# Communities of Practice in an academic library: a run on the wild side?

**Paper Presentation by Johann van Wyk at the 5th ICAHIS Conference held on 4-7 July 2005 at Onderstepoort, University of Pretoria, South Africa**

**Background: http://www.cheetahs-cats.com**

# Introduction

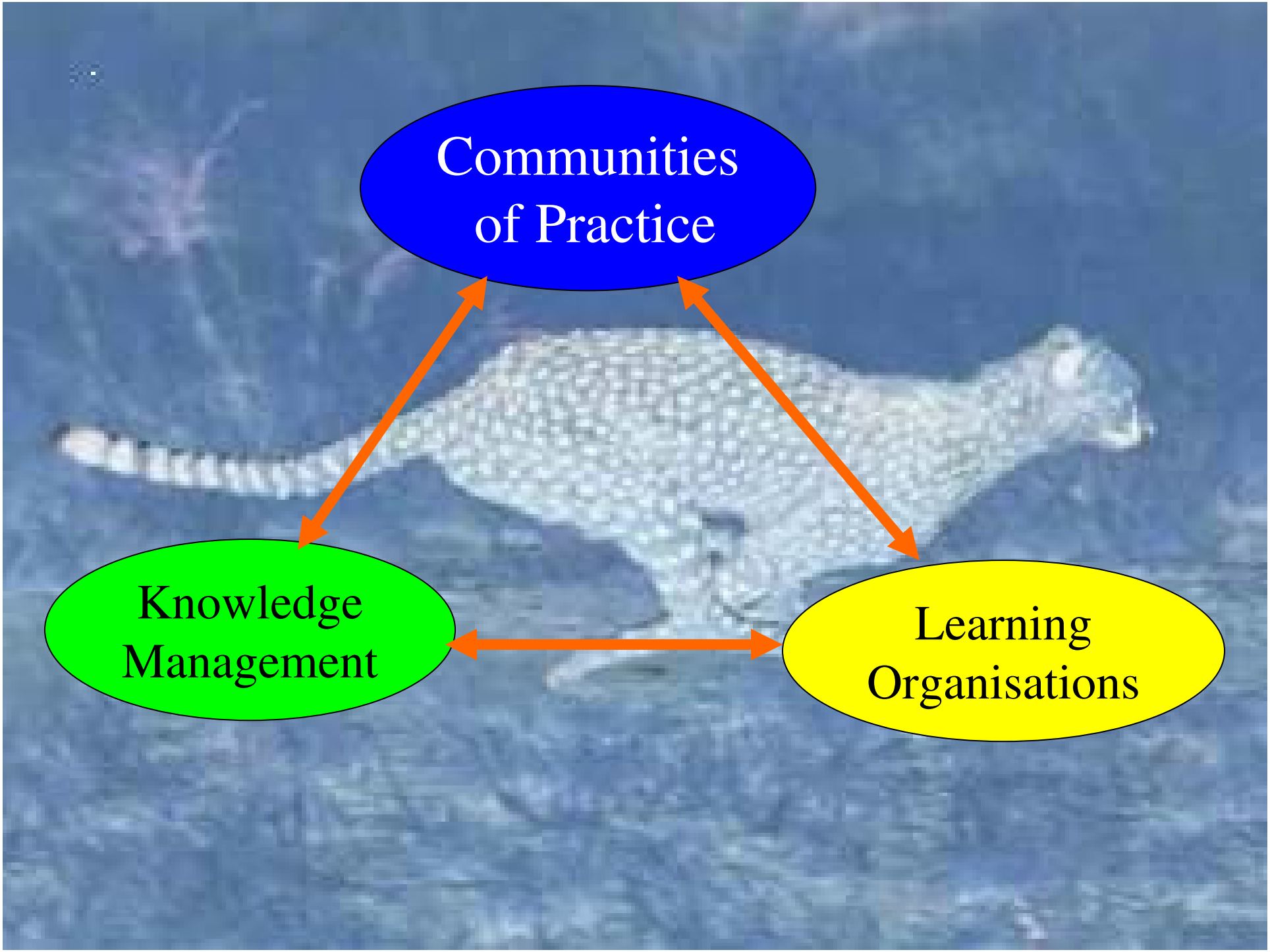
# Knowledge

- **Explicit knowledge**

- **Tacit knowledge**

# Overview

- Knowledge Management
- Learning Organisation
- Communities of Practice (CoPs)
- CoPs in an Academic Library: Case Study: Academic Information Service, University of Pretoria


Communities of Practice
Knowledge Management
Learning Organisations

# Knowledge Management

- **Definition:**

- **Utilisation and exploitation of all knowledge assets of organisation**
- **Including all its info and its unarticulated experience and expertise**
- **Ensure sustainability and competitive advantage**

# KM Definition (Cont.)

- Utilises its culture, processes and infrastructure to
- Create, identify, capture, share, use & re-use knowledge
- Adding optimal value to client's knowledge base

