

ITIL, or rather ITSLS, or even ITSML?

LinkedIn, 3 September 2014

Should ITIL change its name from *IT Infrastructure Library* to *IT Service Library*? Or should the M for Management be added to it, to cover ITSML, *IT Service Management Library*?

The statement that ITIL would only be about **infrastructure management** and used by infrastructure service providers is a fundamental misunderstanding. ITIL has been about **service management** from day 1. It describes practices and - to some level - processes and generic procedures that are commonly used for delivering **IT services**. And yes - there has been a focus on the *IT component* of the services for some time, but it has always been in the context of service management. So the I for Infrastructure, in ITIL, is no more than a historical artifact from a time that the difference wasn't perceived so heavily.

In the Netherlands some competing – or rather *complementary* - frameworks were developed, reusing ITIL practices: ASL and BiSL. The [ASL](#) framework – the Application Services Library – added guidance for the specific domain of application management, copying a lot of *generic* content from ITIL. This again illustrates ITIL's lack of focus on technology and infrastructure, and emphasizes that it has always been a *service management* framework. ASL adds value to ITIL, adding guidance on application management, but it also overlaps with it and it doesn't cover the full extent of ITIL's primary domain: IT services. Both ITIL and ASL are based on best practices, and require an implementation management method. The Dutch also provided that: the [ISM method](#) – Integrated Service Management – a generic method to implement ITIL and ASL guidance, in a standardized way with a predictable result.

Another Dutch framework, [BiSL](#) (the Business Information Services Library), also added value to the scope of ITIL by providing guidance on what we now use to call “business information management”, a domain that is only very partially covered by ITIL. This framework originates from a specific view that is unique for the Netherlands. I've visited many countries and always inquired the way people look at this domain, but I've never found it in any country but the Netherlands. It is based on the **Separation of Duty** principle in the information domain, as first applied by prof. Maarten Looijen in the late eighties. If you want to learn how this principle had led to the domains where ASL, ITIL and BiSL are finding their positions as best practice frameworks, describing activities in the various domains, I advise you to read the SAME Model ([free download](#)). Once you understand the nature of the two domains, you can immediately see the value and the position of the three frameworks mentioned above:

1. ITIL describes the service management practices of an IT service *provider in the information supply domain*
2. ASL describes the service management practices of an IT service provider in the information supply domain *focused on application management*
3. BiSL describes the practices of a service provider in the *information demand domain*.

In spite of this historical head start, the third domain is still not completely professionalized in Netherlands. It still lacks well known organization structures that deliver easily understood contributions to the information services in an organization.

Most of the support for this domain - like in the supply domain - is limited to best practices. And best practice frameworks act as reference models rather than implementation methods. So this again requires an implementation management method to bring the guidance alive and working consistently. As can be expected, The Dutch provided that too, in the [FSM Method](#) (Functional Service Management), similar to the ISM method.

So the elements seem to be there to profit from the valuable guidance in ITIL and its companions. *But shouldn't we first rename ITIL to ITSM or even to ITSML?*