

worth much if patrons or customers can't locate the information they need, the most complete corporate intelligence is useless without a means of identifying it for archiving and later retrieval.

A common contextual framework is mandatory in every successful KM initiative because words can have different meanings, depending on context and the perspectives of those involved. For example, the word “fish” may bring to mind a goldfish in a fish tank for a child, a marlin struggling on a line—that is, the action of fishing—for a fisherman, a plate with slab of seared salmon for an urban professional, or a box of frozen fish sticks for a college student.

### **Professional Databases**

Professional or commercial databases and search engines contribute to the knowledge acquisition phase of virtually every knowledge organization. Organizations with access to these professional databases can save time and money that would otherwise be wasted on duplicating the effort involved in locating the information. In addition, the organization probably wouldn't meet the quality standards established by the companies offering professional databases. With access to the proper database and search tools, in-house expertise can be rapidly augmented with knowledge from outside sources. Dozens of fee-for-access databases exist that typically contain thousands of journal articles and industry-specific information.

### **Application-Specific Programs**

The KM process typically is facilitated through groupware and other networked applications. However, hundreds of stand-alone, application-specific programs can be used in niche areas to save knowledge workers time and decrease errors. For example, there exist specialized, stand-alone applications designed to support the evaluation of employees, to balance