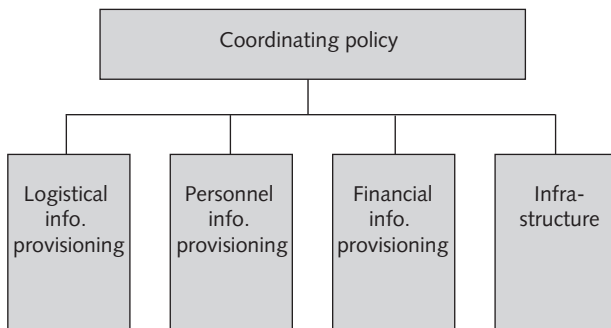


Figure 6 Example of an architecture with information domains

The method and the extent to which the Business information management takes place and the way in which information provisioning is managed depends on the form of authority in the organization. An important factor for the successful operation of business information management is the extent to which the lines of powers that it incorporates follow those that already in place within the user organization.

The consequence is that there is seldom one point from which information provisioning of an organization is managed. Who carries out the management and how it is managed must therefore be clearly agreed. BiSL deals separately with this.

1.3 Objectives of BiSL

As a result of the professionalization of the IT services in past years, there has been an increasing imbalance as the demand organization, business information management, has been left behind and has thus become the weak link. Also, from a business perspective, the need for a more effective and more efficient use of information provisioning and better end user support has grown significantly. This means that many organizations are giving increasing consideration to business information management and information management. And here's where BiSL come up to discussion. The ASL Foundation sets BiSL the following objectives:

- Offering recognition of the important activities that people carry out within the organization in the area of Business information management and giving consideration with regards to the importance of this.
- Positioning business information management in its environment and ensuring this fits in well with other process models such as ASL and ITIL.
- Offering one language and a joint jointly supported framework for the completion and carrying out of Business information management.
- Offering tangible support in the carrying out and ongoing improvement of Business information management such as the provisioning of best practices.
- Offering clarity, completeness and coherence in the areas of procurement, design and the use of information provisioning, as well as recognizing that Business information management operates in the same domain.
- Re-using knowledge in this regard and offering a platform for information exchange.

1.4 Promotion by way of a foundation

BiSL is a *public domain* standard, which means that the body of thought is within an independent foundation making it freely available to everyone. This is the ASL BiSL Foundation, a foundation that also manages Application Services Library, ASL.

With the introduction of BiSL and the transfer of BiSL to the ASL Foundation, the objectives of the ASL Foundation have been widened. The decision to include BiSL in this foundation offers various advantages:

- It is now possible to make use of the existing facilities and best practices from such a foundation.
- It can be guaranteed that BiSL and ASL fit together and will continue to do so.

More information on this is available on www.aslbisfoundation.org, see also annex 3.

1.5 Objectives and structure of this booklet

The objective of this *management guide* is not to teach someone how to organize business information management and information management, or exactly how BiSL is organized and what activities take place. It is an introduction, whereby we want to illustrate to the reader the importance, extent and coherence of the activities within the domain of business information management. It is also an introduction to BiSL that provides an insight into the structure, set-up and global interpretation of BiSL in an business accessible a manner as possible. The reader will also get a feel for the processes, the importance of organizing these properly and the circumstances that can potentially cause problems. For business information (systems) managers and information managers, this *management guide* is hopefully a world of recognition; for outsiders and managers, it is an easy means of gaining a better view of this area.

This first chapter dealt with setting out the domains of business information management, the basic considerations, and what the content and key values are. The next chapter deals with the set-up of BiSL. The following chapters then address the process clusters of BiSL. The processes and activities in the various clusters are illustrated using a case study that is followed throughout the book. The last chapter briefly describes how to start working with BiSL.

We need to say that background to the case study is included in Appendix A and should be read prior to working through the various chapters that contain references to the case study – otherwise it can be quite difficult to follow.

The BiSL framework

2.1 Introduction

The BiSL framework consists of various processes grouped together in clusters. The processes in these clusters are closely connected and are similar in many ways to the nature of management, incorporating the necessary knowledge and experience of the employees in the business information management organization.

BiSL has process clusters on the strategic, management and operational levels, see also figure 7. The complete diagram of BiSL is included in annex 5.

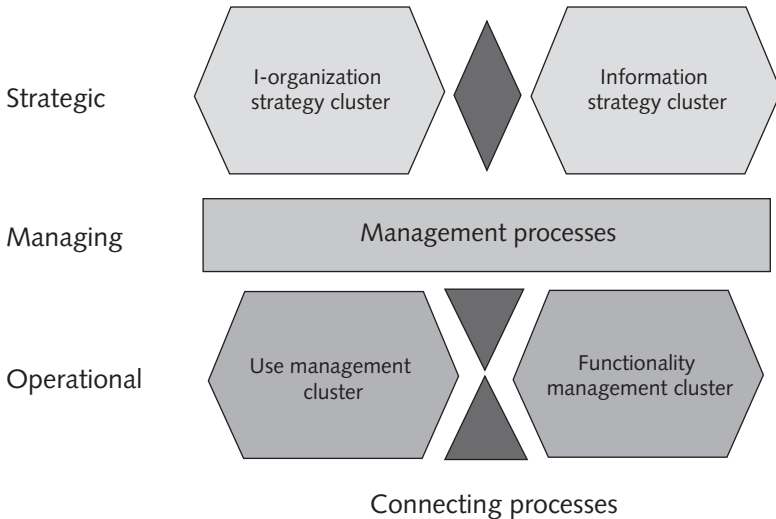


Figure 7 The BiSL framework

2.2 The operational processes

There are three process clusters on the operational level.

