

Managing Knowledge And Leading Change In The Printing And Publishing Industries: Creator To Consumer In A Digital Age

Learning element 3.2

Characterising Knowledge Work:

Why is the concept of knowledge work problematic?



Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis and Christopher Mackenzie

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This Learning Element is published at RMIT University

First Published in Australia in 2003
by the Faculty of Education, Language
and Community Services
PO Box 71
RMIT University
Bundoora

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[Cataloguing-in-Publication and ISBN data]

Cover image: www.kmi.ch/interaction.html

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Framework map

Managing Knowledge And Leading Change In The Printing And Publishing Industries

	<i>Empirical And Experiential</i>	<i>Conceptual And Critical</i>	<i>Applied And Transferred</i>
Theme 1: Knowledge Economy And Knowledge Management	1.1 Economic Activity And Knowledge <i>What are the defining features of the knowledge economy?</i>	1.2 Knowledge Management: Technology And People <i>How does knowledge management maximise economic competitiveness?</i>	1.3 Printing And Publishing In The Knowledge Economy <i>How is printing and publishing being effected by the knowledge economy?</i>
Theme 2: Value Chain Clustering	2.1 Searching For Competitive Advantage <i>What is the value chain principle?</i>	2.2 Value Chains And Epublishing <i>How amenable are print and publishing industries to traditional value chain analysis?</i>	2.3 Cooperation And Competition <i>Is there potential for value chain clustering in printing and publishing industries?</i>
Theme 3: Developing Knowledge Workers	3.1 Work In The Twenty-First Century <i>Who are knowledge workers and what do they do?</i>	3.2 Characterising Knowledge Work <i>Why is the concept of knowledge work problematic?</i>	3.3 Knowledge Work In The Printing And Publishing Industries <i>How can printing and publishing be conceptualised as knowledge work?</i>

Aims

Knowledge scope

Characterising Knowledge Work encourages you to critically evaluate the concepts of knowledge work and knowledge workers, particularly the economic and social forces that have led to their emergence. It seeks to highlight the problems associated with classifying what is knowledge work and what is not, and draws attention to the productivity of knowledge workers and the determinants of that productivity. This element focuses on the management of teams of knowledge workers and the potential gains for organisations who pursue the team-based option. Also considered are the implications of the twenty-first century knowledge economy for those who have not the opportunities or skills to compete in this formidable and challenging new world.

Knowledge and capability aims

On completing this Learning Element you will have the capacity to:

- ⊗ identify, discuss and critically analyse the social and economic trends which have led to the emergence of knowledge industries and knowledge work;
- ⊗ discern a range of types of work that may be categorised as knowledge work;
- ⊗ evaluate the problems associated with classifying knowledge work compared with other types of work;
- ⊗ discuss the determinants of knowledge work productivity;
- ⊗ assess the value of arranging knowledge workers in teams;
- ⊗ analyse the knowledge economy in terms of its consequences for those who are not equipped with the necessary skills and education to participate successfully and;
- ⊗ develop a proposal for a major piece of work on this element.

Important terminology

The 'Learning Framework' is the overall educational endeavour of '*Managing Knowledge And Leading Change In The Printing And Publishing Industries*'. This is comprised of three 'themes', presented in the left-hand column of the Framework map. Each theme is divided into three learning 'processes', presented in the top row of the Framework map. Altogether this constitutes nine 'elements'. The Learning Framework is also referred to as the 'course'.

Learning processes

The main learning process in this element is to discuss with fellow students the questions set out below. In your discussion you need to make reference to the readings listed below the questions. It is recommended that you also search for additional sources.

You will notice that the information included with each source indicates its perspective, whether it tends to be:

Business,
Cultural studies or
Technology oriented

In your discussions you should take account of the different perspectives represented by the readings and acknowledge those in your responses. You may wish to concentrate on one approach rather than another, such as technological change taking place in the industry.

Learning activity: Online/Tutorial Issues

Engage in Online/Tutorial discussion in response to the following questions:

- 1) What constitutes knowledge work?**
- 2) Can knowledge work be associated only with the work of the 'professional' groups? Is knowledge work defined in terms of particular professions or is it driven mainly by business and organisational needs?**
- 3) What patterns of change have contributed to the emergence of knowledge work?**
- 4) Why, according to Peter Drucker (1991), is the productivity of knowledge workers so low?**
- 5) Why will the productivity of the knowledge worker be so important in the twenty-first century? How can knowledge worker productivity be measured?**
- 6) Although much of the literature emphasises the autonomous nature of knowledge work, is their scope for knowledge worker teams?**
- 7) What are the implications of the knowledge economy for those who have not the education and skills to be able to compete in such a different and demanding world?**

Recommended reading:

To answer the questions above it is recommended that you focus on Blackler (1995), Burgess (2001), Burrows et al (2002a), Drucker (1991), Machlup (1998), Mark (2002) and Rubin and Huber (1998). These readings will provide you with a detailed introduction to the issues and guide further exploration.

Sources

When viewing this online you can click on a learning source title to go to the reading. Each reading in the list is provided with a label titled 'Perspective'. Use this as a guide in determining its relevance to the three categories: Business, Technology and Culture.