# Learning organisation

- **Definition:**

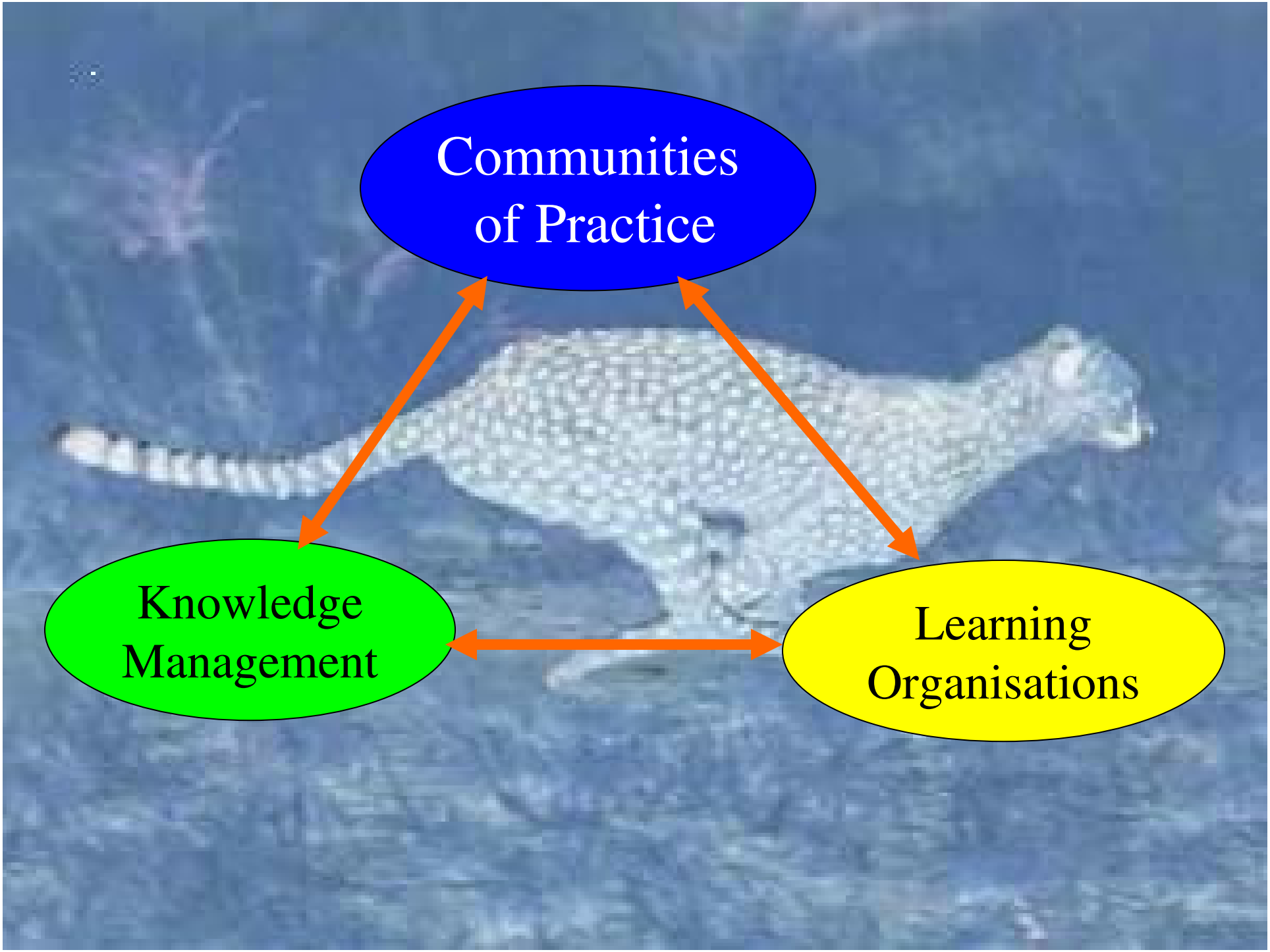
*"An organisation that can identify, develop and utilize its tacit and explicit knowledge capabilities, enabling the organisation to expand its capacity to learn and grow, and to modify its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights, and in doing so to improve its performance and success".*

# Communities of Practice (CoPs)

- **Background:**
- **Social groups: e.g. Drinking clubs, Roman Collegia, Guilds, Caste System in India, regiments, old-boy-networks, peer groups and gangs.**
- **Academic groups: e.g. Royal Society, American Philosophical Society**
- **Informal Academic Groups: Invisible Colleges**
- **Xerox: Communities of Professionals**
- **Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger**

# What is a Community of Practice?

*"A Community of Practice is a network of people emerging spontaneously, and held together by informal relationships and common purpose, that share common knowledge or a specific domain, expertise and tools, and learn from one another".*


Communities of Practice
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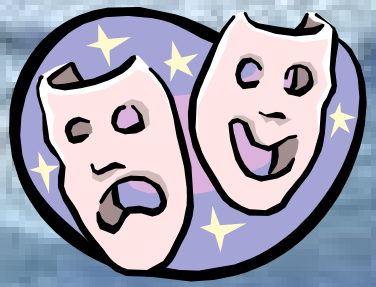
# Capturing knowledge through CoPs

