Civil Service Classification Reform: Implications for Information Management

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June 11, 2007

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The Changing Nature of Work

- Personnel will increasingly need to adapt to changing conditions in the workplace.
- Personnel will increasingly be involved in team- and project-based work.
- Workers will change jobs, organizations, and careers more frequently.
- Organizations will increasingly rely on contingent, short-term personnel.

(Source: Murphy, 1999)

Overview

Discuss the design of a job classification database to illustrate:

1. principles of information management

2. best practices in information management and database design

3. common misconceptions about relational databases

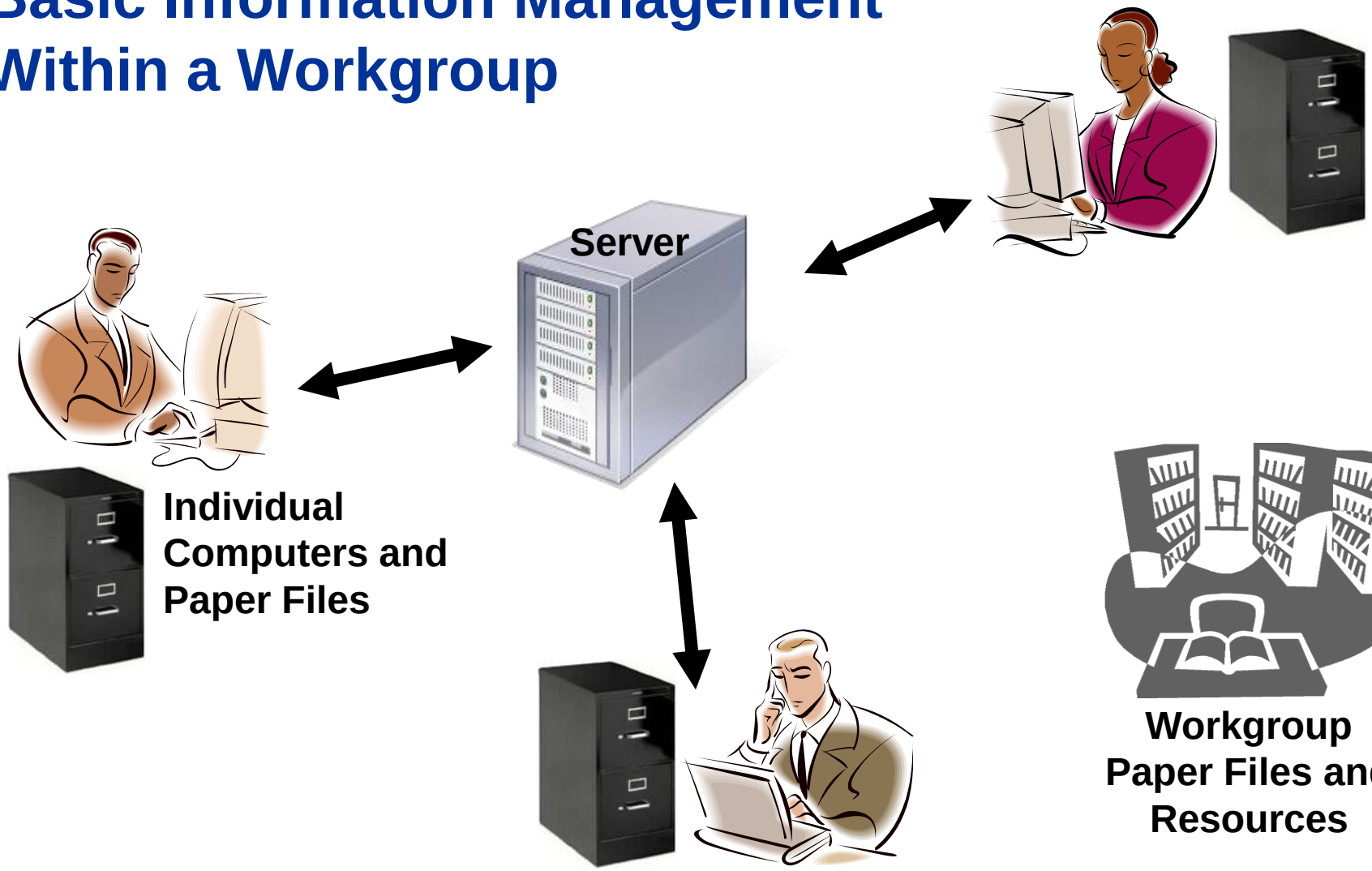
What is Information Management?

