the affordability and ready availability of commercial databases on every topic from current publications to industry-specific processes in fields like engineering, law, and medicine, and genomics.

In Exhibit 4.2, the primary issues associated with the creation and acquisition of information in the KM life cycle include cost, the enabling hardware and software technologies, the format and naming of information, quality control, security, and the means of tracking of information. In addition, the editability of the information, ownership, and even the language used to represent the information are significant.

Information is never free, even if the direct costs of creating and acquiring information can be avoided. Over time, the indirect costs, including tracking and archiving, can easily exceed direct costs. Indirect costs commonly include the hardware and software infrastructure. For example, in automated KM systems, computer hardware and software are enabling technologies. However, issues frequently arise over the make and compatibility of hardware used to create and capture information. In many companies, the artists and architects favor Macintosh-compatible hardware, whereas engineers and accountants favor PC-compatible hardware. Similarly, when mobility and portability are required, hand-held and laptop computers frequently are employed. As with desktop systems, often there are differences of opinion over which technologies are best suited for a particular KM application.

Software issues range from the best applications to use for creating and acquiring information to the underlying operating system. Similarly, when network systems are involved, the network operating system and its versions also can be an issue. The format of information in automated KM systems is often related to the hardware and software involved in its creation or acquisition. Issues arise when the information format is incompatible with the computer hardware or software.