Title:	Knowledge Production and Occupational Structure (1)
Author(s):	Machlup, Fritz
Year:	1998
Book Title:	Rise of the Knowledge Worker
Editor:	Cortada, James
City:	Woburn U.S.A
Publisher:	Butterworth - Heinemann
Pages:	69-90
Perspective:	Culture
Keywords:	Knowledge Worker, Occupational Structure, Growth Rates
Abstract:	In this extract from his famous 1962 book titled "The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States", Machlup looks at how information is created, distributed and employed in the US economy.

Title:	Knowledge Production and Occupational Structure (2)
Author(s):	Rubin, Michael Rogers and Huber, Mary Taylor
Year:	1998
Book Title:	Rise of the Knowledge Worker
Editor:	Cortada, James
City:	Woburn U.S.A
Publisher:	Butterworth - Heinemann
Pages:	91-100
Perspective:	Culture
Keywords:	Knowledge Worker, Knowledge Production, Occupational Structure, Data, Growth
Abstract:	The authors follow-up on work undertaken earlier by Franz Machlup by looking at knowledge production between 1960-80. They examine the problems of the available data relating to who are knowledge workers and how many there are.

Title:	The New Productivity Challenge
Author(s):	Drucker, Peter
Year:	1991
Volume	69
Journal:	Harvard Business Review
Issue:	November–December (6)
Pages:	69-79
Perspective:	Business
Keywords:	Knowledge Worker, Productivity, Change
Abstract:	<p>The most important contribution of management in the 20th century was to increase manual worker productivity fifty-fold. The most important contribution of management in the 21st century will be to increase knowledge worker productivity - hopefully by the same percentage. So far it is abysmally low and in many areas actually lower than it was 70 years ago. So far, almost no one has addressed it. Yet it is known how to increase - and rapidly - the productivity of knowledge workers. The methods, however, are totally different from those that increased the productivity of manual workers. Source: Drucker (1991).</p>

Title:	ITABS And The VET System
Author(s):	McGowan, Andrew and Thorn, Benjamin
Year:	2002
Book Title:	Developing Knowledge Workers In The Printing And Publishing Industries
Editor:	Cope, Bill and Freeman, Robin
City:	Melbourne
Publisher:	Common Ground Publishing
Pages:	123-143
Perspective:	Business
Keywords:	VET, Industry Training Advisory Bodies, Competence, Training Packages
Abstract:	This chapter looks at the current vocational education and training (VET) system, its structures and procedures as relevant to the book production industry. In particular it looks at the role of Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs) and Training Packages, their effectiveness, strengths and limitations in providing a framework for training, and suggests ways in which they can be used and adapted to improve industry training outcomes.

Title:	Knowledge Transfer In Consulting Engagements
Author(s):	Andrew, Mark
Year:	2002
Book Title:	Developing Knowledge Workers In The Printing and Publishing Industries
Editor:	Cope, Bill and Freeman, Robin
City:	Melbourne
Publisher:	Common Ground Publishing
Pages:	183-200
Perspective:	Business, Technology
Keywords:	Knowledge Worker, Knowledge Transfer, Consultants, Information Technology
Abstract:	<p>Many companies rely on consultants and technology vendors to bring advanced or scarce knowledge and skills into their enterprise. Many also expect that in the process their own workforce will acquire some degree of this knowledge through a variety of interactions. This chapter examines this proposition. The author discusses the role of outsiders in stimulating organisational learning, and in particular the use of consultants. 'Knowledge workers tend to deal with unclear, ambiguous and contradictory inputs, where there are often many possible outputs, and are expected to produce outputs that are beneficial to the enterprise that employs them'. He provides a clear, concise and extended definition of the term 'knowledge worker' and a series of practical guidelines on how to make the most of outside consultants as a source of knowledge. Source: Cope and Kalantzis (2002).</p>

Title:	Knowledge, knowledge work and organizations: An overview and interpretation
Author(s):	Blackler, Frank
Year:	1995
Journal:	Organization Studies
Volume:	1
Issue:	6
Pages:	1021-46
Perspective:	Business
Keywords:	Knowledge, Knowledge Work, Learning
Abstract:	<p>There is current interest in the competitive advantage that knowledge may provide for organizations and in the significance of knowledge workers, organizational competencies and knowledge-intensive firms. Yet the concept of knowledge is complex and its relevance to organization theory has been insufficiently developed. Common images of knowledge in the organizational literature are identified, and a typology of organizations and knowledge types is constructed. Knowledge is analyzed as an active process that is mediated, situated, provisional, pragmatic and contested. The approach suggests that attention should be focused on the systems through which people achieve their knowledge and on the processes through which new knowledge may be generated. Source: Blackler (1995).</p>

Title:	Workforce Developments and the Knowledge Economy in Australia
Author(s):	Burgess, John
Year:	2001
Magazine:	B - HERT News
Issue Number:	11
Pages:	6-7
Perspective:	Business, Culture
Keywords:	Knowledge Worker, Business, Knowledge Skills
Abstract:	‘Knowledge workers apply and process information and data in their work tasks. The key productive input is data and information, the transformation is through processing and application, and the main output are services related to the knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired through education, learning and training, or it can be attained through creativity and innovation. The process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination has been facilitated through advances in IT and global communications’. This article considers knowledge workers in the context of restructuring of the Australian workforce. It discusses how many knowledge workers there are in Australia, the skills they have and the training they undergo as well as policy issues and unemployment. Source: Burgess (2001).