Information management consists of the methods used to gather, organize, store, manipulate, analyze, and disseminate information.

Systems involved can include:

- Individual employees' computers
- Shared servers or LANs
- Software and applications
- Paper and electronic files
- Intranet; Internet
- System administrators

Basic Information Management Within a Workgroup



Cautions

Shared information is difficult to use

- Problems with version control
- Too much unimportant information
- Information is difficult to find

Information can still be stovepiped

- Important information is not shared
- Redundant information
- Contradictory information

Potential Symptoms of an IM Problem

- Generalists and new hires feel uncomfortable making classification decisions.
- Knowledge of, and adherence to, classification policies and procedures is inconsistent.
- Substantial information about classification procedures and about specific job classes is not recoverable after an employee leaves.
- Classification decisions contradict one another.
- The classification plan consists of many nearly-identical classifications; there are too many classes.

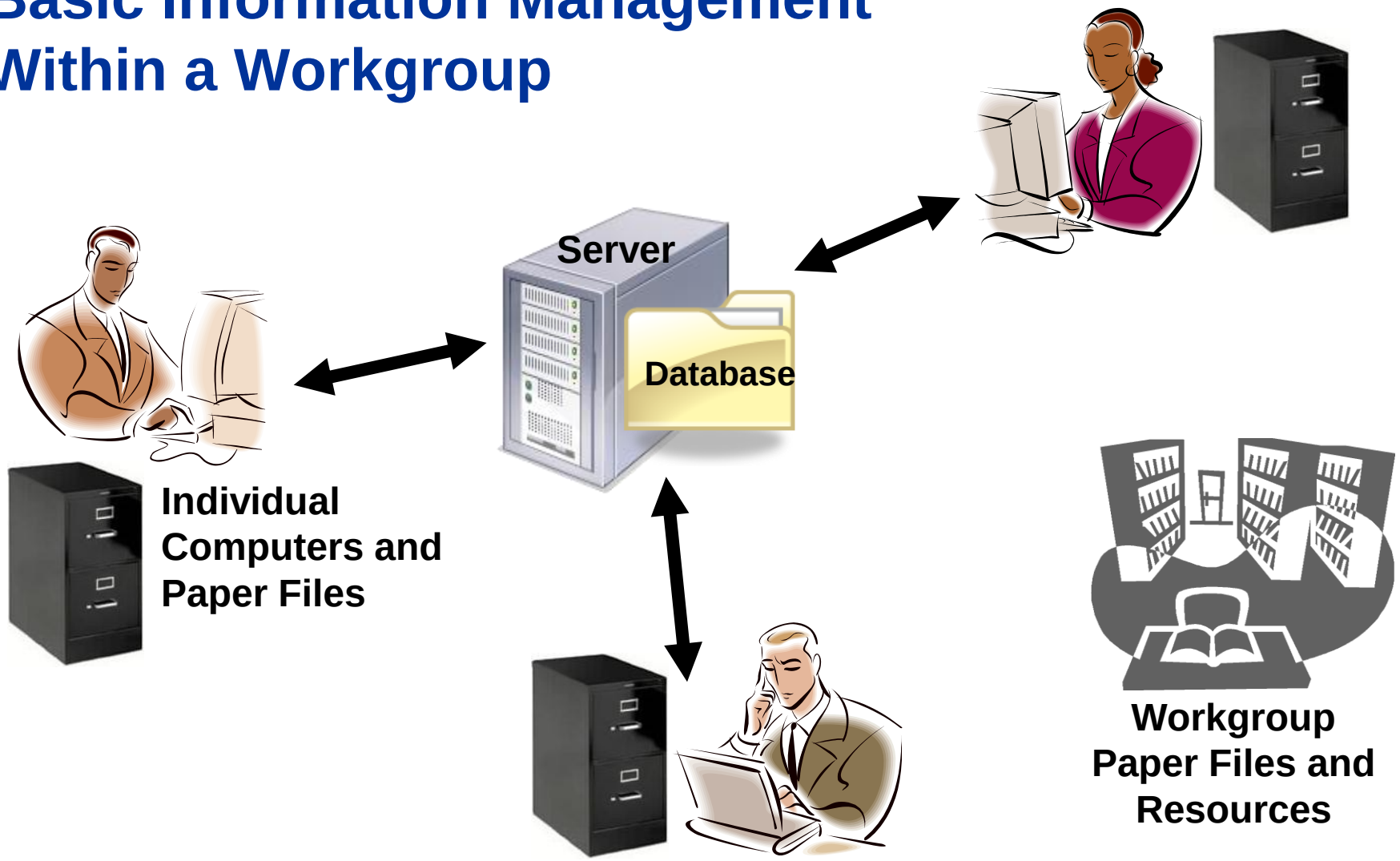
Recommendations

Centralize and Structure Information in Paper Files and on the Server

- Establish rules about what information will be stored electronically, and where paper documents will live
- Establish rules about what information should be shared
- Establish naming conventions

Utilize a Relational Database for Information Necessary to a Process…

Basic Information Management Within a Workgroup



Advantages of the Relational Database (Part I)

