

A construction site at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, there is a complex structure of dark metal scaffolding. In the background, a yellow crane stands tall. The overall scene is silhouetted against the bright sunset.

KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURES REQUIRE SCAFFOLDING

THE ROLE OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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Knowledge infrastructures comprise robust networks of people, artifacts, and institutions that **generate, share, and maintain specific knowledge** about the human and natural worlds.

- P.N. Edwards (2010)

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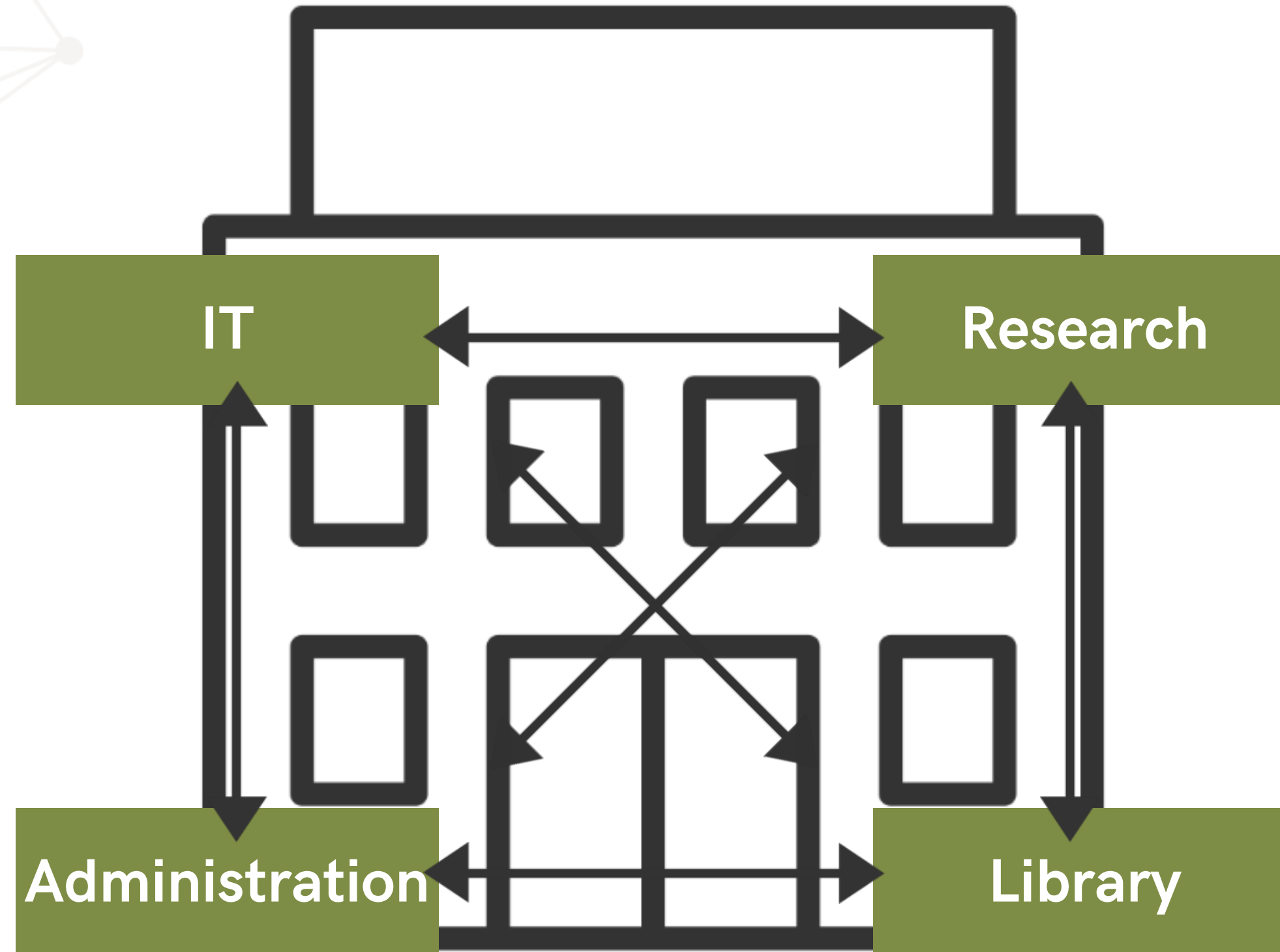
Moving Forward

