BiSL®

A Framework for Business Information Management

2ND EDITION

BiSL®
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A Framework for Business Information Management

Second revised edition

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Ralph Donatz
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Van Haren
P U B L I S H I N G

Foreword

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

This book describes a process framework for business administration and information management, the domain that will be hereinafter referred to as 'business information management'. This is the Business Information Systems Library (BiSL) – a public domain standard for business information management and information management that is consistent with ITIL® and ASL® (Application Services Library).

The concept of a framework of this kind is not new – for example, there are several publications describing models for business systems management. The information in this book helps organizations 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 full description of the framework, together with a detailed definition of a standard for business information management and information management.

In this second edition many small corrections and improvements are incorporated. Many individuals and organizations have contributed to the development of this book. We first wish to thank the many organizations who have adopted our model: their willingness to share their experiences has enabled us to define a practical and practice-based framework that is based on real-life experience. Special thanks go to Achmea, ASR Netherlands, Capgemini, Logica, Ministery of Defence/ IVENT and vts Police Netherlands.

We hope and expect that BiSL will be very useful to all people working in the field of business information management, all over the world.

Lucille van der Hagen

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Introduction

Key messages
— Most organizations depend on their information systems; information management is becoming critically important. Business information management is a priority.
— Outsourcing of IT activities is increasing; it is essential for the organization to maintain control of the IT services to be delivered. A professional approach to business information management becomes a necessity.
— Modern organizations are becoming increasingly complex, with diverse demands for information systems. Business information management acts as the primary contact point for the user organization (the business) and as the customer for IT.
— Organizations and their requirements for information provision change rapidly. These changes can be adequately anticipated and managed by adopting business information management.
— Information policy sets the context for business information management; policy and operational practice need to be integrated.
— The Business Information Services Library (BiSL) as a generic framework provides an effective solution for business information management.

1.1 Background

This chapter explains the context of business information management – why it is increasingly important, the trends influencing the way in which organizations manage their information and the advantages of adopting BiSL as a solution.

Increasing importance of business information management
With the close relationships between business processes and their supporting information systems, access to reliable business information becomes increasingly important. A professional approach to business information management and good coordination of the required processes become essential: downtime of even a small system can have disastrous consequences for operational management.

As well as professional operation and management of the technical infrastructure (with ITIL as the guiding principle) and application management (with ASL as the guiding principle), there is now great interest in a professional approach to business information management. Effective integration of IT activities (whether or not outsourced) and overall information provision to the organization and its business processes are crucial. Business information management provides this management and connection.

Increase in outsourcing of IT activities
The numbers of organizations outsourcing some or all of their IT activities is increasing. Most businesses have considered outsourcing recently; the main reason for doing so is to enable the organization to concentrate on its core business activities, leaving IT to external providers. However, the activities of managing delivery from outsourced IT activities and defining the required information provision should never be outsourced. The user organization (the business) must be in control of decisions about their information provision. Business information management, as an intermediary between IT and the organization, fulfils *precisely* this role.

Increasing complexity within the organization
Mergers, takeovers and autonomous growth mean that organizations are becoming larger and more complex. They are often subdivided into smaller units – subsidiary companies, business units and so on – using the same information systems. But opinions on information provision may differ, and influence may be dispersed.

Various parties in an organization may have control over different aspects of information provision. For example, their respective roles can include process owners, system owners, business information managers, information managers and information consultants. In addition suppliers may also exercise control over information provisioning activities. These parties will seldom act in each other's interest. One does not often realize that their actions might have an impact upon other actions undertaken elsewhere within the organization. Business information management fulfils this coordinating role on behalf of the user organization.

Organizations are changing rapidly
As the pace of organizational change accelerates, it is very important to ensure that total information provision (IT product portfolio and organization of information provision) continues to match the business and its changing needs. Business information management has a role to play in enabling the organization to adapt to change.

A policy fitting in with practice
A lot of attention has always been paid to information policy. However, the relationship between information policy and operational business information management is under-exposed. Information policy must shape and direct existing practice but must also

take account of future demands and current shortcomings. Policy and operational prac-tice must be integrated; this is a precondition for an effective and efficient information provision.

Business information management ensures that the information provision fits in with the business processes and the requirements of the users of those business processes. It is from this viewpoint that business information management is positioned within the user organization.

The BiSL framework as a solution
The importance of business information management is increasing. BiSL (Business Information Services Library) offers a practical solution, business oriented and based on a process approach for business information management. The framework is supported by a number of best practices, which can be found on the website of the ASL BiSL Foundation (www.aslbislfoundation.org).

1.2   **Business information management**

It is clear from the trends described above that managing, controlling and modifying information from a demand perspective becomes the critical success factor for how well information provision aligns with the business processes – and the costs that will be acceptable for achieving that integration.

To summarize: anyone who wishes to manage information must not only manage the supply of IT. It is much more important to manage the demand for information provision and how this matches the business processes. This business-IT alignment can only succeed if the various levels of control of information provision converge and are interrelated.

Separating supply and demand organizations
Effective control of demand, translated into requirements for automated information provision, can only succeed if the supply and demand organizations are separated in terms of information provision. The demand side is governed by business information management. Choices made on the demand side are translated via business information management to the management on the supply side. The actual service is then delivered by the IT provider or department.

Business information management is not part of the IT organization; business information management is positioned within and is an inseparable part of the user organization. It can be structured in different ways but is always part of the user organization. Business information management includes both day-to-day management of the information

provisioning and execution of the activities of the business manager's portfolio in the area of information provision.