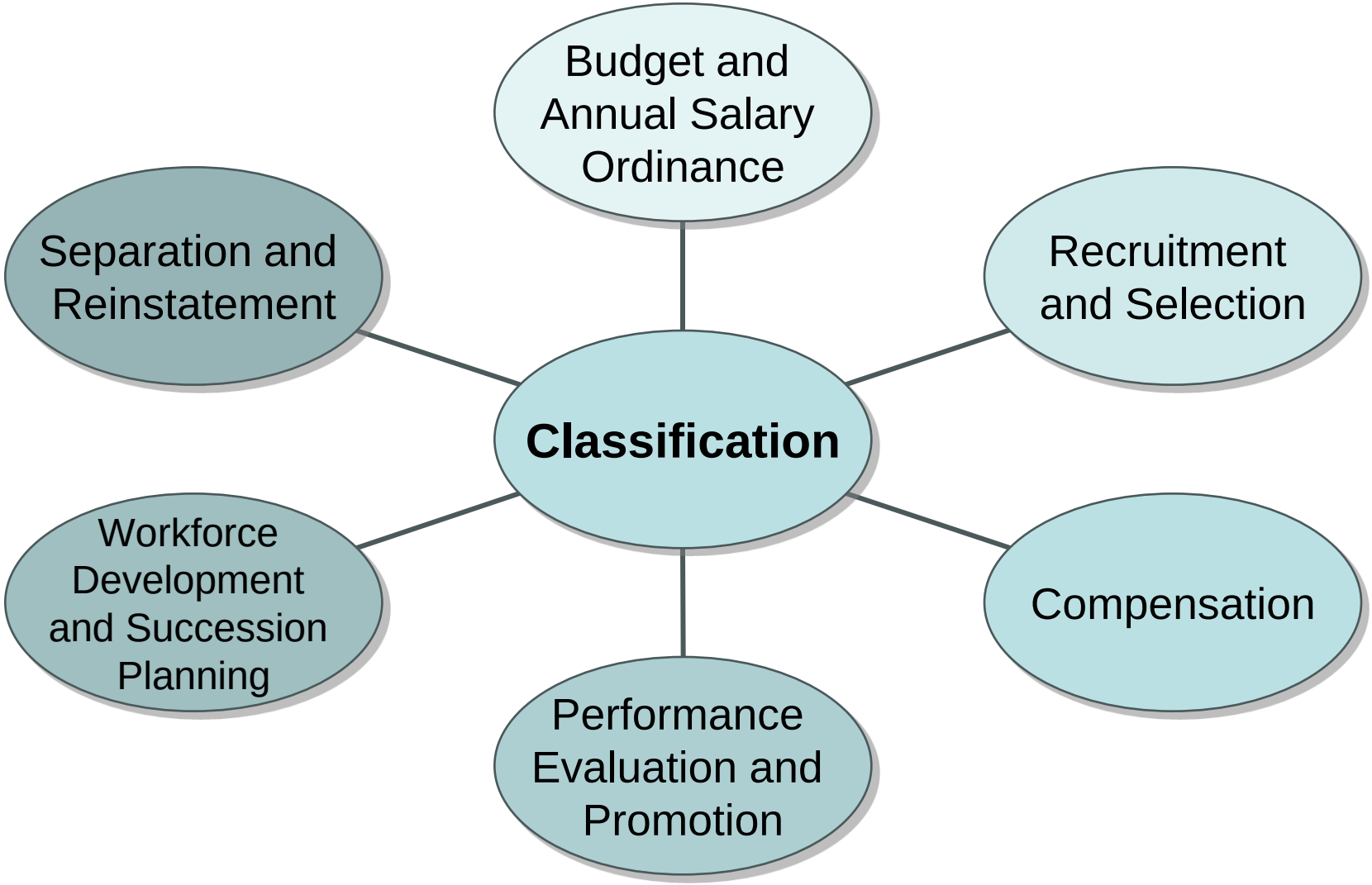
Minimize Redundancy

- Update information in one place instead of in multiple flat files
- Identify missing or contradictory information without having to open multiple flat files

Quality Control

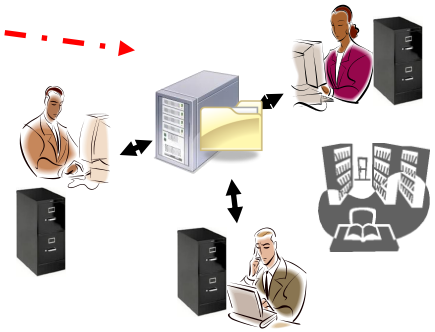
- Create validation rules for data entry
- Establish standard report formats
- Ensure that the most up-to-date information is used

