

Defining our terms

To organise is to impose order, counteract deviations, simplify, and connect.
(Weick, 1995: 82)

This book is primarily written for knowledge and information managers, or for those responsible for knowledge and information management in their organisations. It is intended to help you commission, build and maintain taxonomies to aid you in your knowledge management efforts. As such, we'll focus more on the pragmatic than the pure. This is not as easy as it sounds; rigour and purity are two of the most intense seductions of taxonomy work.

Let's start with some working principles and definitions.

Can we organise knowledge?

Organising knowledge: what do we mean by this?

Karl Weick's definition of 'organise' given at the head of this chapter relates organising activity to sense-making activity. The same things that help us organise also help us make sense of the world around us. But organising goes further than sense-making. It enables us to act systematically and intentionally in relation to our environment and this is one of the primary activities of management.

It's not immediately obvious that you can organise knowledge unless you have a clear definition of what knowledge is, and knowledge is notoriously difficult to define without fear of contradiction or counter-proposal. Many would say that knowledge cannot be organised because it resides in people's minds and abilities. What *can* be organised is information, which resides in documents or other artefacts apart from people (Taylor, 2004: 3).