The field of business information management
The broad field of managing, controlling and adjusting information requirements, as well as the control of all related activities, falls under the domain of business information management. The scope of activities is wider than of the traditional, operational business information administrators. It also includes the activities of the system owner, process owner, contract manager and information management. Depending on how it is organized, business information administration delivers the operational level of business information management,and information management forms the strategic level of business information management. It is important to recognize that these activities fall within the same domain.

Chapter 2 explores the various topics and levels within business information management:
– the operational control of information provision (such as, for example, defining the content of new information provision by developing specifications)
– managing information provision and contracts/agreements with IT providers and user organizations (the process ownership or system ownership)
– designing the policy for the future of information provision

It is important that these various levels of control are interlinked. This will determine the effectiveness and the amount of influence and control that these levels have.

1.3 Objectives of this book

The objectives of this book are to:
– raise awareness of the necessity and importance of business information management
– provide a description of the complete framework for business information management, BiSL
– provide a detailed description of the processes within business information management and their relationships with other management areas
– offer a complete picture and reference work for anyone who is in any way involved with business information management or its application.

1.4 Structure of the book

Chapter 2 deals with the positioning of business information management and BiSL within the total management scope of information systems and information provision. Chapter 3 outlines the BiSL framework, and addresses and explains the various clusters of the processes.

Chapters 4 to 10 deal with the various process clusters identified in the BiSL framework. The processes at the operational level are dealt with first, followed by those on a managing level and ending with the processes at the strategic level.

The process descriptions follow a fixed structure. This starts with the objective of the individual process, followed by the subjects within the process, the activities, the output of the process and the relationships of the respective process with other processes or other parties. Regarding the description of the processes, the choice was made not to describe the way the management processes control the other processes for each process. This method of description is the same for each process, therefore the management mechanism is described only once at the beginning of Chapters 4 and 5.

Finally, Chapter 11 deals with implementation and organizational aspects.

Clear and unambiguous communication between business information management, application management and IT infrastructure management is essential. This book aims to focus upon the relationships and interfaces between the various IT management domains. The structure and composition of this book is consistent with the book *ASL, A Framework for Application Management* (Remko van der Pols, 2004).

Positioning of business information management

Key messages
— Business information management does not operate on its own but is very closely related to application management and IT infrastructure management.
— Business information management is part of the of the user organization.
— Business information management is the portfolio holder of information provision for the business process.
— Business information management acts as the customer for application management and IT infrastructure management.

2.1 Management domains

In this book we identify three IT management domains:

1. IT infrastructure management
2. Application management
3. Business information management

IT infrastructure management is responsible for maintaining the operations of the IT infrastructure that is part of the information system. This includes hardware, equipment, networks, software and databases which are the main areas of focus for the computer center or the IT center. ITIL is a much-used framework in this context.

Application management is responsible for maintaining the application software and the databases. Application management corresponds to the operation of a software company: the creation, maintenance and renovation of software applications. ASL (Application Services Library) is the standard for organizing application management.

Business information management on behalf of the business and user organization is responsible for maintaining the functionality of the information systems. This section concentrates on the provision of information to support the organization and its business processes.

Figure 2.1 shows these three management domains in relation to one another.
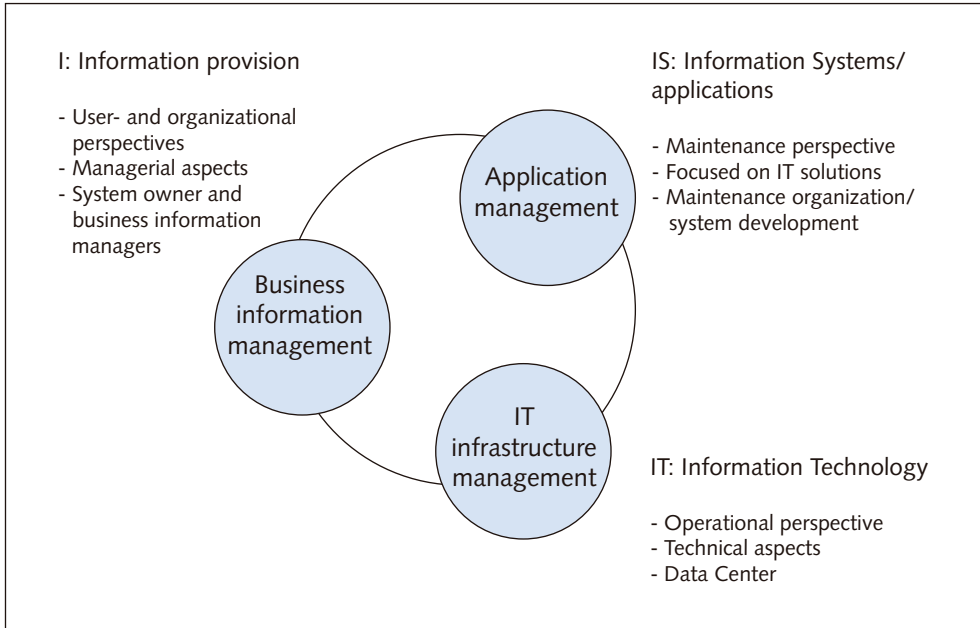
Figure 2.1 Management domains

2.2 Positioning of business information management

The three recognized management domains are not independent from one another. There are close relationships between the business information management domain and the other two IT management domains. Each IT management domain has its own specific points of consideration, activities and responsibilities.