Interconnectivity of Classification Actions

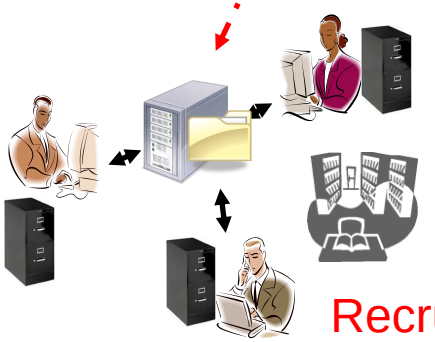


Departmental Information Management

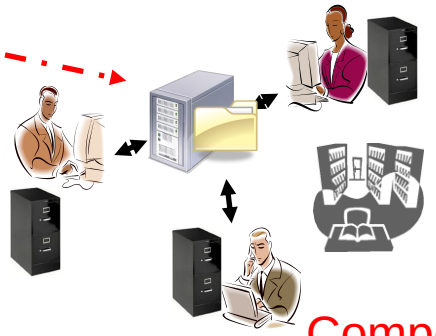
Department Server and Paper Files



Classification

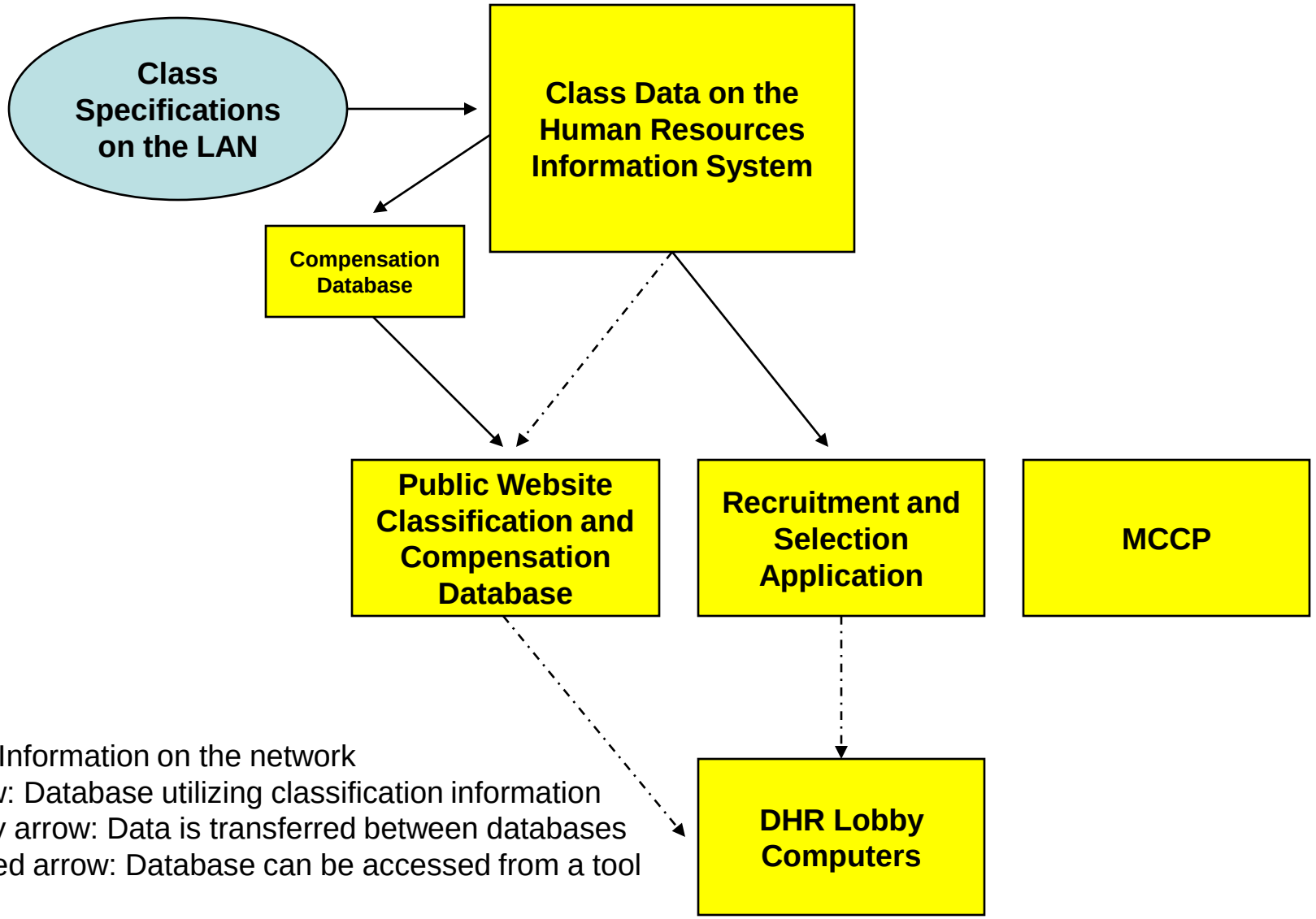


Recruitment and Selection



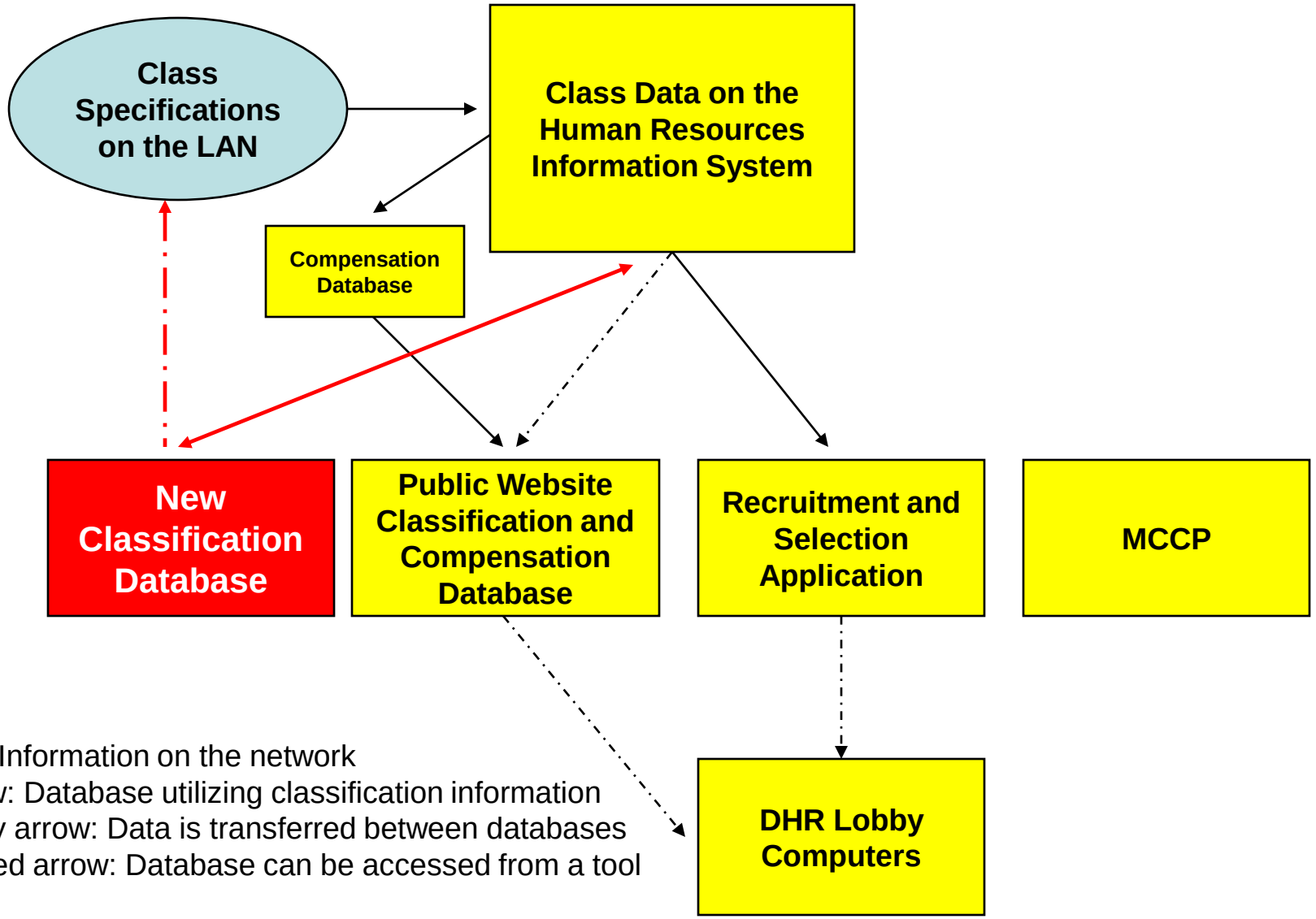
Compensation

Classification Data Flow: Existing



KEY:
Blue: Information on the network
Yellow: Database utilizing classification information
Heavy arrow: Data is transferred between databases
Dashed arrow: Database can be accessed from a tool

Classification Data Flow: Proposed



KEY:
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Advantages of the Relational Database (Part II)

Centralize Non-Database Information

- Automatically retrieve and integrate information from other databases
- Create controls to view documentation, policies, and archives

Institute Change

- Institutionalize essential procedures
- Promote certain information as relevant to decision-making
- Establish tracking functions to assign responsibilities and monitor progress

Realistic Expectations About a Database

- Developing a good database requires the most investment of time and energy in the design phase.

- A database is only as good as the information put in it.

- A database still requires periodic maintenance and auditing. Changes to the database and to the information management system should be expected.

- A database is not a substitute for statistical software.

- MS Access is not always the best option, particularly if the database intended to be used widely or if it will reside online.

- Orientation and documentation is helpful to encourage use of the system. Expect an adjustment process.

Principles Underlying Our Database

- Introduce no new data redundancies; reduce data redundancies where possible
- Coordinate centralization of electronic records with centralization of paper records
- Conformance to DHR policies and procedures
- Provide analysts with the tools needed to make good decisions
- Facilitate and track transition to new class spec format