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# BiSL®

## A Pocket Guide

## 2nd edition

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BISL®
A POCKET GUIDE

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# BiSL®

## A POCKET GUIDE

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# Colophon

# 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 Pocket Guide describes BiSL, Business information Services Library, a framework for business information management and information management. BiSL is a public domain standard that is consistent with ITIL® and ASL® (Application Services Library).

The information in this Pocket 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.

Remko van der Pols,
Yvette Backer

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# 1 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 *Pocket 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.

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1  A note regarding the terminology used. There are many various ideas as to what business information management is. 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 includes both operational and strategic processes and activities.

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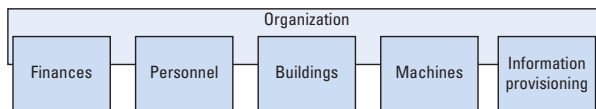


Figure 1 The production means within an organization

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 *IT 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 IT infrastructure management and application management.

IT 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 renewal of applications including business packages such as SAP, Oracle and Exact. Here, people fulfill positions such as (functional or technical) designer, data analyst, programmer and tester.
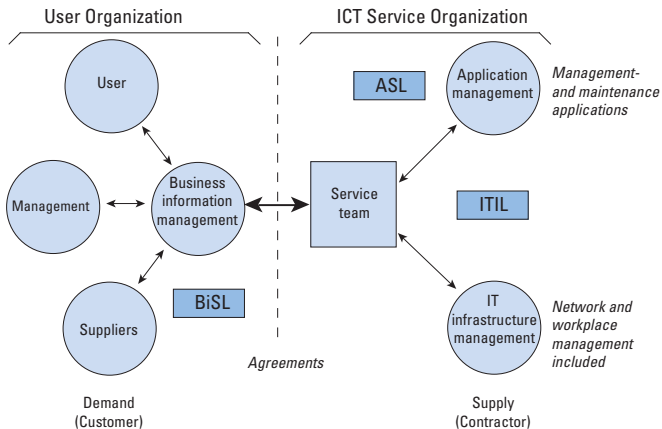


Figure 2 Process standards for management and relations between these
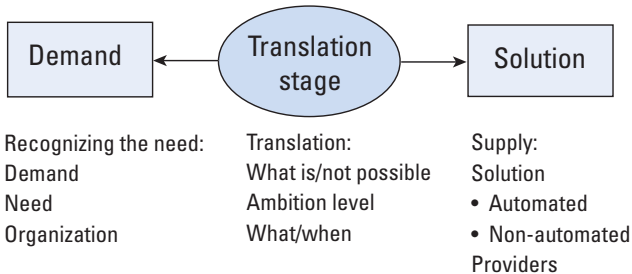
Figure 3 The translation stage between demand and supply

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.

*The position of business information management*
Business information management is part of the user
organization. There are of course exceptions to this rule: it is
sometimes executed by the internal IT department. Business
information management is a function that deals with:
- Supporting 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 the information provisioning, acting as the principal for IT organizations.

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.



**Strategic**
CIO
IT manager

I-organization strategy cluster

Information strategy cluster

**Managing**
Product manager
System owner

Management processes cluster

**Operational**
Key user
Business information administrator

Use management cluster

Functionality management cluster
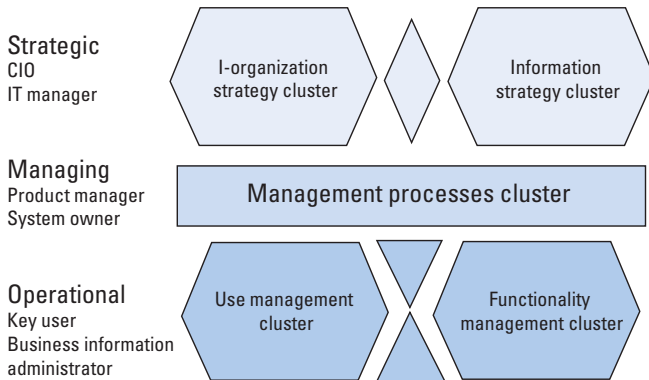
Figure 4 The three levels of control of business information management

*Relationship between business information administration and information management*

Business information management is a function, an organization that manages the information provisioning and its use. There are three levels within business information management:

- 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. This is called business information administration (in some publications functional management).
- The managing 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. This is often called information management.

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 administration. It can be said that information management is the strategic level of business information management. Equally, it can also be said that business information administration is the operational level of business information management.

For the sake of clarity of the argument in this Pocket 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 terms 'information management' or 'business information administration'.

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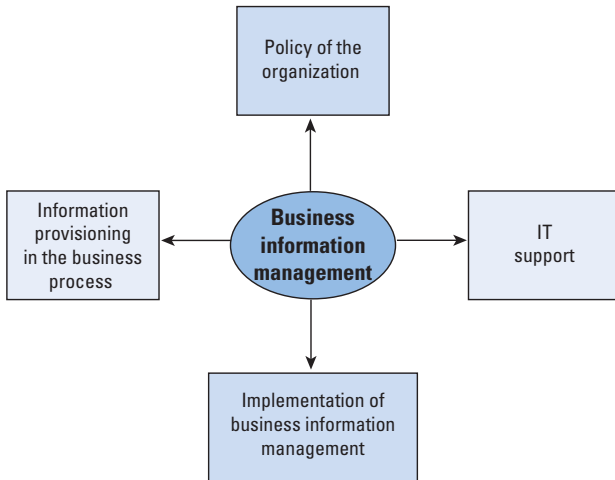
Figure 5 The field of influence within which business information management must operate

*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 (BIM) 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.
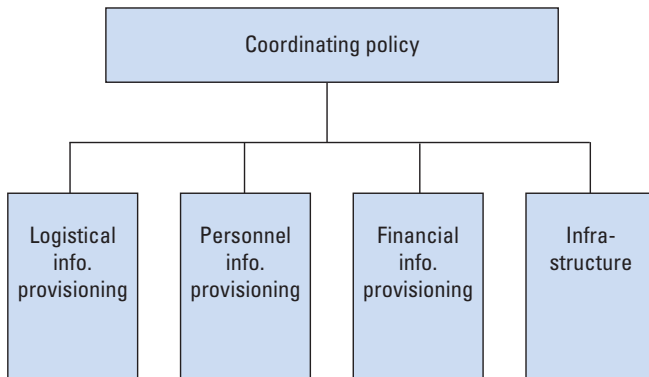


Figure 6 Example of an architecture with information domains

There is also, as in many organizations, a slightly different group for technical 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.

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 are 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 here's where BiSL comes up in discussion. The ASL BiSL 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 BiSL Foundation, the objectives of the ASL BiSL 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.aslbislfoundation. org, see also Annex 3.

## 1.5    Objectives and structure of this booklet

The objective of this Pocket 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 managers, information managers and business information administrators, this Pocket 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 domain 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.

Background to the case study is included in Annex 1 and should be read before working through the various chapters that contain references to the case study – otherwise it can be quite difficult to follow.