Preface

As I write the preface to this book, I am going through my notes from the recent World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003, an unprecedented United Nations summit focusing on the global impacts and governance of information and communication technologies (ICTs). A number of provocative and profound questions were raised at the conference, which will be carried over into its second phase in Tunis in 2005.

How have ICTs affected productivity and learning? How have new media affected traditional media and international relations? How will ICTs affect the prosperity of a country? Will emerging ICTs widen the existing gaps between nations and communities or provide opportunities all around? What is the future of intellectual property in the Digital Age? How will ICTs like the Internet be governed? How have ICTs changed the way knowledge is experienced, created, shared, valued, and distributed?

The release of this book, the second in my knowledge management (KM) series of publications, seems timely in this context. With examples drawn from multiple sectors and countries around the world, this book shows how ICTs can profoundly strengthen knowledge management practices—provided, of course, that appropriate cultural and capacity foundations have also been built.

With a background in information technology (IT), media, and business and work exposure in Asia, Europe, the United States, and Latin America, my interests over the years have coalesced into the fascinating and compelling intersection between ICT adoption/creation on the one hand and (1) national cultures, (2) organizational cultures, (3) sectoral cultures, and (4) professional/vocational cultures on the other hand. This has led me to launch two series of books, drawing on contributions from dozens of experts around the world.

"The Asia-Pacific Internet Handbook" series explores the growth of the wired and wireless Internet and its impact on the technology sector, business environment, political climate, and cultural attitudes in the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. The series currently includes *Episode IV: Emerging Powerhouses*, *Episode V: News Media and New Media*, and *Episode VI: The Mobile Advantage*. (The titles borrow on the "Star Wars" movie series practice of structuring a set of narratives.) Future episodes will focus on issues like e-government; each book is a compilation and blending of perspectives from regional experts.

Shifting focus from a nation and region to an organization and sector as a unit of analysis, "The KM Chronicles"—of which this is the second book—consists of thematic compilations of essays about KM practices in different organizations and industry sectors. Each individual book is called a "travelogue" or a journey through a set of KM practices in clusters of organizations.

The first book in this series was *Leading with Knowledge: Knowledge Management Practices in the InfoTech Sector*, followed by "The KM Chronicles, Travelogue 2," which is called *Knowledge Management Tools and Techniques: Practitioners and Experts Evaluate KM Solutions*. The next travelogue in the series will be called *Cultures of Knowledge*; future travelogues will focus on KM in vertical sectors like government, manufacturing, and civil society.

Leading with Knowledge focused on IT companies, since the IT sector consistently dominates awards like the annual Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises (MAKE) awards across regions and across the past years. The most successful IT companies have certainly blazed a fiery trail on the KM front, and the book was an attempt to learn from and benchmark their KM practices. My educational and research background also includes a strong focus on IT, and I am particularly impressed by how innovative this sector continues to be and how it sets benchmarks for other industries as well.

Dozens of books have already been published about KM by consultants and academics, with expert analysis of KM practices in companies around the world—but not enough has been written by corporate KM heads themselves, who have been understandably too busy to write books. The "KM Chronicles" series of books fills that gap by bringing together perspectives, strategies, lessons, and recommendations straight from CKOs, knowledge managers, and KM heads. The clustering of books by vertical sector and horizontal themes also allows for intra-sector benchmarking and cross-sector transfer of learnings and best practices.

As importantly, this book series is a collection of *stories* about the growth of KM in organizations: about KM journeys, origins, destinations, roadmaps, speedbumps, gridlocks, and compasses. It brings KM to life as a human story, filled with a cast of characters, agendas, passions, and motives and even with confusion and conflict. The objective of the book series is to share these first-principles experiences and practical learnings with the entire KM community and, ultimately, to grow the KM discipline as a whole.

In my previous KM book, I classified business writers into four categories: *geek*, *genius*, *guru*, and *gypsy*; I fall in the gypsy category of writers who travel extensively, work with a wide spectrum of organizations, are exposed to all kinds of people and cultures, and blend multiple narratives together. This book is the second collection of my offline and online interactions with KM professionals in organizations and countries around the world.

In mid-2003, dozens of KM practitioners were contacted in person, via e-mail, or by phone in countries around the world, ranging from the United States and United Kingdom to India and Australia. Over 20 have graciously contributed entire chapters, and several others responded to a smaller questionnaire. Research insights were also culled from the Gartner Group; two sections of chapters were invited from KM consultants and vendors as well.

The diversity of perspectives and analyses in this book makes it a must read for a wide spectrum of the KM community: business professionals, CEOs, CKOs, CLOs, CTOs, CIOs, KM professionals, consultants, human resource professionals, academics, and MBA students.

All the contributors would like to thank their colleagues, families, friends, and well-wishers, and I myself would like to specially thank each and every one of the contributors for their painstaking efforts, time, and willingness in sharing details of their KM practices.

My thanks also go to the Butterworth-Heinemann team and the extended Reed–Elsevier network for their support of my various writing journeys. I am sure readers will appreciate the novelty and value of this book series and will join me in my various KM travelogues.

Questions? Fire away on the companion Web site of this book!

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Madanmohan Rao
Bangalore
madan@techsparks.com
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