Knowledge Management draws on technologies and approaches developed in virtually every field of computer science. For example, knowledge creation and acquisition benefit from technologies such as data mining, text summarizing, a variety of graphical tools, the use of intelligent agents, and a variety of information retrieval methodologies. Knowledge archiving and access benefit from information repositories and database tools. Knowledge use and transfer benefit from interface tools, intranets and internets, groupware, decision support tools, and collaborative systems. In addition, virtually all of the technologies involved in the KM life cycle assume an infrastructure capable of supporting moderate- to high-speed connectivity, security, and some degree of fault tolerance. The next sections describe the primary classes of enabling technologies listed in Exhibit 5.2 in more detail.

Groupware

Groupware typically is defined as any software that enables group collaboration over a network. Examples of groupware include shared authoring tools, electronic whiteboards, videoconferencing tools, online forums, e-mail, online screen sharing, and multimodal conferencing. Each of these technologies holds the potential to increase collaboration at a distance, reducing the cost of travel and the time knowledge workers waste in transit.

Shared authoring tools include common word processing programs, graphics programs, and sound editing utilities. Although they're not often sold as such, many stand-alone applications can be considered groupware if they can access and modify a document on the web or a common server. Most shared authoring tools must be used asynchronously, in that only one person at a time can make changes to a document.

E-mail systems that support asynchronous text-based communications are probably the most often used groupware. A related technology,