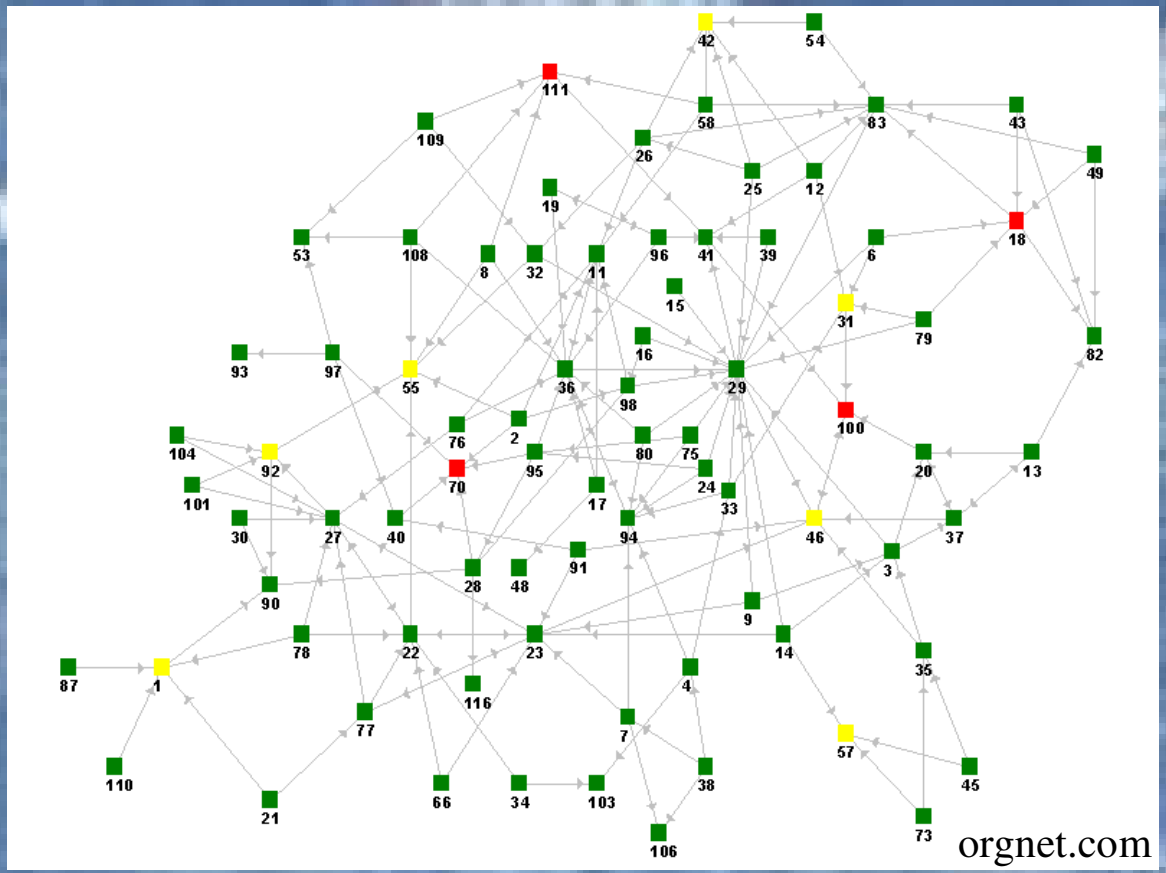
- **Storytelling**

- **Role-play/simulations**



# Capturing knowledge through CoPs (Cont.)

- **Knowledge Mapping**



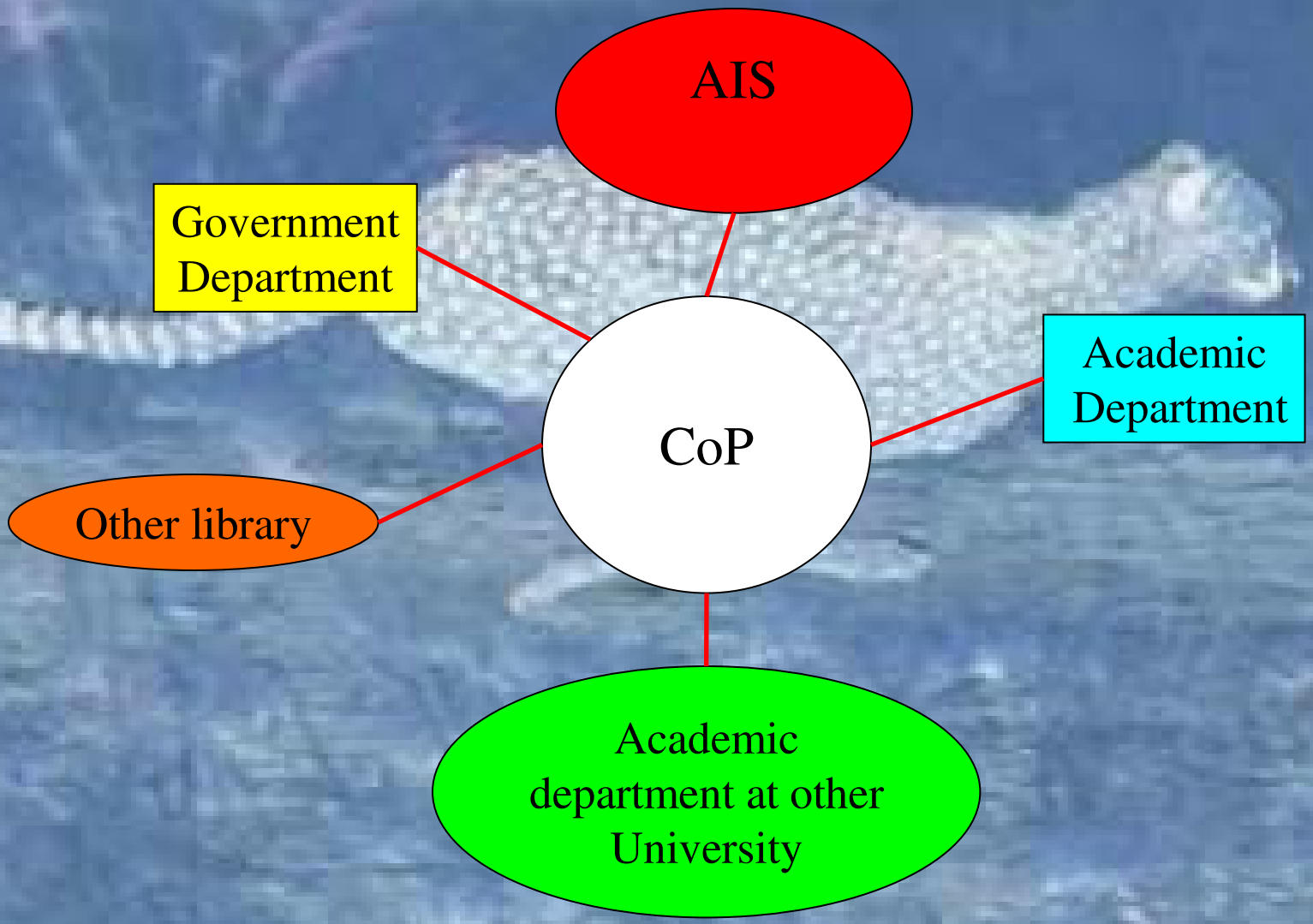

orgnet.com

# Case Study: Academic Information Service (AIS), University