Hiring, orienting and socializing employees for maximum benefit

A large-scale construction site featuring a concrete frame structure under development. Several tall orange tower cranes are positioned around the building. The ground is cluttered with construction materials, including stacks of concrete blocks, rebar, and wooden formwork. A yellow van is parked on the right side of the site. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Organization

KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE



KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE



ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Valuable

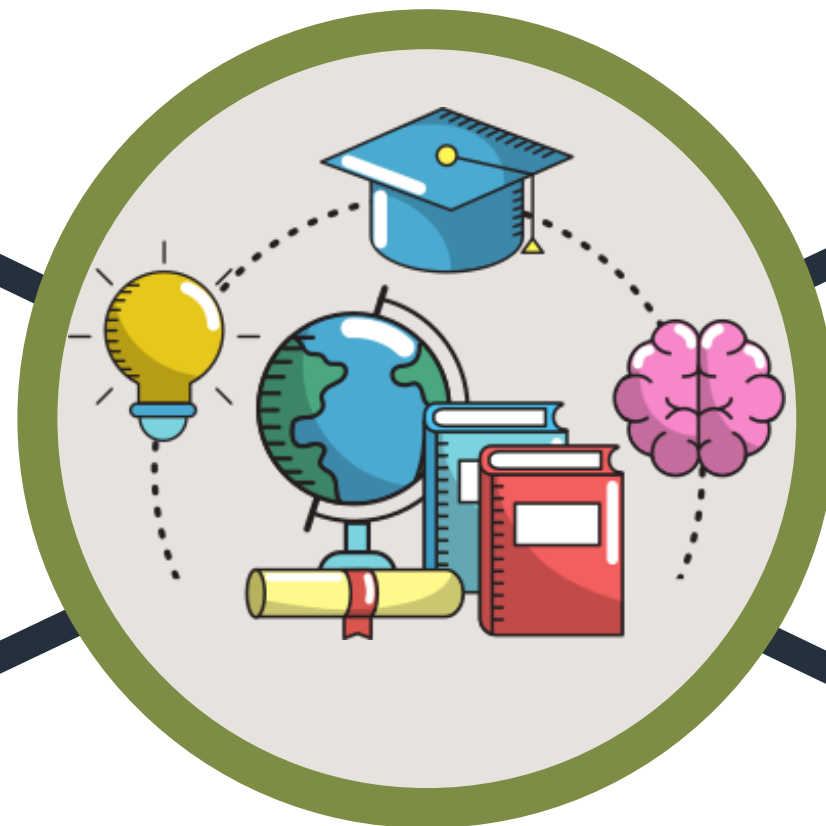


The knowledge is held in the people, processes and technologies that comprise the organization. **It is not easily replaced or recreated**, if something fails.

Distributed



The knowledge is distributed throughout the organization, held by the people who create, maintain and use the information. **It is shared in structured and unstructured ways.**



Evolving

As people enter and leave the institution, as processes and technologies change, as information is combined and expanded, the **knowledge continuously evolves.**



Multiform

The information can be **explicit** (stated clearly) or **tacit** (understood or implied without being directly expressed). It consists of databases, processes, behaviors, and more.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?