Title:	The Reader as User in a Re-Intermediated Supply Chain
Author(s):	Burrows, Peter., Coburn, Michael and Daria Loi
Year:	2002a
Book Title:	Markets for Electronic Book Products
Editor:	Cope, Bill and Mason, Dean
City:	Melbourne
Publisher:	Common Ground Publishing
Pages:	163-179
Perspective:	Business, Culture
Keywords:	Supply Chain, Consumer, ePublishing Ecology, User, Reader
Abstract:	<p>In this chapter the authors highlight the importance of those working in the book production industry to make conceptual shifts in the way they can innovate and progress. The authors focus particularly on redefining today's 'readers' as 'users'. They demonstrate how the concept of an active user, whose activity is contributing to the design and creation of a product-service, is pivotal to envisaging the future of the book industry. The implications are profound, requiring an awareness of the nature of the epublishing ecology, the way markets are conceptualised and the way in which markets are developed. Central to each of these changes is a re-modeling of the linear supply chain mentality to a much more collaborative approach, and a redefinition of the new roles and responsibilities of players in the digital production-management-distribution process. Source: Burrows et al (2002a).</p>

Assessment Task A option

You may wish to draw on the issues raised in this element, **Characterising Knowledge Work**, for your Assessment Task A (worth 25% of your overall grade).

To complete Assessment Task A you must write a proposal (of approximately, but not exceeding, 1,500 words) for the larger work that will constitute Assessment Task B. In choosing the format of this proposal refer to the range of assessment formats provided in the framework level description of this course. If applicable, you can draw on experience from your own workplace to provide examples of how these issues impact on the education, communication and/or business sectors.

The aim of Task A is to:

- (i) help you begin to format the structure of Task B; and
- (ii) help you begin to build the content for Task B

You also need to consider how you will later integrate the final work you produce for Task A into Task B.

Note: You are required to do only one Assessment Task A throughout the course.

Choosing issues from **Characterising Knowledge Work** as the springboard for your Assessment Task A does not necessarily confine you to pursuing them for Task B. For example, on completion of this task, you may decide to pursue a different theme for Task B.

Even if you choose not to base your Assessment Task on the issues raised in this element, the knowledge and capabilities you have gained here can be fed into the topic you eventually use as the basis for your Assessment Task A.

Note: Assessment Task A must be submitted by the end of week four.

Learning pathways

Transition from Learning Element 3.2

On completion of this learning element (with or without completing the Assessment Task A option) you must decide which element to undertake next.

Some possible pathways are indicated below. You may wish to adopt these or choose an alternative path based on your own design or in consultation with your teacher.

Pathway options

After completing this element you should have attained a critical appreciation of the concept of knowledge work. You may now wish to apply this knowledge more directly to the printing and publishing industry by undertaking the *Applied And Transferred* learning element **Knowledge Work In The Printing And Publishing Industry**.

Another option would be to explore a different but related theme such as the *Empirical And Experiential* learning element **Economic Activity And Knowledge**. This would enable you to identify relationships between this theme and the element you have just completed. If you wish to undertake another *Conceptual And Critical* element you need to bear in mind that you may be covering information you have not yet encountered.

Although there is no prescribed pathway, and you are required to complete all nine elements, your pathway planning should reflect your expertise, experience and interests.

Example pathways

	<i>Empirical And Experiential</i>	<i>Conceptual And Critical</i>	<i>Applied And Transferred</i>
<i>Theme 1: Knowledge Economy And Knowledge Management</i>	1.1 Economic Activity And Knowledge	1.2 Knowledge Management: Technology And People	1.3 Printing And Publishing In The Knowledge Economy
<i>Theme 2: Value Chain Clustering</i>	2.1 Searching For Competitive Advantage	2.2 Value Chains And Epublishing	2.3 Cooperation And Competition
<i>Theme 3: Developing Knowledge Workers</i>	3.1 Work In The Twenty-First Century	↩ 3.2 → Characterising Knowledge Work	3.3 Knowledge Work In The Printing And Publishing Industries

About this Learning Element

Characterising Knowledge Work aims to develop your understanding of knowledge work and knowledge workers from a critical perspective. It canvasses a range of issues and asks a number of questions. For instance, what sort of work is understood to be knowledge work? What type of forces have led to the emergence of knowledge work? Is knowledge work productive compared to the work conducted in previous decades and centuries? This learning element also encourages you to think about the potential for knowledge workers to operate in teams and the emergence of social pressures as a result of the transition to knowledge-based economies.

Keywords

Education
Knowledge
Knowledge Management
Knowledge Worker
Productivity
Profession
Professional Group
Teams
Work