Figure 2.2 shows the positioning of business information management in relation to other IT management domains and the business process.
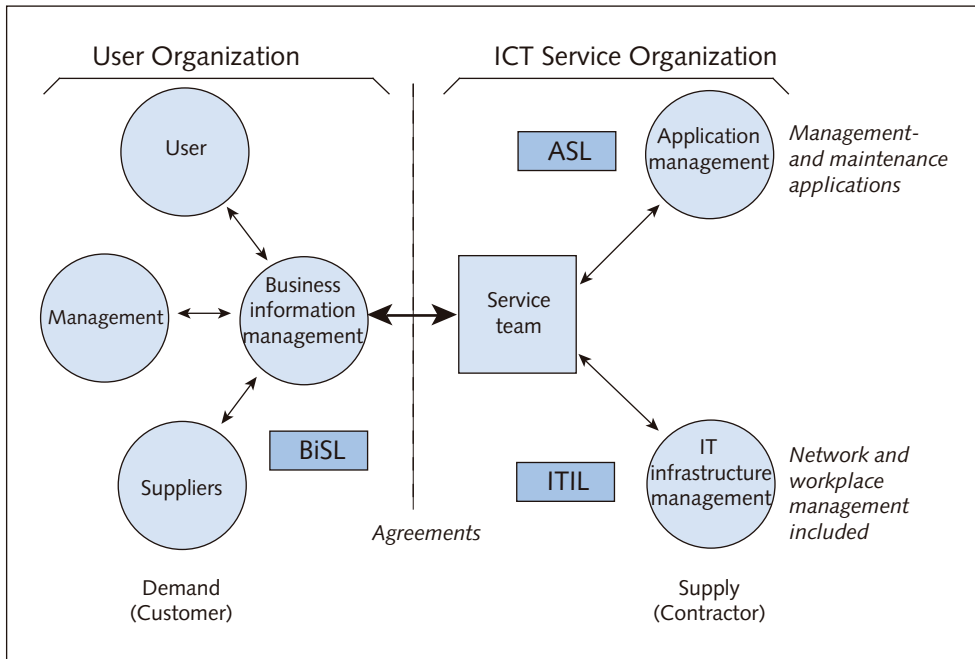
Figure 2.2 Positioning of business information management

Business information management is expressly positioned as part of the user organiza-tion. Business information management is undertaken on behalf of the user organization and the management responsible for the total information provision in the organiza-tion, both for the automated and the non-automated part. Here, business information management also functions on behalf of the user organization as the customer for the IT service function.

The IT service organization delivers all the services in the areas of both IT infrastruc-ture management and application management that are needed to meet the complete requirements to the information provision of the user organization. The IT service or-ganization can consist of both internal and external parties. External parties will operate on behalf of several customer organizations and are therefore active in several IT service organizations.

Figure 2.2 shows the service team positioned as a clear coordination point for all ser-vices delivered by the IT service organization. The service team thus forms an integrator for the business information management on behalf of the IT service organization. The service team is responsible for the integral quality and mutual coordination of the IT services delivered by the IT service providers .

2.3   The nature of business information management

Portfolio holder of information provision
Information provision plays an essential role in supporting business processes for several organizations. Both information provisioning and IT are too important for these business processes to hand over full control to the IT provider.

The user organization must take on this management itself. The control of information provision - and defining the information demands and any needs for IT solutions arising from this - require specialist knowledge and experience of the business and its processes. This is very different from having technical IT experience.

Business information management implements the portfolio of information provision on behalf of the business manager (of the business process). Business information management ensures that the business processes are supported in an optimal manner. Business information management is thus responsible for the design and delivery of information provision. This requires that business information management forms an inseparable part of the user organization.

The areas of tension in business information management
Business information management operates within four fields of force:
–   information provision within the organization's business processes: specifying the organization's information requirements
–   automated information provision (IT) and IT support: ordering IT services and monitoring the IT provider
–   the business information management organization: the function that controls the information provision for the organization
–   the policy of the organization

Central between these four fields of force is business information management. Business information management translates the demands for information in the business process into support by automated and non-automated information provision. Business information management implements and enforces the policy of the organization on these aspects and provides the support for this to the users and the management of the organization.

The area of tension shows the various areas of consideration and the associated risks:
–   business information management translates demand into supply. There is the risk that business information management will monitor the supplier too closely and even take over the roles and activities of the IT provider. It is important that a clear distinction exists between the tasks and responsibilities of business information management and those of the IT provider
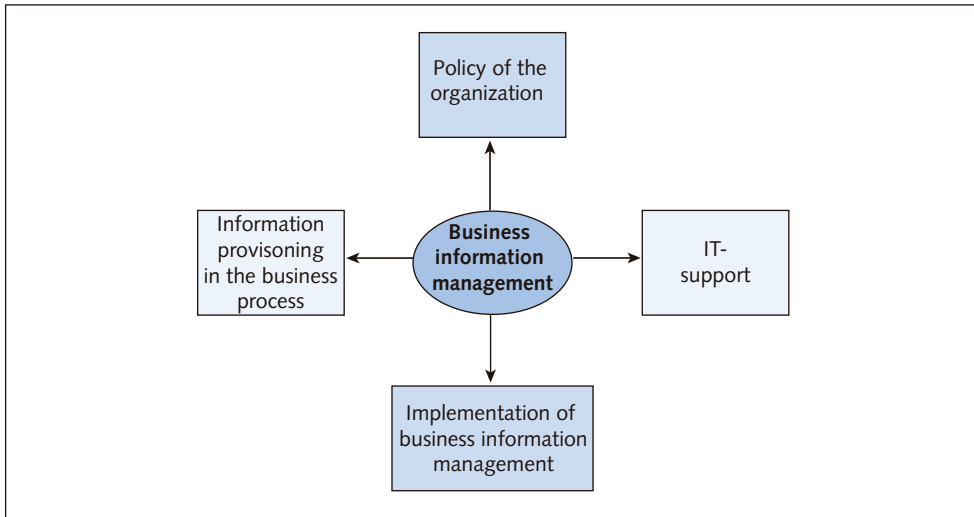
Figure 2.3 The areas of tension in business information management