01

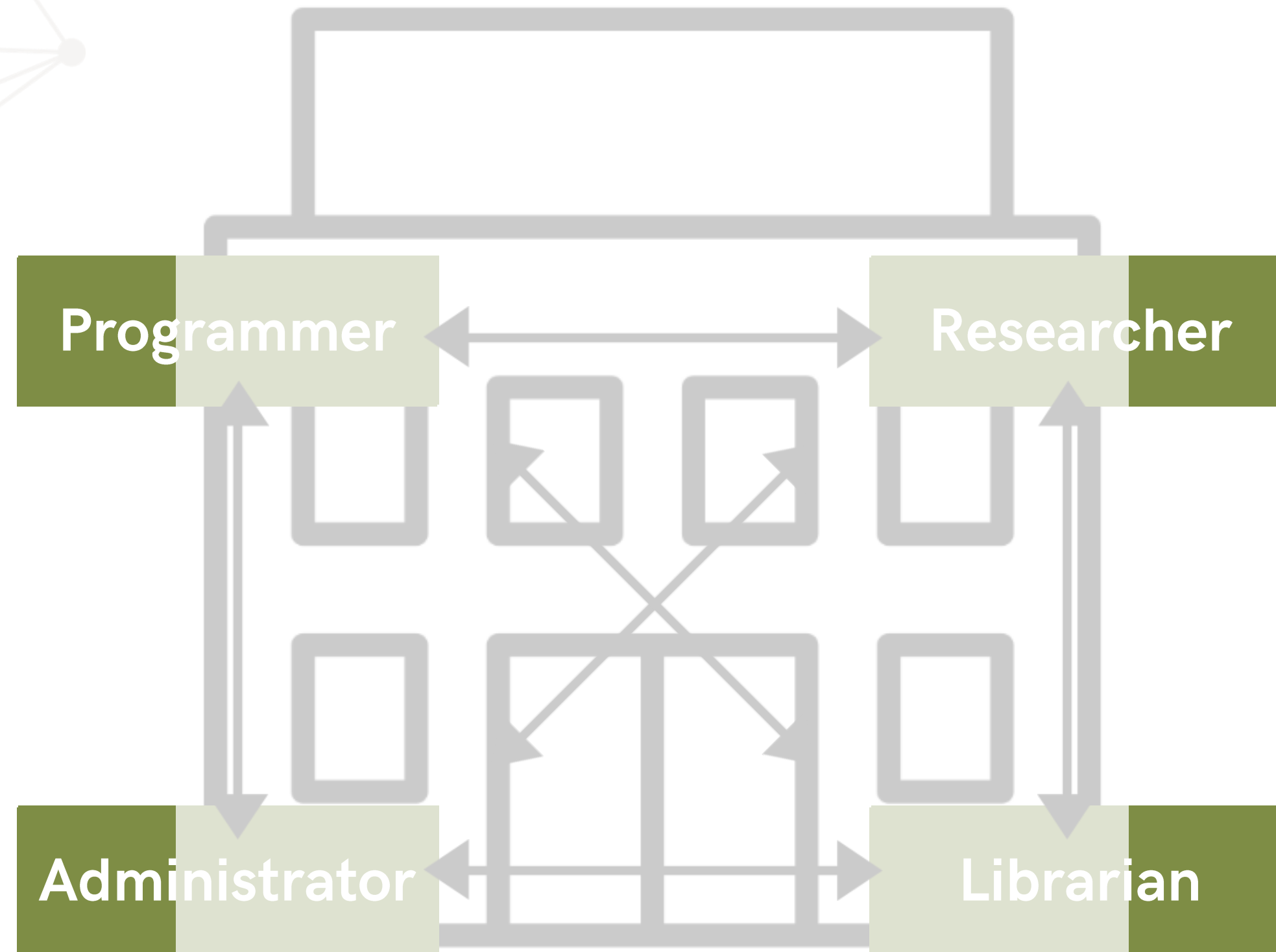
We don't know what we don't know. That is, we can't ask for information if we don't know it exists.

02

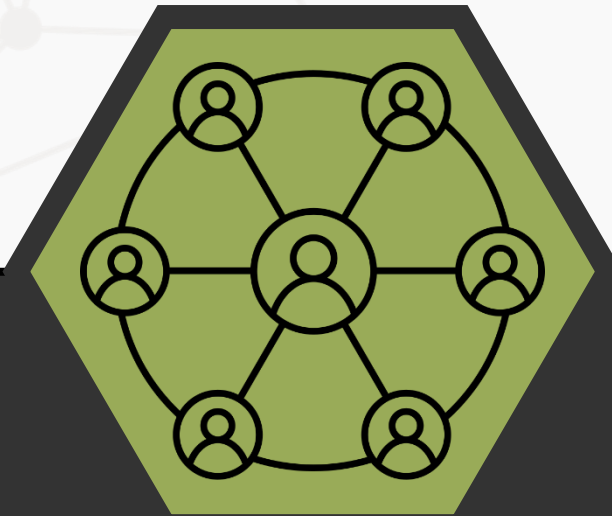
We have limited time, energy and motivation to seek information or to help others outside of our formal responsibilities.

NETWORK

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NETWORK RELATIONSHIPS



Formal Networks

...prescribed networks that consist of formally defined relationships between supervisors and subordinates and people from different functional departments interacting to perform a particular task.