Use management cluster

The central point of the *use management* cluster is to ensure that the existing information provisioning provides optimal support to the business processes and that these are used adequately. Here, the users are supported in the optimal use of information provisioning, the operational data management is guaranteed, and the operational control for the maintenance of information provisioning is carried out by the IT suppliers.

Functionality management cluster

In the *functionality management* cluster the changes to information provisioning are analyzed, worked out and the organization is prepared for the change. This demands, as in the previous cluster, knowledge of information provisioning, the specific needs, and the method used in the business process.

Connecting processes

This cluster ensures that the correct changes to information provisioning are carried out in practice, so they can then be operated by the users. It therefore provides synchronization between the *use management* and *functionality management* clusters.

2.3 The management processes

The management processes cluster ensures that the means (in the widest sense) are available for information provisioning, and that its use is managed in line with the needs and possibilities of the organization. This involves management resources such as time and capacity, costs and benefits, needs, services of suppliers, and contracts. This leads to the overall management of information provisioning, and the activities in this area are independent from how they are managed within the organization.

2.4 The strategic processes

On the strategic level, there are also three clusters.

Information strategy cluster

The *information strategy* cluster deals with the design of information provisioning in the longer term, recognizing what is necessary to achieve this and outlining scenarios in order to achieve the desired situation. This is also referred to as information policy.

I-organization strategy cluster

The *I-organization strategy cluster* refers to the organization of information provisioning. In this cluster the strategy is determined in terms of the form this organization should take and what the roles and responsibilities of the various divisions are. This policy refers to the role of suppliers, the relations with chain partners, the relations to the user organization, together with the set-up and method of the entire business information management in the organization.

Connecting strategic processes: information coordination

There are typically several parties who develop policies on various parts of information provisioning and the information provisioning organization. This cluster, which consists of one process of *information coordination*, deals with the coordination and communication of the various forms of policy developed in the previous clusters.

2.5 Relations and coherence between clusters

The activities in the area of business information management – incorporating the activities within the clusters – are carried out in most organizations at several and various locations and sometimes also outside of the organization. It is however the coherence that makes management of information provisioning work effectively. Here are a few examples.

Use management looks at the operational shortcomings and the possibilities for the optimal use of information provisioning, together with how information provisioning can fit in with the business processes more efficiently and more effectively.

Functionality management deals with the completion and design of information provisioning. Shortcomings noted within *use management* must be solved correctly. The form that the functionality takes also has a direct influence on the effectiveness and efficiency in the way that information provisioning is used.

The management processes must ensure that any targets associated with issues such as money and time are adequately addressed. For important shortcomings and optimization, the means of removing these or carrying them out must be identified. Also, strategic developments must be translated into possibilities, so that these can be dealt with in *functionality management*.

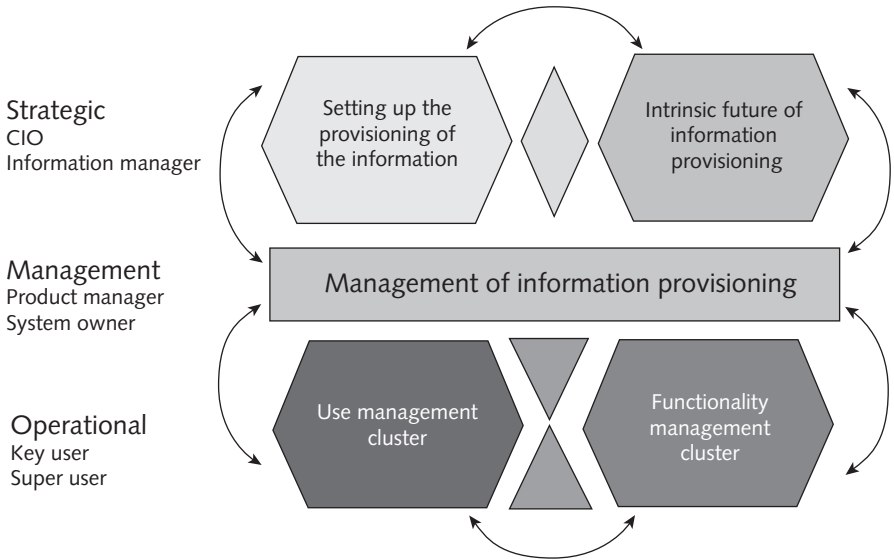


Figure 8 Relations and connection between the BiSL clusters

To ensure that successful policies are developed, the guiding processes need input that, for example, relate to the quality of the use and integration of the existing information provisioning with the business processes. The scenarios outlined within the guiding processes must be feasible and fit in with users and business processes.

There are several more dependencies and information flows than those outlined above. It is not possible to optimally carry out all of the activities in a cluster without information from the other processes. It is therefore important that this information from the various clusters be distributed among the other clusters, so the correct considerations and choices can be made.

This seems trivial but is not. In the majority of organizations this information exchange is less than perfect. Information policy is often formulated without any common ground with the actual situation, the established and the future needs. Structural problems with information provisioning such as experienced by users on the shop floor are often not recognized or not understood. An organization will often carry on struggling with the same problems for years, or this policy is not implemented at the management level, so that no specific actions and plans evolve for addressing these.

An important objective of BiSL is understanding that the coherence of activities makes the management processes more effective. The executive processes are the hands and eyes, the management processes are the guide, and the guiding processes are the map reader and the route. If you don't know where you are, there's no point reading the map. If you wish to go in a certain direction, you have to head that way. You need eyes to see whether you are going in the right direction. It is coherence that makes this effective.

