TOGAF^{TM} 9 & BiSL® - Two perspectives on Business Information Management

Scope and perspective

This paper compares the scope and perspective of the TOGAF 9 and BiSL frameworks and shows how they can be used in conjunction to assure that business information management processes are executed effectively and efficiently. It is a high-level mapping. For more detailed information, see:.

BiSL   www.aslbislfoundation.org
TOGAF 9   www.opengroup.org

TOGAF

TOGAF 9 is an architecture framework – The Open Group Architecture Framework. It is a tool for assisting in the acceptance, production, use, and maintenance of architectures. It is based on an iterative process model supported by best practices and a re-useable set of architectural assets. TOGAF 9 helps business units and IT departments with the architecture of the business, information, applications and technology. TOGAF 9 is structured in the phases that are illustrated in figure 1.
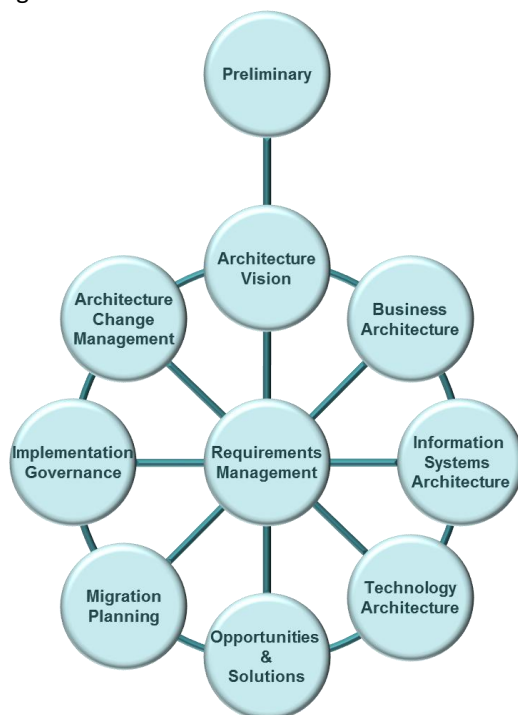

Figure 1 – TOGAF phases

TOGAF 9 describes the world in terms of Business Architecture, Information System Architecture (that is subdivided into Data Architecture and Application Architecture) and Technology Architecture. The term Enterprise Architecture is used to denote all of the above-mentioned architectures when they are in harmony with each other and the enterprise's goals.

Data Architecture is the most relevant architecture for this paper.

BiSL

The Business Information Services Library helps business units with management of information and IT from a demand and use perspective. BiSL comprises a process framework and examples (best practises) of how organization have used the framework, and guidance how to translate the model and best practices into an organization-specific way of working. The BiSL framework is structured in 23 processes that describe the strategic, managing and operational activities related to Business Information Management (figure 2).
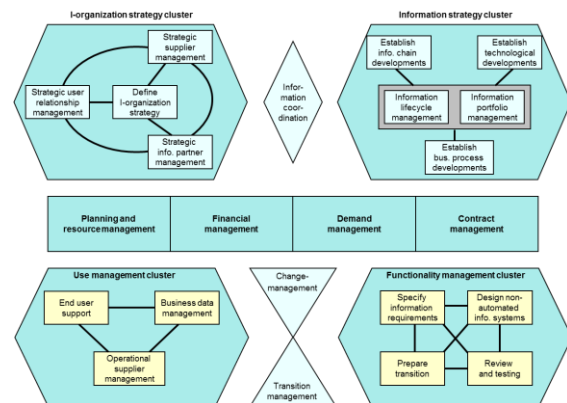

Figure 2 – The BiSL Framework

Demand, supply, use

The term Business Information Management refers not to supply of IT services but to the demand and use of information and related technology. Demand and use is the business' responsibility, as opposed to the IT departments'.

Reach and grasp

The trouble with frameworks, as Charles Betz eloquently puts it, is that they eventually find that their reach exceeds their grasp. In other words, experts start off by describing their core domain and then in subsequent versions of the framework expand the scope to include related domains. While this is valuable, providing insight into the broader 'ecosystem', the guidance is never as detailed and credible as guidance that other specialized frameworks provide. Such is the case with BiSL and TOGAF 9.

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In figure 3 below, TOGAF's reach addresses the business, information and IT, while its core competence focuses on information and IT, and architecture rather than design. BiSL's reach covers the whole information domain, including architecture, while its core guidance is about design, realization, implementation, operations and support.
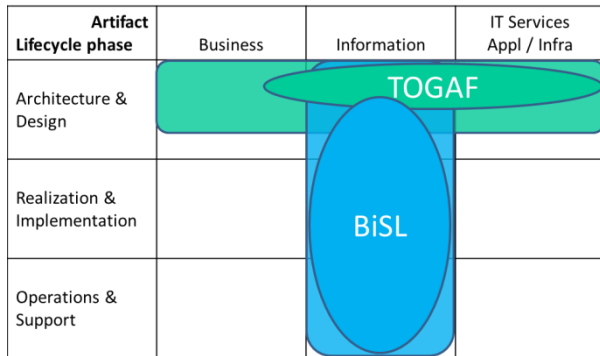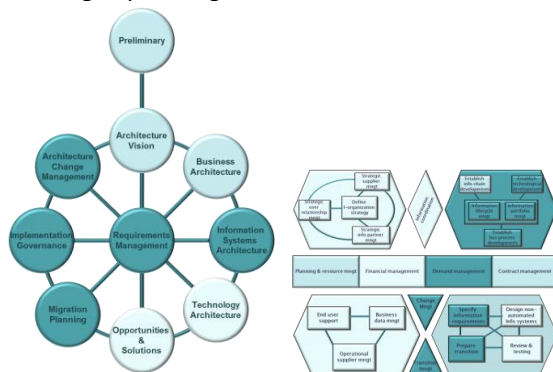

Figure 3 – TOGAF 9 – BiSL mapping

TOGAF 9 and BiSL

The mapping above illustrates how TOGAF 9 complements BiSL with detailed guidance for information (and data) architecture. Most BiSL practitioners are generally not directly involved in the creation of architecture yet TOGAF 9 give them insight into this domain and how it is related to the other architectural domains across the whole enterprise. Conversely, BiSL complements TOGAF 9 with guidance as to how execute the non-architectural lifecycle phases. While architects are generally not directly involved in the execution of these phases, BiSL gives them insight into the activities that are informed and directed by the information architecture.

The following two figures show a more detailed comparison of the overlap (dark) in scope, with differing depths of guidance.

Power of perspectives

"Essentially all models are wrong, but some are useful." This powerful statement by George Box illustrates both the weakness and strength of models. Every model is an abstraction of the real world, depicting aspects that are relevant for its intended use. And omitting the irrelevant parts. Asked how he made such beautiful stone lions, a stone carver said "It's easy. I just chip away the parts that are not lion."

The architect looks at the world through architect's glasses and in so doing, shows other what he considers to be important. The information manager does the same from his own perspective.

Framework fundamentalism

The authors are convinced that practitioners who recognize, respect and integrate these perspectives are better equipped to function in a multi-disciplinary world than framework fundamentalists who insist that their perspective is the one and only truth. As Tom van Sante says: "It's not that one model describes the world better than another, it just does it from another perspective".

Acknowledgements

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