There is widespread agreement that organizations might usefully be re-considered as bodies, systems, or communities of knowledge, both cognised and articulated into practices, thus complementing their regular definition as bundles of tangible assets or systems of explicit instruction and authority. Though "knowledge" has been a focus of philosophical study for centuries, an entirely new and, some might argue, philosophically naive literature of ‘knowledge management’ (KM) has emerged and is already exerting considerable influence over managerial and organizational practice. Reviewing it one might be excused for concluding that almost everything now counts as knowledge: implicit know-how, personal experience, rule books, values, data, information, insights, as well as plans, programs, maps, organizational routines, narrations, practices, and social norms. Tools and machines also embody knowledge. Clearly we risk too ill-defined a base for effective new knowledge-based theories of either organization or management. But we still seek a definition of ‘knowledge’ precise enough to be useful for this.

The philosophy of science already offers us a vast literature about distinguishing between scientific knowledge and non-knowledge, between true and false scientific claims. Is this helpful? Students of KM are increasingly familiar with alternative conceptions of scientific knowledge: Realism, Empiricism, Rationalism, Constructivism, and Postmodernism. Yet, even for science, there is no agreement on a single epistemology or methodology of knowledge or practice. Competing paradigms have become instead the basis for divergent proposals on how to develop theories of KM and organization.

This Special Issue is not intended to produce yet another summary of what has been said so far, there are a number of these available already. Rather the Special Issue should advance the discussion aggressively beyond established positions, perhaps along lines that address entirely new philosophical, theoretical, and practical questions. It may also be that the way forward lies through a better understanding of the gulf
between cognition and practice, between ideas and their implementation, a gulf that managers must negotiate daily but which academics seldom venture into.

Specifically, this Special Issue seeks to strengthen our understanding of knowledge as relevant and useful to organization studies, to provide a framework for academic debate on the role of knowledge and its place in organization theory and the theory of the firm. We invite theoretical or empirical contributions that probe the philosophical foundations of knowledge management, especially those that compare the theoretical and practical implications of different philosophical conceptions. Relevant issues to consider are:

1. **What is an appropriate philosophical foundation for knowledge management?**

   - How is organizational knowledge to be understood? Is such knowledge a single coherent entity, a complex multi-faceted structure, or a complex of activities? Is it an “it” at all?
   - What theoretically useful and practically relevant contributions can be drawn from the classical epistemologies such as realism, empiricism, constructivism, postmodernism?
   - Do managers need or use a pluralist epistemology? If yes, how can one bridge across the different knowledge types and paradigms?

2. **What are the consequences for organization theory of taking knowledge seriously?**

   - Do we need different types of organization theory to address different types of knowledge?
   - What are the appropriate knowledge-based notions of the organization/the firm? A nexus of contracts? A bundle of idiosyncratic assets/resources? A system of routinized activities? An intersection of resources and needs? A system of cognitions and meanings? What role might knowledge play in each of these notions?
   - If we adopt a non-totalizing post-modern approach, can we bridge across the resulting multiple notions of the organization/the firm?

3. **What are the consequences for management theory of taking knowledge seriously?**

   - Can there be a division of knowledge like the division of labor, or can there only be a totalizing solution of ‘shared knowledge’?
   - If we admit divergences, how can managers deal with a plurality of knowledge types and achieve their integration? Is integration a useful concept? What are the consequences for the management of meaning and organizational culture?
   - What are the relationships between a knowledge-based theory of the firm and managerial practice?

**Submission procedure**
Papers must be sent electronically and dated before August 1st, 2005 (submitter's local date) to organization@som.umass.edu as Word email attachments, indicating Philosophical Foundations of Knowledge in the subject line. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in every issue of ORGANIZATION, also at the journal's website: http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalManuscript.aspx?pid=105723&sc=1. Papers should be between 5000 and 8000 words, and will be blind reviewed following the journal’s standard process. For further information contact the guest editors: Andreas Georg Scherer <andreas.scherer@iou.unizh.ch> or J.-C. Spender <jcsponder@earthlink.net>