of Pretoria, South Africa

- Background
- Respondents
- Method: Literature study and Interviews

# CoPs identified in the AIS

# Cross Organisational CoPs

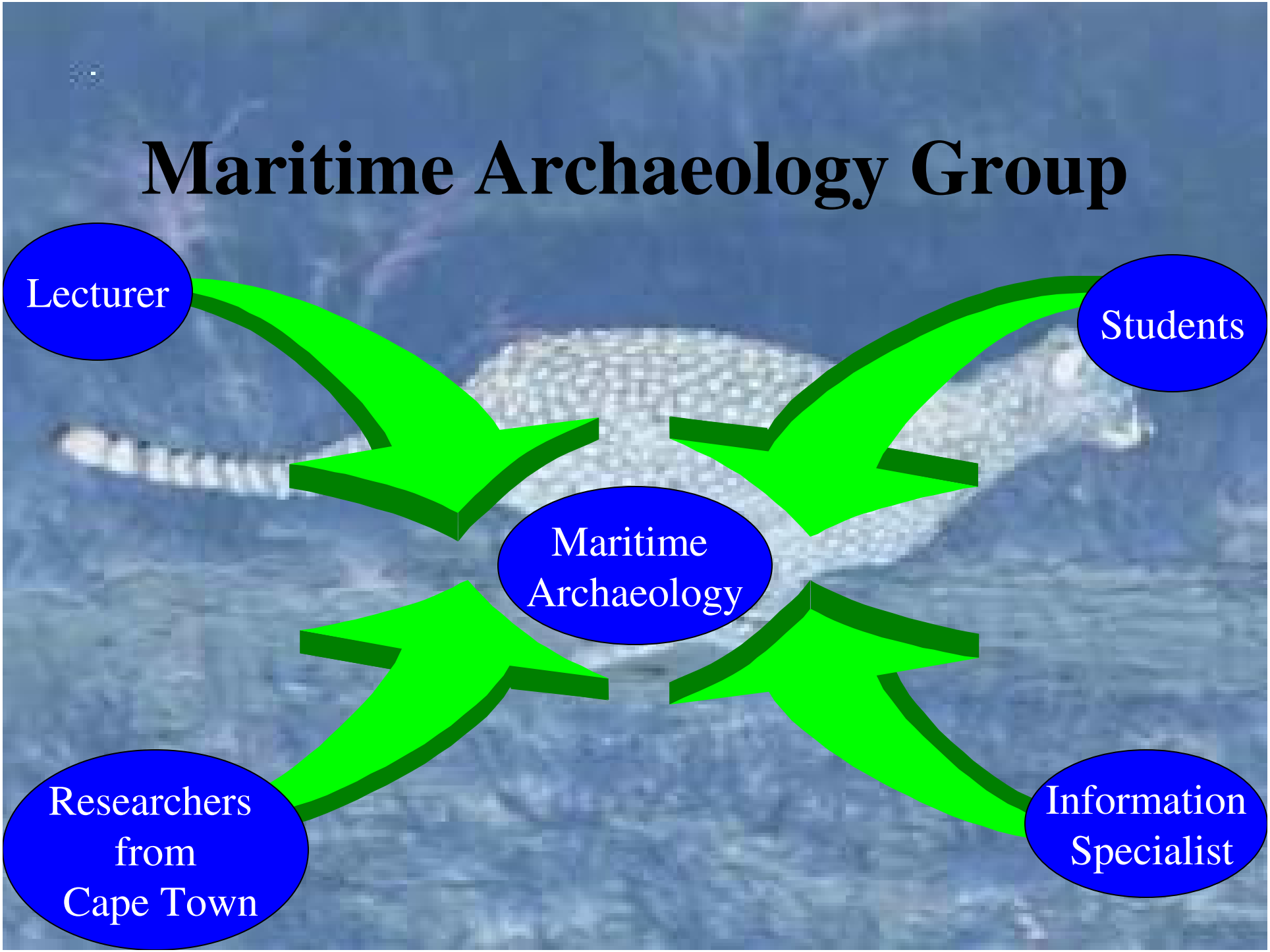


# Knowledge Management Practitioners Group of Pretoria

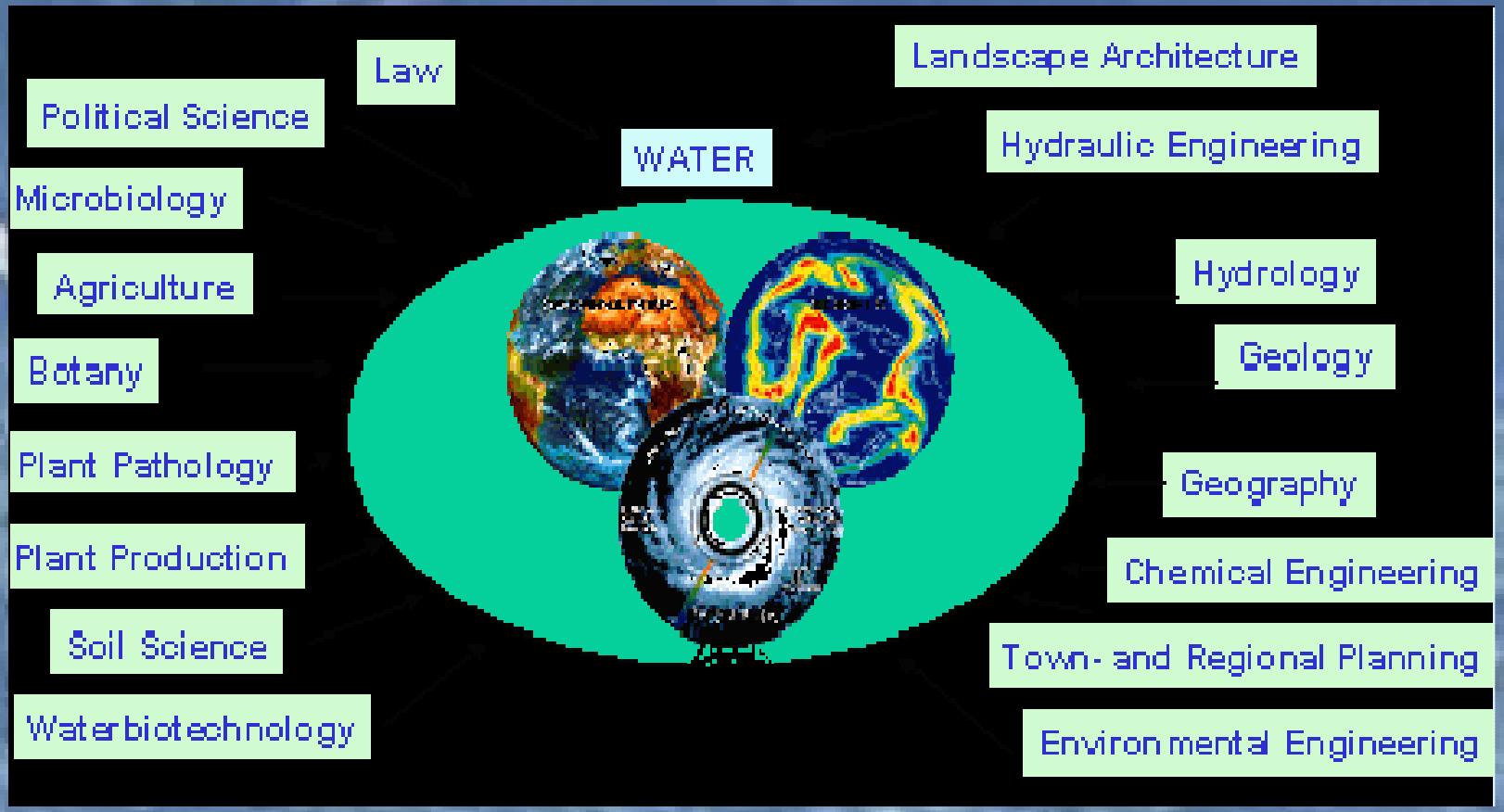