– an additional risk is that demand is no longer managed (this is the primary task of business information management); only the supply is managed. By concentrating only on IT solutions, the focus on the actual demands of the organization is lost
– it is important to keep sight of the integral character of the process management across the three. For instance cost management not only deals with the costs of the IT related specifically to business information management, but it also involves costs of IT support for business information management and also the costs related to business processes. It is wrong to focus on just one domain

Business information management, on behalf of the user organization, is responsible for information provision. This means delegated responsibility which is easy to forget. In particular, if business information management is organized within a separate unit there is a risk that it starts to act as if it were a service provider, like a regular IT unit. All decision making and responsibility will be held within the user organization or the line management.

The key point of the added value of business information management is found in the alignment between the information provision and the business processes. Crucial for this is a good knowledge of the respective business process in combination with the required information provision. This applies to supporting business processes (for example, providing personnel or financial information), managing business processes (for example, providing logistical information) and the primary business processes (for example, providing purchase- and sales information).

An important precondition for effective business information management is a special-
ized knowledge of the business process. This can be achieved in various ways. As it is
generally impossible for one person to possess all the required specialist knowledge, the
personnel capacity is usually divided over various information clusters or information
domains.

The levels of information provision
Information provision can be viewed at three levels within an organization. Manage-
ment of information provision takes place at each of these levels:
– at the *corporate information provision* level, information provision is managed from the
perspective of the entire organization, paying attention to the relationships between the
various business processes and the consequences for information provision. In practice,
this is an area of consideration that is often taken care of by separate departments within
the organization because of the requirement for specialist knowledge, skills and contacts.
– at the *business process* level, all information provision supporting this process is man-
aged. For control at this level, the information requirements of the individual business
processes are central.
– there is also a *system-based level*. Here, the specific demands of users are anticipated in
working with information systems. An information system often supports only a part of
a business process; conversely, a single information system is often used for several busi-
ness processes. This means that there are often several information systems that support
the entire business process, which gives rise to the necessity for business information
management at the system level.

A pitfall in controlling the information provision is that control is only exercised at too
low a level: only at the information system level. The classification into information sys-
tems[1] is often based on technical arguments. Control should also include the two other
levels from a business point of view.

The levels of business information management
Business information management must be implemented for each of the levels described
above. Various levels are also present within business information management.

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1   There are two definitions of the term 'information system'. Here, the limited definition is used: an
    information system is an automated application: software combined with databases. See also the
    list of definitions at the back of this book.
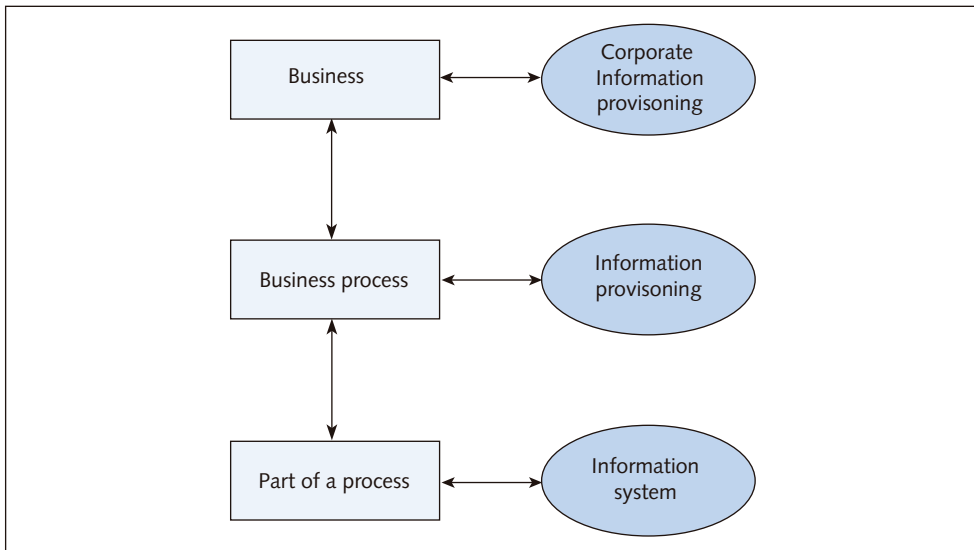
Figure 2.4 Three levels of information provision

The domain of business information management is wide. In each case, business infor-
mation management should be more widely interpreted than only for the role of an opera-
tional business information administrator. The BiSL framework recognizes three levels:
  – operation
  – management
  – strategy

The associated roles for these levels are often indicated by the business information ad-
ministrator, system ownership and information management respectively.

