

Transitioning the Defense Acquisition Deskbook

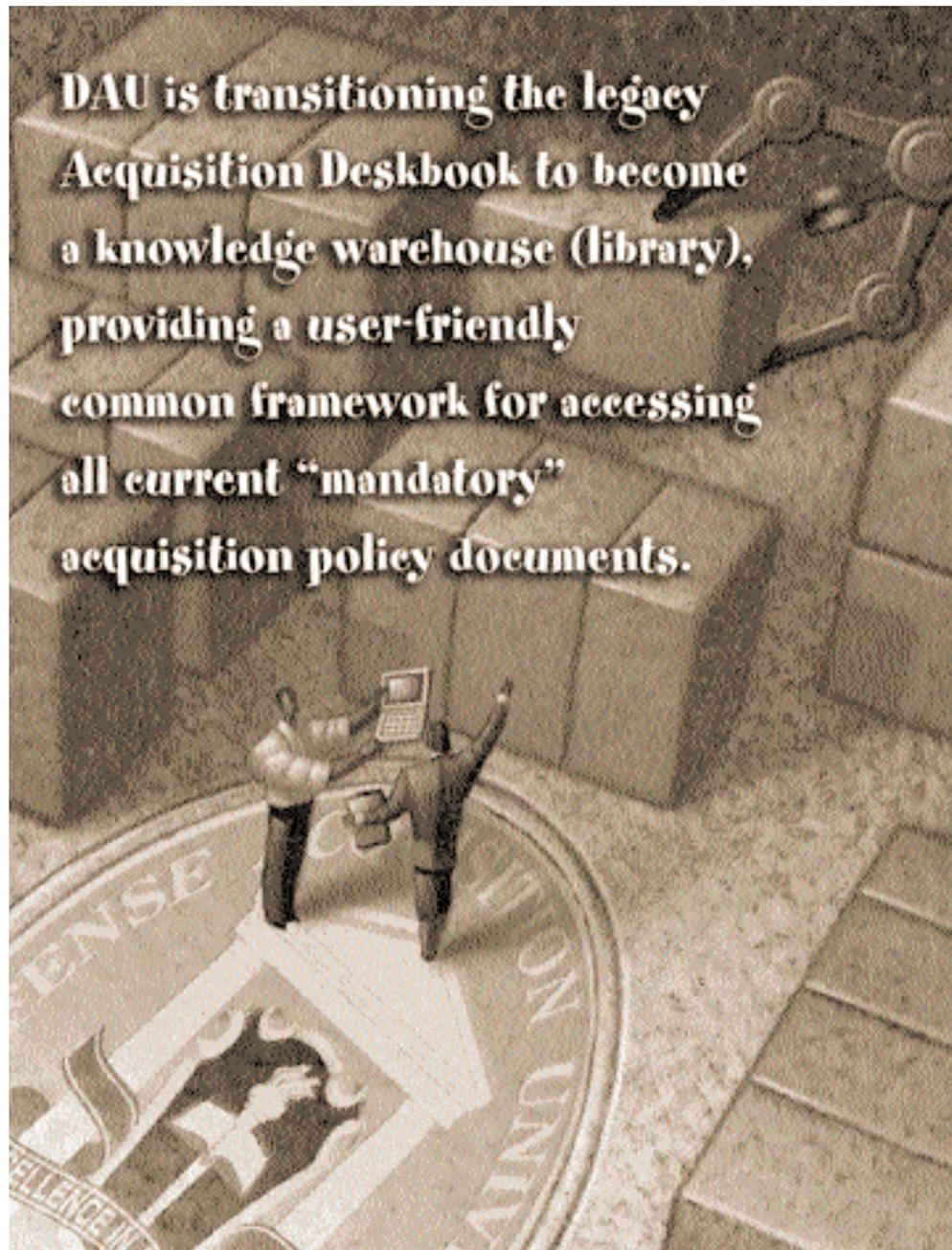
First Release of New DoD AT&L Knowledge Sharing System Set for Fall 2002

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In March 2002, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (USD [AT&L]) authorized the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), Fort Belvoir, Va., to facilitate the transformation of the legacy Acquisition Deskbook, currently hosted at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, to a new DoD AT&L Knowledge Sharing System (Figure 1). The resultant system, planners envision, will be a new generation Acquisition Deskbook that will provide a more robust and capable tool for the DoD AT&L workforce.