- **http://www.kmpg.org**

# GCATS (GAELIC Cataloguers)

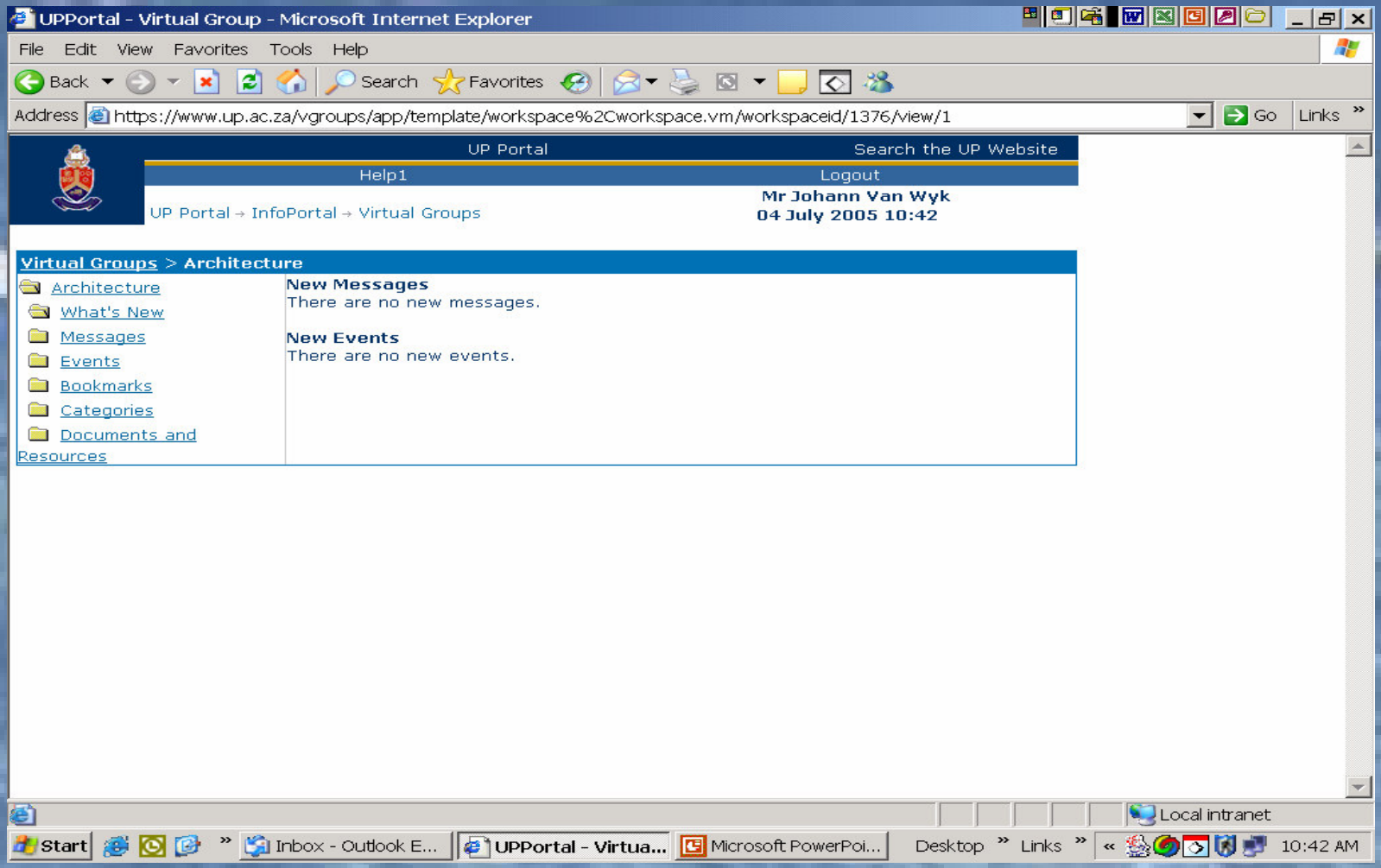
# Maritime Archaeology Group



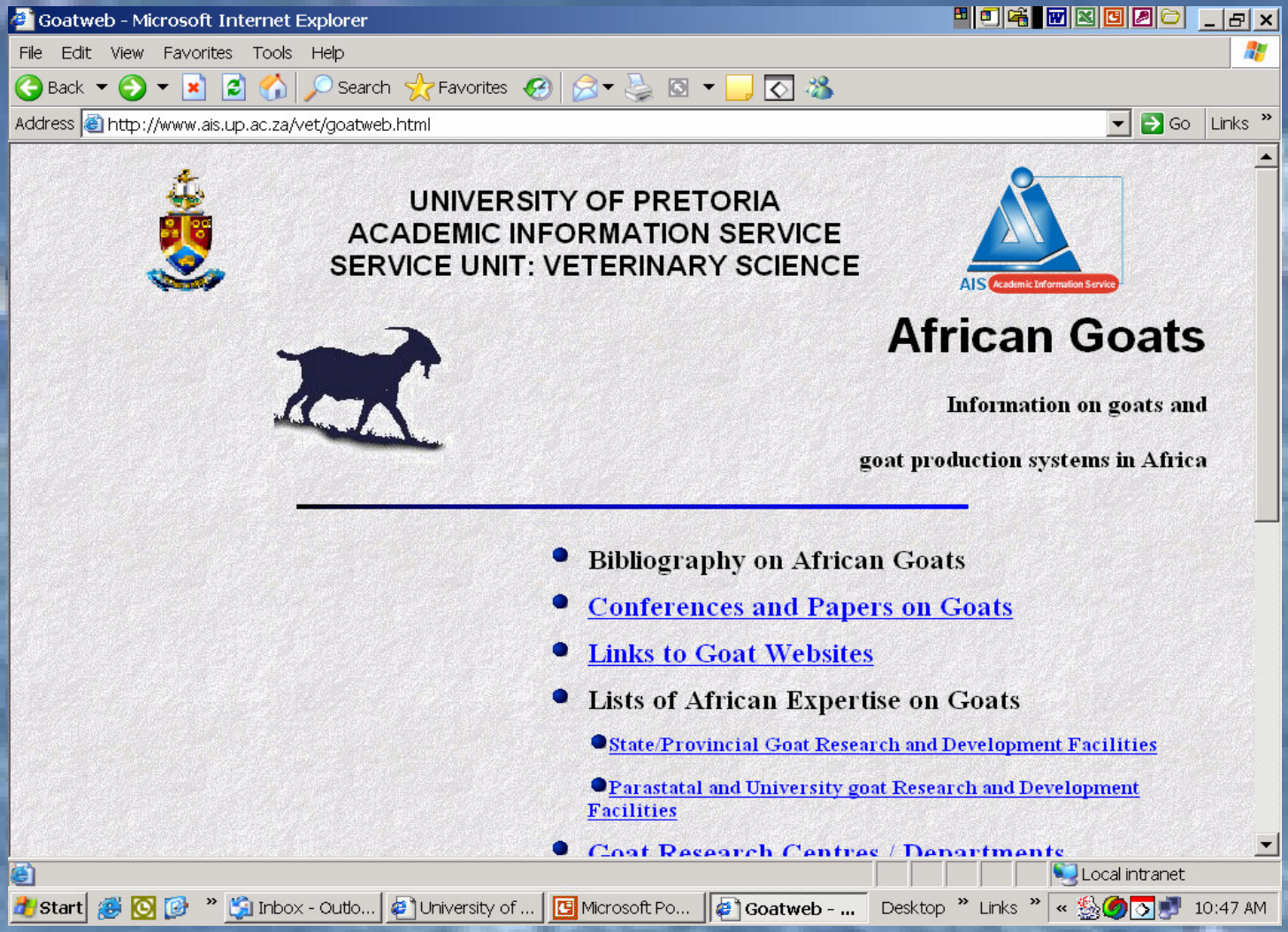
# Virtual Group on Water Research



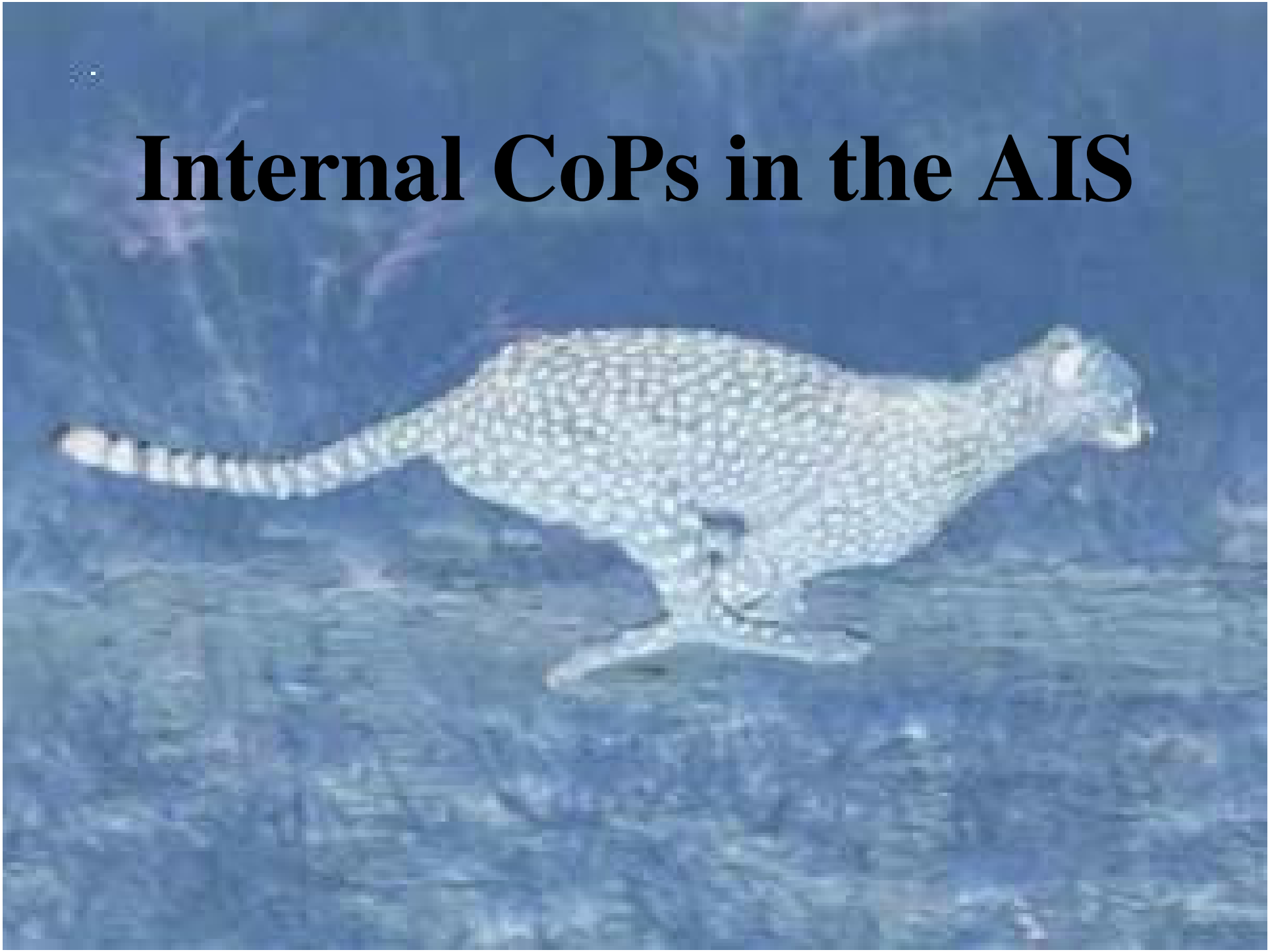