– The *operational level* of processes of business information management deals with the use
  of the information provisioning and defining the demands that this information provi-
  sioning must satisfy. In practice, this includes the tasks carried out by the role of business
  information administrator.
– The *managing level* deals with costs, returns, contracts and planning. Functional roles
  such as system owner, customer, budget holder, etc. take responsibility for this. In cases
  where packaged software suppliers also carry out business information management,
  this level is often carried out by the role of product manager.
– The *strategic level* deals with the future of the information provisioning: information
  management.
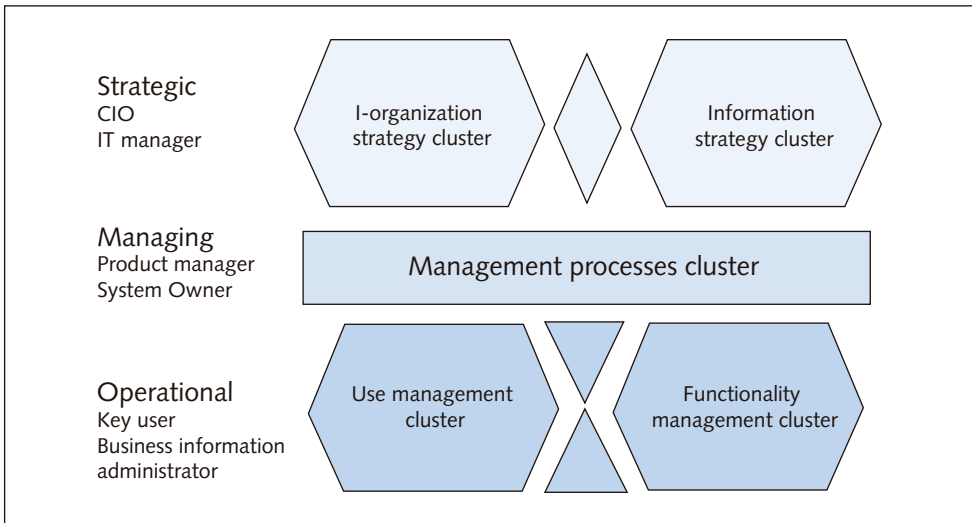
Figure 2.5 Levels within business information management

The extent to which an organization succeeds in achieving effective and efficient information provision depends to a great deal upon the extent to which the processes at the various levels exchange information and cooperate with one another.

The main tasks of business information management
Business information management handles the portfolio of information provision on behalf of the business or line manager. This makes business information management responsible for the design and implementation of information provision. The following tasks are essential in order to satisfy this responsibility:
– recognizing needs or demands within the user organization
– translating this demand into solutions by way of further implementation or a change of information provision. Not every demand or request necessarily requires a solution with the help of information provision and not every delivery of a new information provision or extension of an existing information provision leads to an IT assignment.
The change request can often also be met by changes in the area of non-automated information provision or organizational adjustments.
– deciding and issuing assignments to the IT provider and managing, monitoring and evaluating their delivery or supply

Figure 2.6 The main tasks of business information management

When translating demand into supply, not every demand automatically leads to supply:
– demands are sometimes not translated into a solution or a change in information provision;
– demands are sometimes translated into a solution at a later stage or when this is cost effective;
– demands are sometimes only partly satisfied. The scope of the requirement is reduced or the solution only fulfils part of the demand.

Responsibilities of business information management
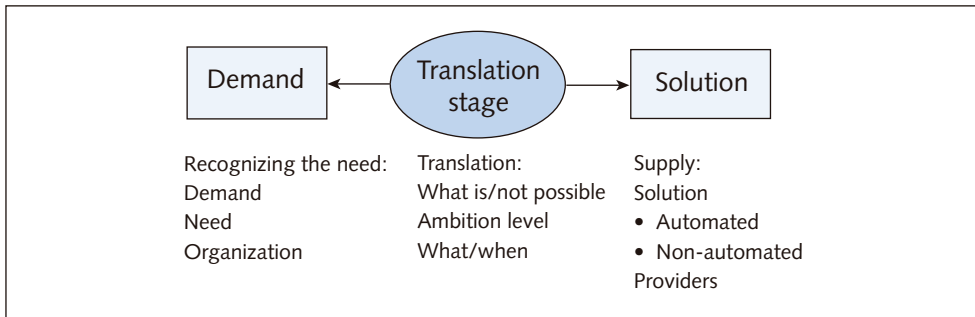Business information management deals with the translation of business processes into information provision. This is, however, influenced by the policy of the organization. Development of the organization's policy and translating this policy into a business process is within the domain of the organization's line or business management. Line management carries out the translation by developing a processing architecture that describes how the organization will realize its policy. Because of the relationship between the business process and the information provision, business information management (which is responsible for developing the information policy model) must be closely involved in the domain of line management. Line manatement, of course, remains responsible for the business process.

Business information management is responsible for the translation phase of the business process and business policy into information provision. Application management and IT infrastructure management deal with the further translation into applications and infrastructure.

The various responsibilities of the IT management domains (business information management, application management and IT infrastructure management) and the domain of business management converge on some points as shown in Figure 2.7. In this figure, responsibilities of the three IT management domains are projected on to the information