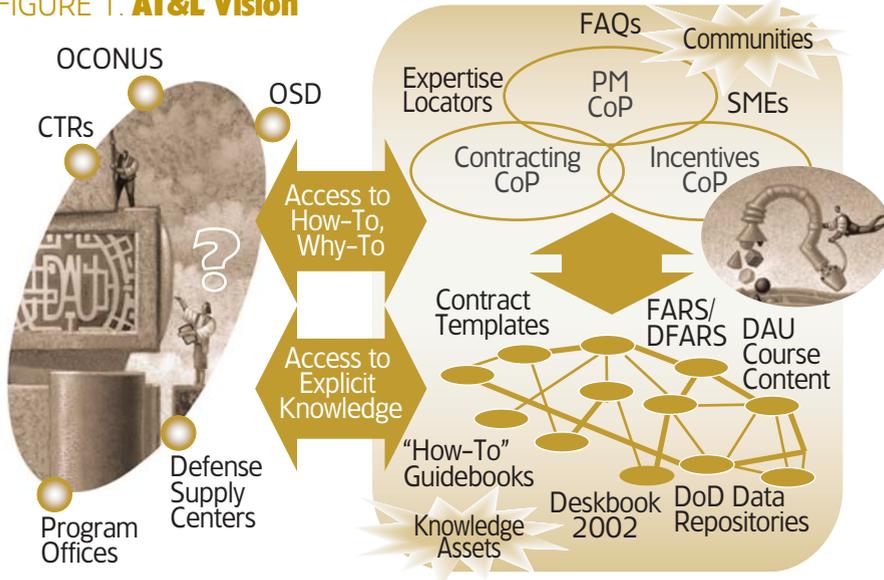
About the Acquisition Deskbook
From its inception in 1995, the Acquisition Deskbook was intended to be a centralized repository for formal acquisition policy and for the collection of best practices, lessons learned, courses, templates, recipes, rules of thumb, and other informal/discretionary information that is used to implement policy and manage programs. This initiative offered the acquisition community something they had never had before—acquisition information at their fingertips in one location.

The growth of Web technologies spawned a multitude of independent knowledge communities and sources. Recognizing that the centralized Acquisition Deskbook framework was becoming increasingly less effective, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) began searching for an integrated but decentralized approach, with the principles of knowledge management shared



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FIGURE 1. AT&L Vision



among Communities of Practice (CoPs). CoPs, a relatively new strategy for knowledge sharing, are networks of people held together by a common purpose, who share and learn from one another.

Consequently, in June 2000 the USD(AT&L) issued guidance to establish a comprehensive Acquisition Knowledge Management System (AKMS) to enable the acquisition workforce to acquire, create, integrate, share, and quickly reuse knowledge to achieve mission objectives. In March 2001, the Defense Acquisition Policy Steering Group approved the road map for AKMS development, which included:

- transitioning the Acquisition Deskbook to become a knowledge warehouse (library), providing a user-friendly common framework for accessing all current “mandatory” acquisition policy documents;
- promoting CoPs; and
- developing Knowledge Management (KM) tools, including a new AT&L portal.

In July 2001, the Office of the Director, Acquisition Initiatives, USD(AT&L), facilitated group exercises with representatives from the DoD AT&L workforce—which included both government and industry—to identify a set of “portal” requirements for a new AT&L knowledge system. These data requirements are now playing an important role

in defining the future “end state” of the overall system as the Acquisition Deskbook transitions to a new DoD AT&L Knowledge Sharing System at DAU. The transition of the Acquisition Deskbook is a step toward sharing of knowledge in a shared practice of education, knowledge, and training.