# Virtual Group on Architecture



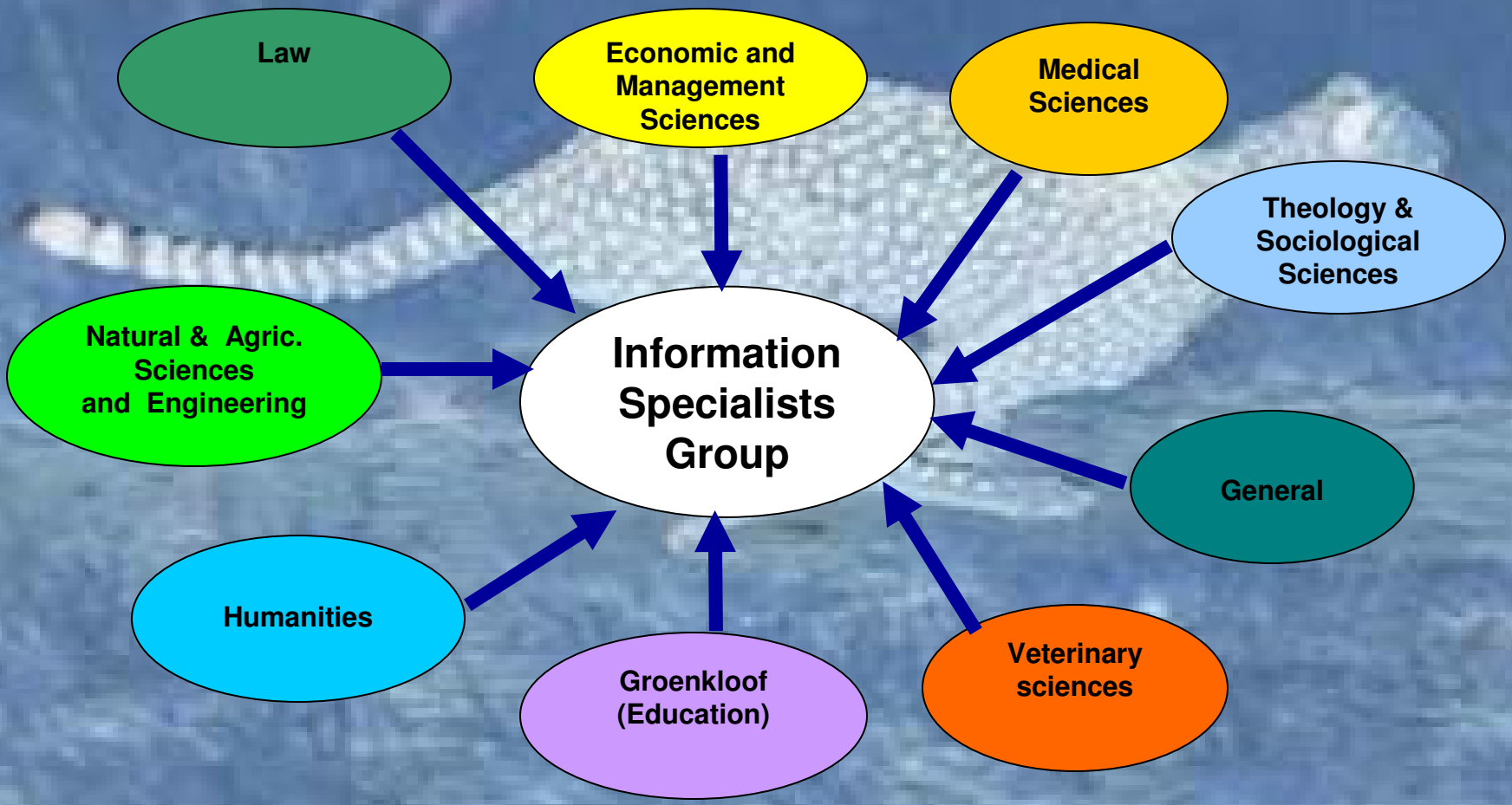
# African Goats Group



# Internal CoPs in the AIS



# Information Specialists Group



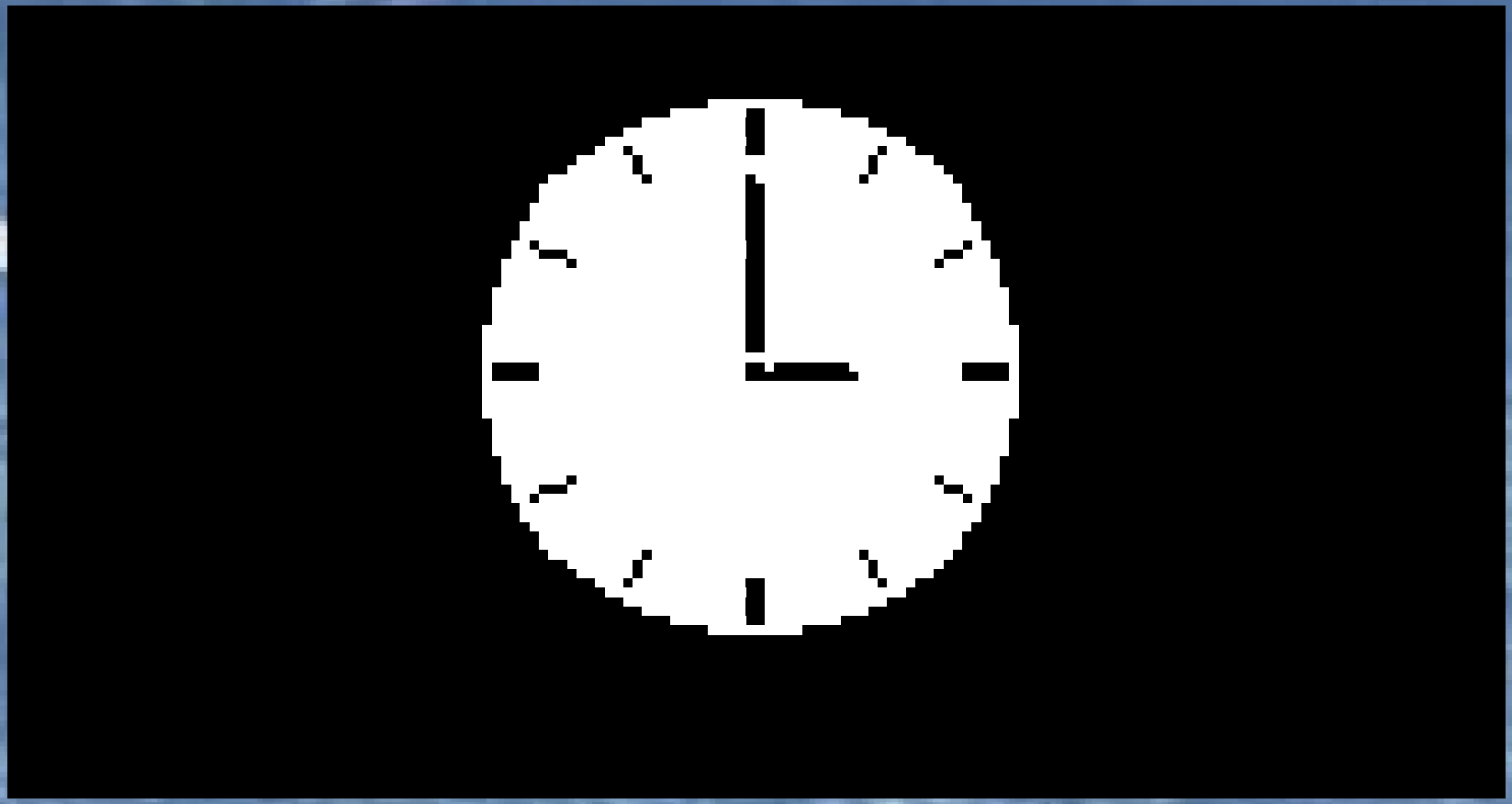
# Digital Repositories Group

# Informal Network for E-Information Experts