architectures for the complete translation of business policy into an application running on a computer system.
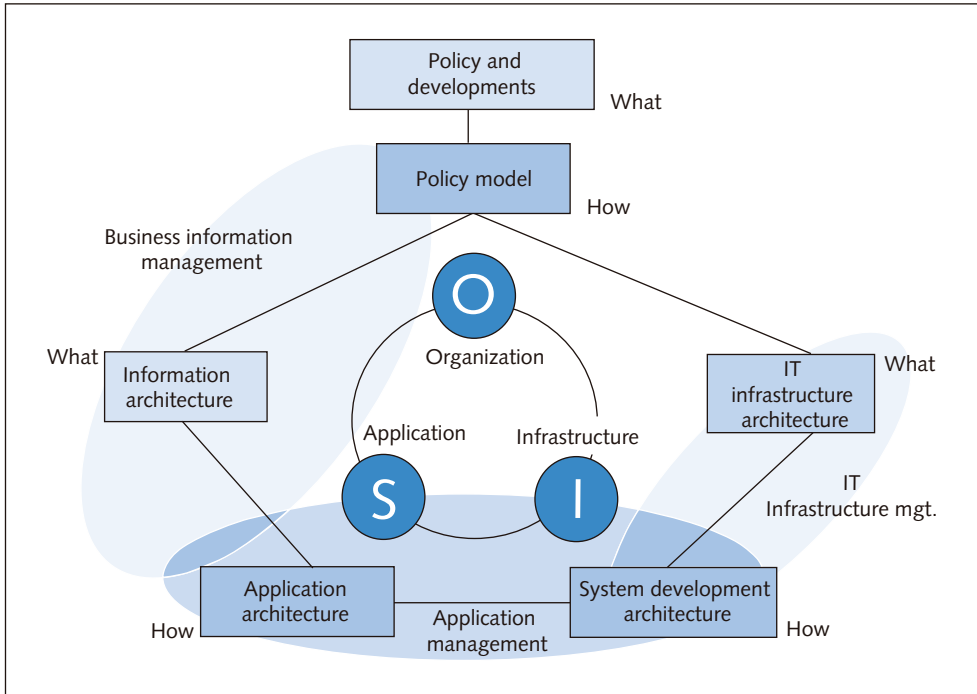
Figure 2.7 Areas of responsibility in business information management

Business information management translates the business policy model (describing what the business process should look like) into the information architecture. This describes what information provision should look like and shows the relations between the business processes and the supporting information provision.

An important part of the delivery of information provision takes part with automated applications. The set-up and running of these applications thus define to a large extent the quality of the support for the business processes. Business information management will be involved in the application architecture. The development and connection of applications are described in the application architecture, which is primarily the responsibility of application management.

Business information management can also place demands on the IT infrastructure architecture and the system development architecture. The IT infrastructure architecture

gives a description of the technical infrastructure used for operating the applications. The system development architecture indicates which technical environment, resources and standards are used in the development and maintenance of applications. The responsibility for both architectures rests with IT infrastructure management, but business information management can place demands on this, because of specific requirements for information provision.

Business information management as line activity
An organization is subject to all kinds of changes: its name changes, the organization becomes part of a larger concern or is divided up into smaller parts. However, the business processes usually remain stable; they generally continue their course and remain in existence.

The need for information provision for the business process therefore also remains in continuous existence, requiring continuous control of the information provision. Therefore business information management is often implemented as line activities. Businesses sometimes refer to activities in this area as projects or programs, which suggests that these are only carried out during a certain period. However, this is not correct: activities in the area of business information management are continuous and should therefore be considered as line activities, within the existing organization.

Radical changes to the information provisioning are often delivered in the form of a project or program. The change of information provisioning is drawn from outside the organization currently providing the information but this does change the underlying processes or the points of consideration. It still is part of the business information management function.

The BiSL framework

Key messages
— **In order to carry out business information management effectively, operational, managing and strategic processes must be in place.**
— **In the framework, these processes are divided into seven process clusters.**
— **The success of the model in practice is to a large extent determined by the links between the various process clusters and the various process levels.**

3.1 The framework for business information management

The model for business information management distinguishes between seven proces clusters. These are shown in Figure 3.1.
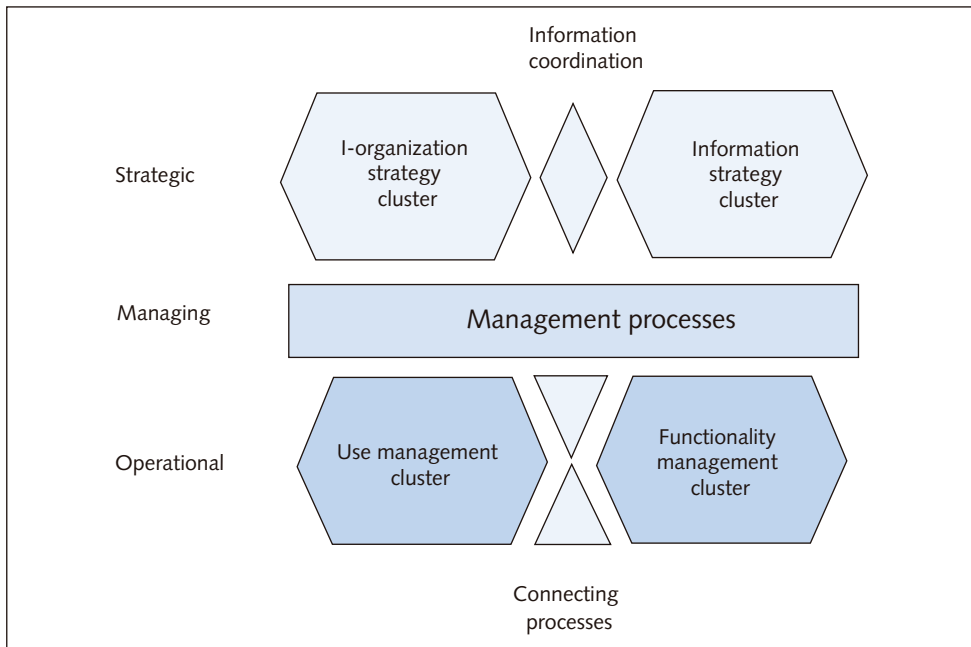

Figure 3.1 The BiSL framework

Process cluster 1: Use management
The processes aimed at optimal and continuous support of information provision are in-cluded in this cluster. These processes provide support for the users in using information provision when carrying out their activities within the business process, for the opera-tional management of the IT provider and for providing and monitoring the operational data provisioning. The key question with these processes is:
Is the operational information provisioning used and managed efficiently?