- Chen + Krauskopf, 2013

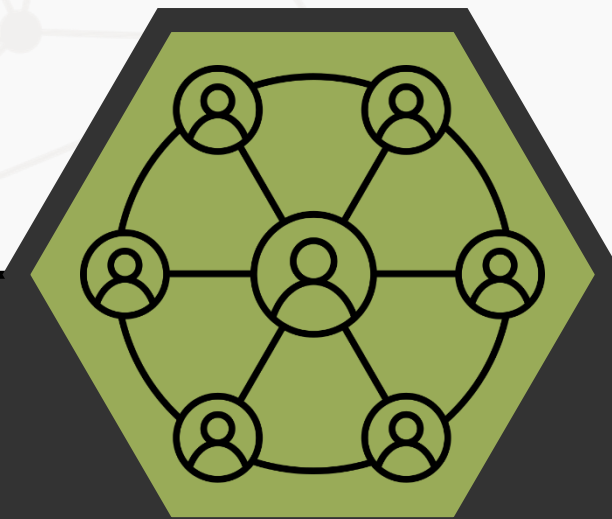


Informal Networks

...more discretionary patterns of interactions, where the content of relationships may be social, work-related or a combination of both.

- Ibarra , 1993

NETWORK RELATIONSHIPS



Formal Networks

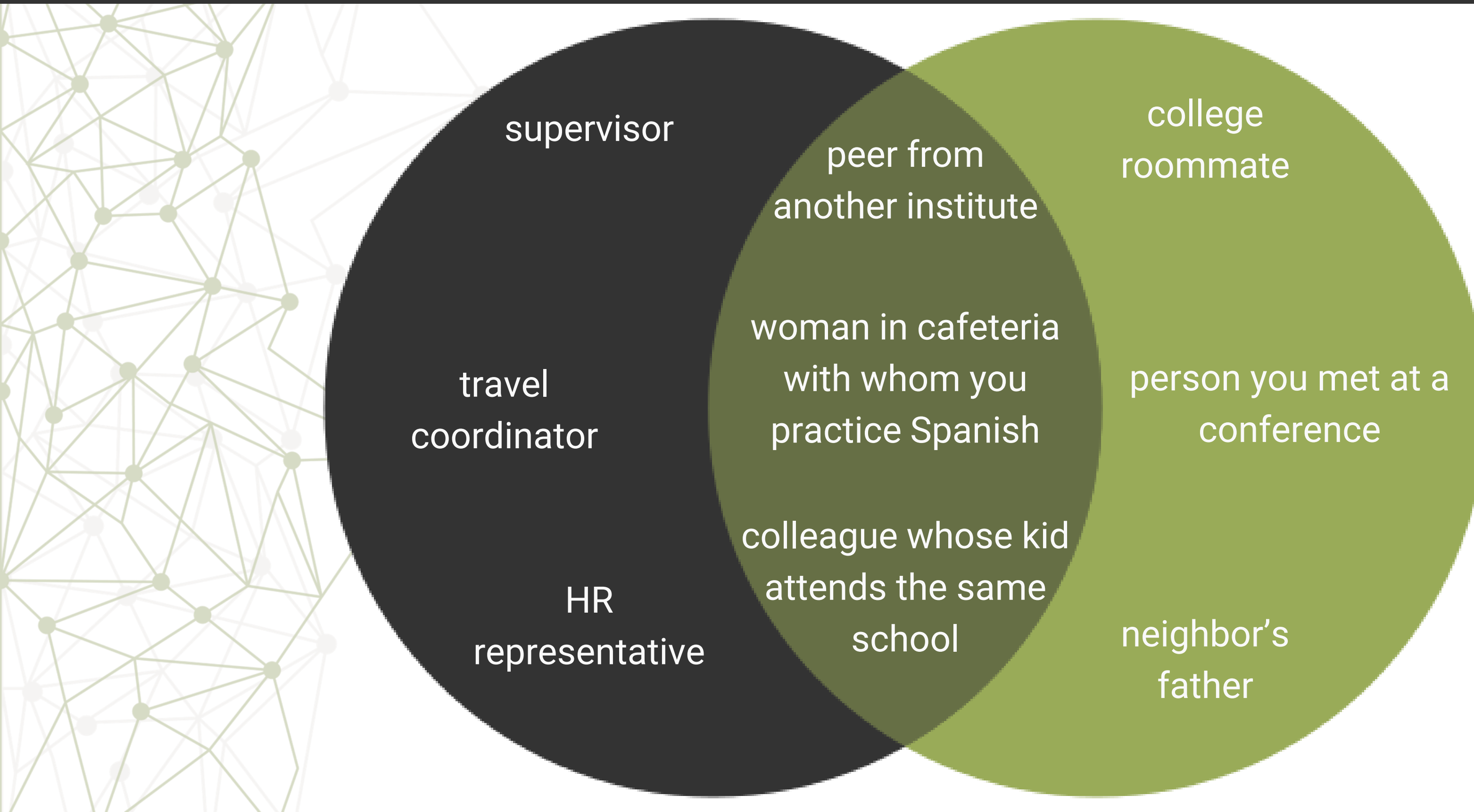
Goal-oriented



Informal Networks

Not goal-oriented...unless you want it to be.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL NETWORKS



INFORMAL COMMUNICATION



Building trust



Learning about their skills, interests, expertise, character



Learning about their network connections



Taking a mental break from our work



Enjoying ourselves...hopefully

COST OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER



↔ Knowledge transfer costs **time** and **energy**

↔ The cost is higher when:

- the knowledge is distinct
- the person is unfamiliar

↔ We are more willing to pay that cost for:

- people we like
- people who might be able to help us

“FRIENDS AND FAMILY DISCOUNT”



The cost is reduced when we **trust** and **understand** each other.



Sources of trust and understanding:

- frequent communication
- similar background
- shared experience

INFORMAL NETWORKS = SCAFFOLDING



1

External to infrastructure

2

Tailored to the issue

3

Temporary

INFORMAL NETWORK ADVANTAGES



Draw attention to weaknesses in infrastructure.



Address issues before they become crises.



Identify desirable features before they are requested.