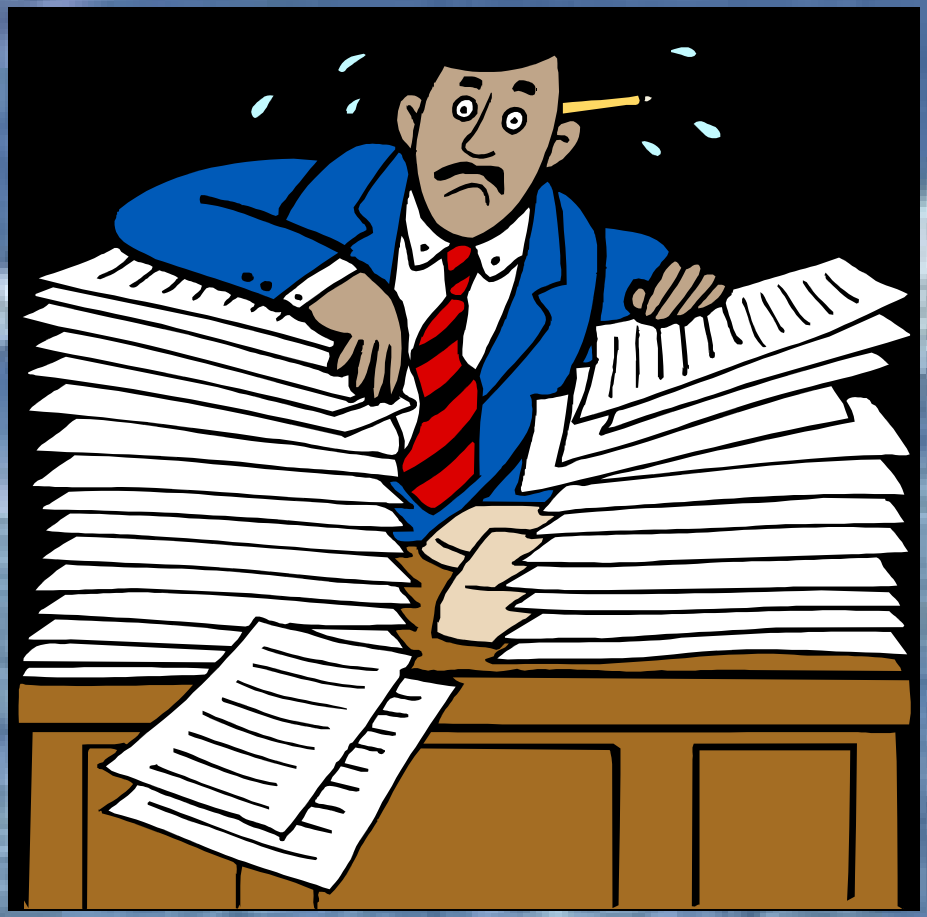
Results

# Role of Management

# Time to participate



# Workload



# Rewards or Incentives

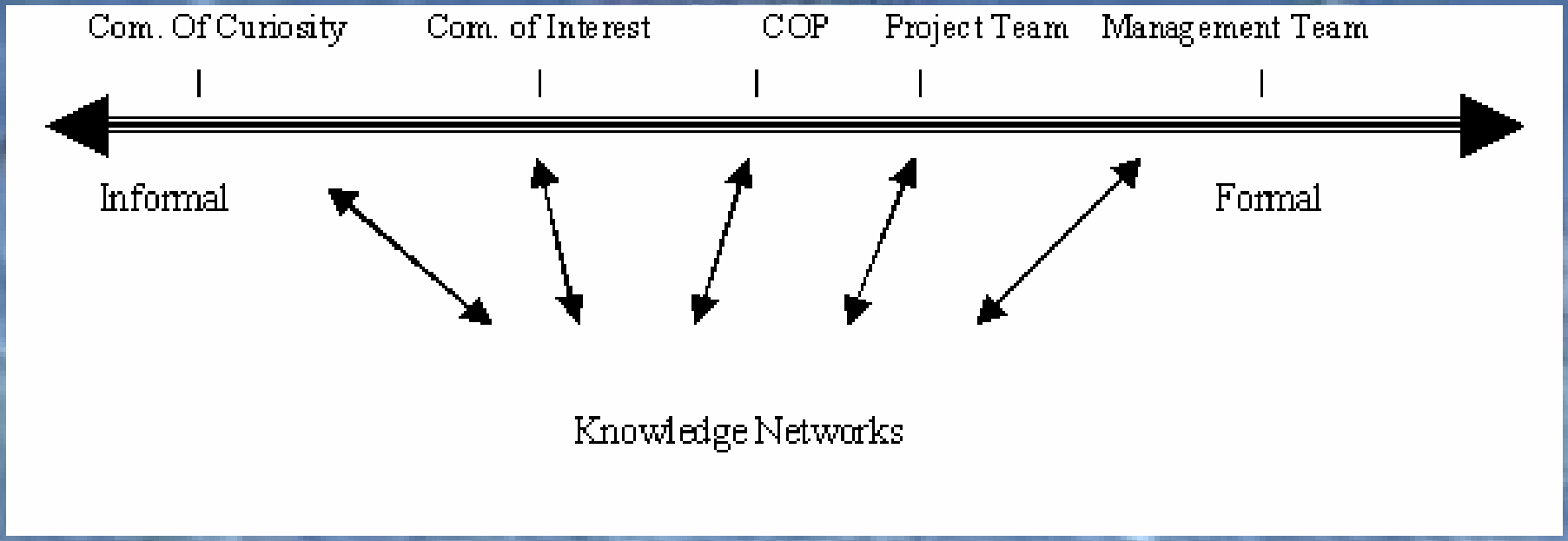
# Size of the CoP

- **Ideal size: 15 – 20 members**

# Trust

# Coordination or Facilitation role in the CoP

# Formal v Informal



# Information Technology

- E-mail and Listservs
- Telephone and Teleconferencing
- Web Pages
- Virtual Workspaces on Portals, e.g. InfoPortal of UP

# Conclusion

- Are Communities of Practice in Academic Libraries a run on the wild side?