Process cluster 2: Functionality management
The second cluster of processes describes the phase during which the changes in infor-mation provision are designed and carried out. The objective of this is to carry out the changes in such a way that these fit in with the set frameworks and demands while sat-isfying the needs, objectives and demands set. All these processes address the question:
What form will information provision take in the near future?

Process cluster 3: Connecting processes - operational level
The process clusters *use management* and *functionality management* cannot be considered independently from one another. The objective of the *connecting processes* is to decide which changes must be made to information provision and the actual implementation in the user organization(s) of a change to information provision. The central question in these processes is:
Why and how do we change information provision?

Process cluster 4: Management processes
The *management processes* ensure that the process clusters mentioned above are managed integrally. The *management processes* monitor the activities with regard to agreed costs and benefits, demands, contracts and service levels and planning. The central question with this cluster of processes is:
How do we manage information provision?

Process cluster 5: Information strategy
In the direct environment of the organization but also in the organization itself, the busi-ness process or the department, all kinds of changes continuously occur that affect in-formation provision of the organization, business process or department. It is of great importance that the information provisioning fits in with future demands and that struc-tural shortcomings in the current situation are solved, which means that there must be a strategy for information provision for the future. The central question in this cluster of processes is:
What will information provision look like in the future?

Process cluster 6: I-organization strategy
In the area of information provision, there are several parties active in controlling, decision-making or influencing roles. Managing, structuring and work methods must be coordinated. This also applies to relationships with the controlling parties outside the business information management domain, such as suppliers, partners in the supply chain and the user organization. The central question in this process cluster of processes is:
How are realization and the control of the information provisioning organized?

Process cluster 7: Connecting process on the strategic level
Linking between content (process cluster 5) and organization (process cluster 6) requires a process in which the decisions in the sub-fields are coordinated by the parties involved. This process, *information coordination*, forms the connecting process cluster for the clusters 5 and 6. The central question in this process is:
How do we work together according to the agreements?

3.2   Structure of the BiSL framework

There are two perspectives within the BiSL framework (see Figure 3.2):
–   process clusters whereby the focus lies in the content of information provision. The clusters *functionality management* and *information strategy* on the right-hand side of the BiSL framework are based on the content of information provision (what must information provision look like)
–   process clusters that focus on the use and structure of information provision. These process clusters are on the left-hand side of the BiSL framework: *use management* and *I-organization strategy*

Next to these two perspectives, BiSL recognizes three levels:
–   operation
–   management
–   strategy

The operational level
The operational activities are to be found in the process clusters *use management*, *functionality management* and the *connecting processes* on the operational level. These operational processes are in practice often carried out by people referred to as business information managers or key users. The processes are based on daily use of information provision and the design and implementation of adjustments in information provision.

The managing level
The process cluster *management processes* deals with costs, returns, planning and quality of information provision and contracts/agreements with the IT provider. Roles have

been developed for running the *management processes*, and are indicated by names such as system owner, demand organization and budget holder.

Although there is a managing level within business information management, this does not mean that control only takes place via the *management processes* cluster. The entire business information management carries out control – particularly on information provision and the IT provider – and this affects all processes. Control also takes place in the operational processes. The process cluster *functionality management* shows what information provision will look like. The process cluster *use management*, for example, deals with the management of suppliers and users. From the point of view of business information management these are, however, operational activities.
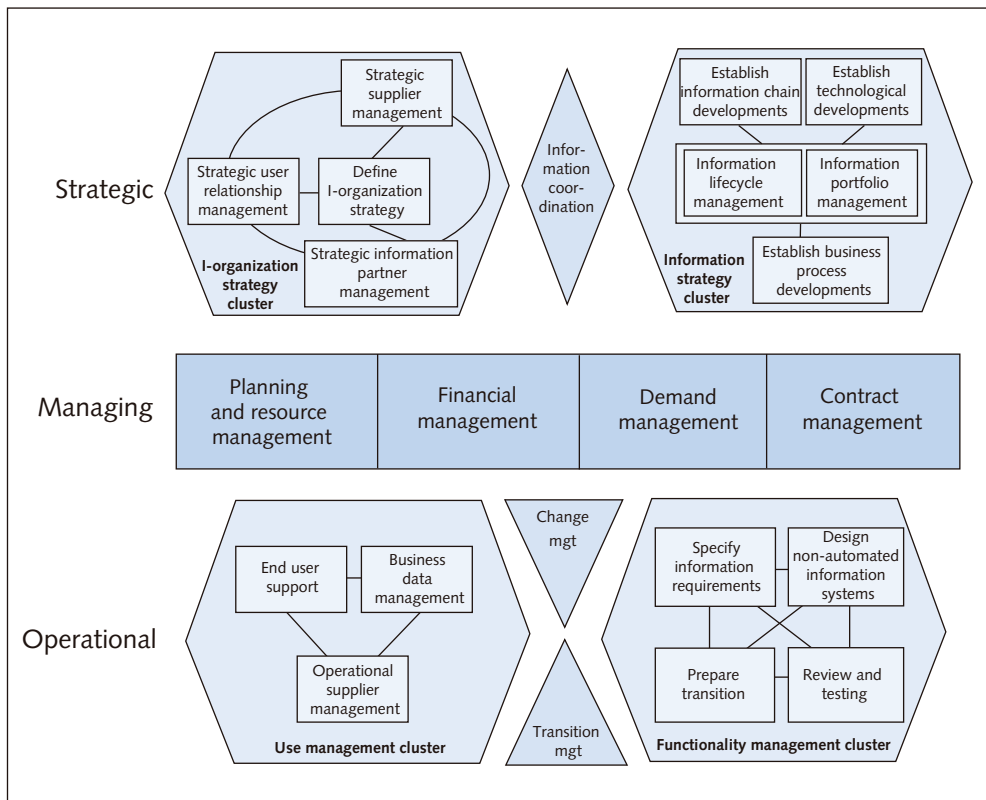

Figure 3.2 The complete BiSL framework

The strategic level
In the strategic process clusters, information provision is defined for the long term and specifies how control over information provision will be organized in the complex field

of the organization, its parts, suppliers and partners in the supply chain. Often functional names such as information manager and CIO (chief information officer) are used.