INFORMAL NETWORK DISADVANTAGES

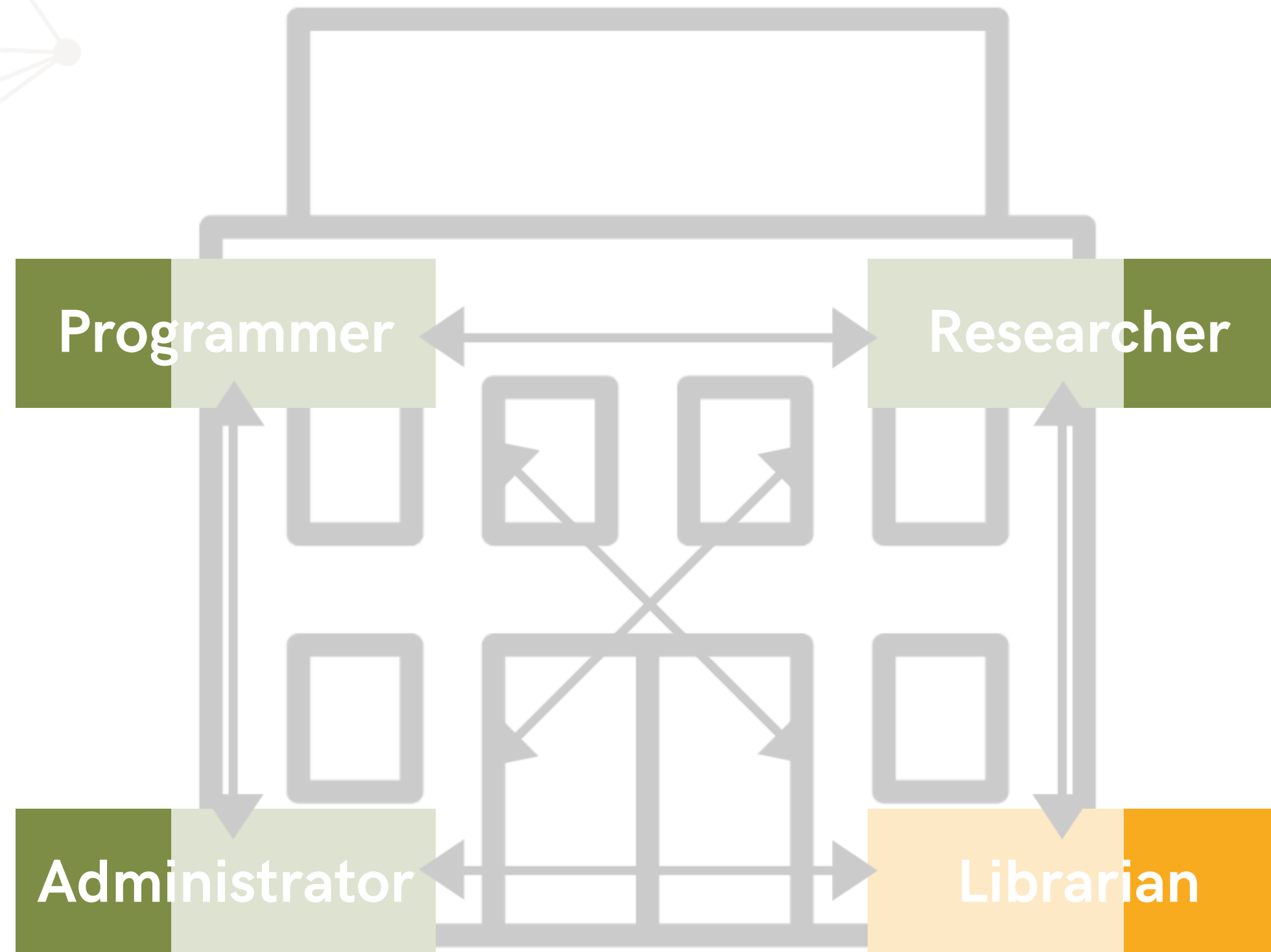


They depend on people.



INDIVIDUAL

KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE



INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIPS



Informal networks depend upon the **skills, interests, experiences**, etc. of the individuals involved.



Some connections are wide (e.g., boundary spanners):

- These provide **more novel information** by pulling insight from other work units or external alliances.



Some connections are deep:

- These lead to **more efficient teamwork** by allowing colleagues with shared experiences to collaborate with less effort.

INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIPS



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Who you know affects what you know.



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POSITION-DEPENDENT NEEDS



Integration needs depend on the role.

- Not all roles require a boundary-spanning network
- No need for every employee to cultivate external ties



Having a single point of contact has benefits:

- Trustworthy source of information
- One-stop shop for information
- Filter information in both directions

RELEVANT SKILLS



- Maintaining a robust, diverse network
- Taking multiple perspectives
- Framing issues effectively
- Connecting people across roles, departments, locations
- Active listening

TURNOVER RISK



- Tacit knowledge transfer requires the right person at the right place.
- Some networks revolve around a central person.
- Peripheral (not well-connected) people are more likely to leave.

TURNOVER RISK




“Understanding how [an individual’s] departure might impact connectivity and information flow is critical to ensuring network resiliency.”

- Cross, Parker, Prusak, 2002



MOVING FORWARD

INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

