Abstract
Knowledge is a dynamic thing. It is not static. It is constantly changing, challenged and tested against new and different ideas, applied and judged in different contexts and recast by people. The life cycle of knowledge is dynamic and chaotic. It reflects the human thought process. It is different from the information cycle which is linear and predictable. A critical step in the knowledge life cycle is “knowledge validation/invalidation.” Too often, this step takes the form of a check against an existing stock of information. The result is what we might call – knowledge sub optimization. What does it take to do a deep validation/invalidation of knowledge?

Keywords
Unlearning, knowledge society, relearning, DIKW pyramid, stale knowledge, knowledge life cycle.

INTRODUCTION
Four panelists discuss the concept of learning, unlearning and relearning in the context of information science, knowledge sciences and the future knowledge society. The premise of this panel discussion is that in order to truly evaluate knowledge – new or existing – people have to have the capacity to unlearn and relearn what they know. Unlearning is an emerging area of research aligned with education, psychology, neurosciences, organizational learning, and knowledge sciences. The ability to unlearn – to step outside our existing knowledge base and our knowledge comfort zone – is critical to a 21st century knowledge society. Futurists such as the Tofflers (1995) and Gibson et al (1998) have suggested in the future illiteracy will be judged not by one’s ability to read or write but to the capability to learn, unlearn and relearn. The future will belong to those who can unlearn the fastest.

UNLEARNING IN OTHER DISCIPLINES
Unlearning takes the form of knowledge invalidation in the Knowledge Life Cycle (McElroy 2003). Our ability to unlearn is essential to our ability to relearn (Senge 2006). Unlearning has been introduced to many economic sectors and academic disciplines, including economics (Cochrane 2009) (Casillas et al 2010), neurosciences (Christos 1996) (Welsh 1992), education (Dinur 2001) (Richardson 2011) (Schmidt et al 2010), psychology (Kuo 1929) (Postman 1965), (Macdonald 2002), artificial intelligence (Case & Modelius 2008), engineering (Akgun et al 2007), indigenous culture (Porter 2010), and physics (Sefton 2009) to cite only a handful of examples.

DISCUSSION
The implication of unlearning and relearning is clear to knowledge scientists. While unlearning is a core concept in Knowledge Sciences it has received little attention from the information science community. The concept of unlearning has significant implications for the fields of information science, information technology and knowledge science. What does this mean the field of information science and technology? We celebrate our wonderful history and the knowledge base that we have developed. How often, though, have we critically evaluated old knowledge and decided that it is time to unlearn something? When that happens, how do we unwire our brains? How do we decide to stop promoting these ideas?

The panelists introduce the topic of unlearning and place it in the context of the knowledge life cycle, systems thinking and organizational learning. Two examples of knowledge that might be exposed to unlearning in the field of information science are considered, specifically the DIKW (Data-Information-Knowledge-Wisdom pyramid) and some classical theories underlying cataloging, classification and indexing.

REFERENCES