The stated process clusters within BiSL each involve various processes. Figure 3.2 shows the complete BiSL framework including the underlying processes. These processes are defined in the following chapters in detail.

3.3   Connection of the process clusters

The success of the application of the framework in practice is to a large extent defined by the links between the various process clusters and the different process levels. This involves the degree to which the process clusters cooperate and how communication progresses between the process clusters. Cooperation and communication are deciding factors in the effectiveness of business information management and the quality of the provisioning of information within the organization.

This is illustrated with some examples of relations between the various processes, see Figure 3.3:
–   It will emerge within the *use management* cluster whether information provision functions effectively and where there are bottlenecks in the organization. This can lead to change requests (requests for adjustment (of a part of) information provision). The adjustments (carrying out of the change requests) take place within the process cluster *functionality management* where the information provision is adjusted.
     Coordination and communication between the process clusters *use management* and *functionality management* is therefore significant for implementing the necessary changes.
–   The *management processes* are based on the contracts/agreements and delivery of information provision. The costs for the information provision are basically determined by the method with which the activities of the *functionality management* cluster are carried out: here, specifications are created, which are the base for the activities of the IT provider (thus leading to costs). These specifications define to a large extent the costs and the benefits. *Financial management* must be closely related to the *functionality management* cluster as this is where the new or changed information provision is defined.
–   Information on daily use is available within the *use management* cluster: an assessment should be made as to whether information provision works efficiently and if there is a need for improvements. From the *use management* cluster, there is a close relationship with the process *demand management* within the process cluster *management processes*. Demands for change are assessed within *demand management*. This is where the benefits or changes are also made visible in terms of absolute necessity or financial benefits. Because *demand management* is defined as the central process from which management decides on the total quality of the support of the business processes, the level to which the IT provider satisfies this should be made visible and aligned with the findings from the *use management* cluster.

- An organization's policy on information provision is largely based on the way in which it works now and the extent to which this is aligned with the actual need for the information, or can be aligned in the future. There is a close relationship between the strategic processes and the management processes. The costs and quality of the information provision are monitored within the *management processes*.
- Changes in the information provision must also be implemented in a way that fits in with practice. There must be appropriate skills, the correct functionality must be defined and the correct financial allocation identified. There is an important relationship between the operational process clusters and the management processes that make resources available for implementing the changes.

The examples mentioned above only deal in a limited way with the dependencies and relationships between the various process clusters and processes. However, it should be clear that the success of business information management – as well as the general quality of the business information management processes – is largely connected with the extent to which organizations coordinate the various business information management activities with one another. Experience shows this is not always well coordinated. Perhaps the most important contribution of BiSL is to ensure that from now on an efficient connection will exist between the various business information management processes.
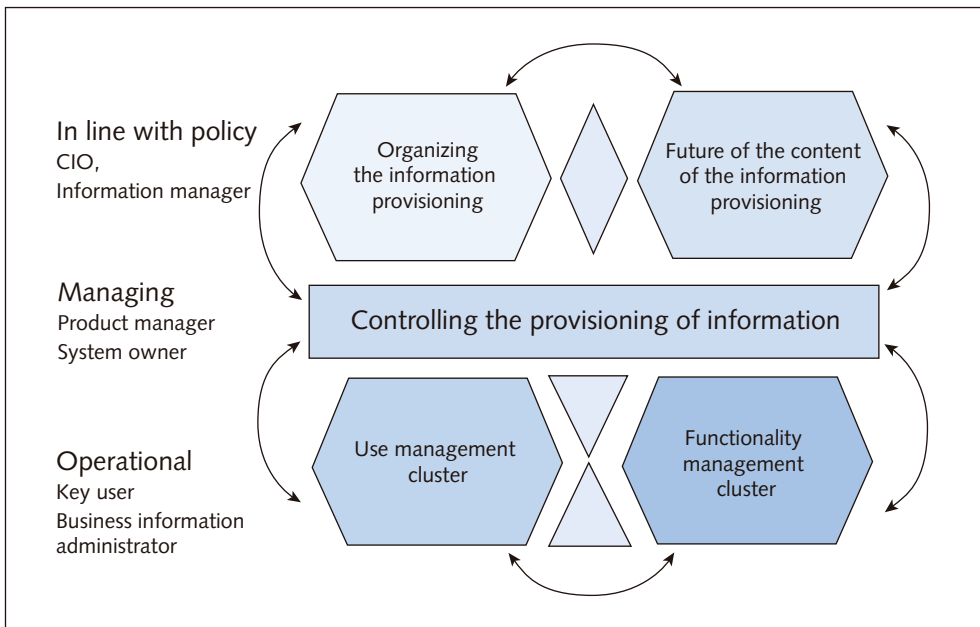

Figure 3.3 Relationships and connections between the BiSL clusters