- 
- ❓ Is the position task-based or team-based?
 - ❓ Would this position benefit from inter-unit collaboration? Does this position require visibility across the organization?
 - ❓ Does this person show interest in and aptitude for expanding their network?
 - ❓ Does the person enjoy moving between groups or prefer to work with a more defined team?

NETWORK QUESTIONS



Are the procedures firmly established, or under development?



Are there changes on the horizon that might affect the way the position operates or the information it requires?



Are there known information bottlenecks?

ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS



What makes this organization unique? What would be important for someone from outside to know?



What does it mean for someone to “fit in” with the department and with the wider organization?



How do we keep the organization on a desired track?

PROMOTING INTEGRATION

A background network diagram consisting of a complex web of interconnected nodes and lines, rendered in a light green color. The nodes are represented by small circles, and the lines are thin, creating a dense, interconnected structure that spans the left side of the slide.

Strategic staffing

Mentor program

Recognition
and reward for
network activities

Informal and
casual events
during work time

Offboarding
procedures to capture
network information

TAKE-AWAY



Knowledge Transfer:

- We become more efficient at communicating as we expand our network and interact with different people.
- We can learn more from people with whom we have less in common.

Personal Benefit: Feeling integrated is associated with better long-term outcomes, such as

- job performance
- job satisfaction
- organizational commitment

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THANK YOU



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