System Development and Management Approach

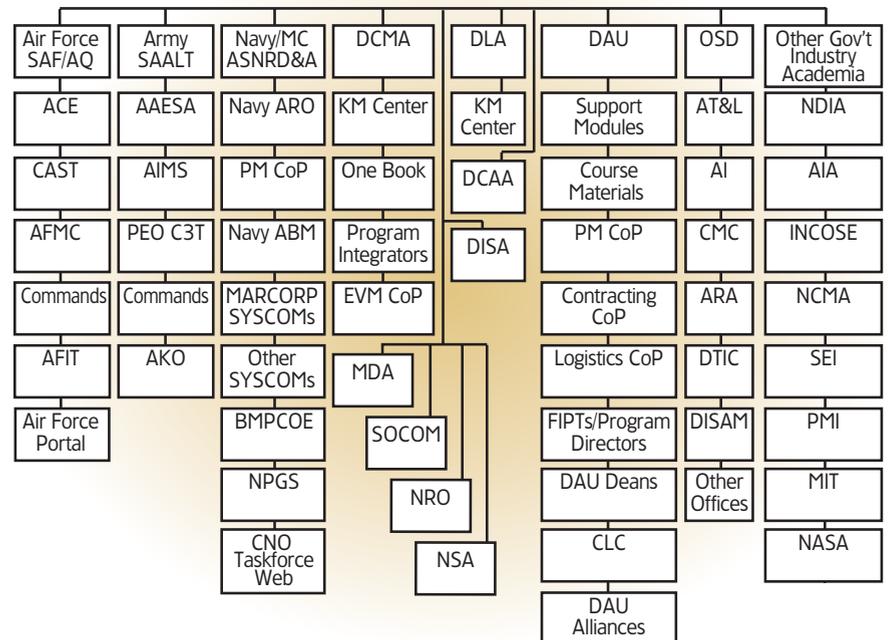
A network of Service, Agency, and OSD representatives (Figure 2), who are dedicated to providing online performance support knowledge and tools to the DoD

AT&L workforce members, and a DAU Systems Integration Contractor team will work together to:

- identify the product and functional requirements;
- develop a set of knowledge maps/taxonomies that best describe the DoD AT&L “system”;
- identify and contribute locally developed and managed knowledge objects/resources that will be shared through the new system’s “gateway”;
- develop the “gateway” access architecture and user-friendly interface;
- identify user test subjects;
- develop updates to the system on a continuous, evolutionary basis;
- develop the overall system architecture and knowledge access methods; and
- identify major linkable elements for the system.

The USD(AT&L), with the support of the Defense Acquisition Policy Steering and Working Groups, will support and oversee the system, with DAU acting as the system manager and network coordinator. DAU will form the Service, Agency, and OSD knowledge-provider network and host the system’s Web site at DAU’s Web hosting facility. Network members will be responsible for the management

FIGURE 2. DoD AT&L Knowledge Sharing Network



COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE—WHAT IS A CoP?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who form around a topic/domain to share ideas, information, and lessons learned; learn together and evolve the knowledge of the domain; and create and manage tools, techniques, as well as the process of the domain.

What can be gained?

- Productivity
- Teaming
- Faster Decisions
- Quality of Life
- Corporate Knowledge
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Better Decisions
- Practical Use of Lessons Learned

The most successful CoPs share knowledge across organizational divisions in order to include many different perspectives and concerns on the topic. Instead of, or in addition to communities formed around a particular problem area, CoPs could be formed for functional areas across the systems. The formation of CoPs is important to:

- facilitate the sharing of domain information and knowledge;
- evolve the discipline of the domain;

- achieve a greater sense of communication with peers;
- improve innovation; and
- save time looking for information.

Fulfilling its goal—supporting the Acquisition Community—the Knowledge Management team focuses on the following objectives:

- establishing and supporting communities of practice in a sharing environment by enticing, exciting, and engaging community members (novices and practitioners, all Services, government, and industry);
- improving community performance by providing access to existing knowledge resources and creating new knowledge framed in the context of daily work processes as determined by the community;
- capturing the corporate knowledge of the retiring workforce and transferring it to the new workforce; and
- establishing a PM CoP “Portal” on the World Wide Web that incorporates the functions determined necessary by the community.

and funding of their locally owned and maintained knowledge assets.

Major Elements

Access to the new AT&L Knowledge System will be through a simple, user-friendly Web site. It will be a “gateway” for users to access mandatory policy/processes, discretionary knowledge, experts, and other tools to assist the DoD AT&L workforce (government and industry) in providing the best weapons and support systems possible to U.S. warfighters. The gateway will principally point to Service, Agency, and OSD knowledge assets, including active CoPs (Figure 3).

A network of Service, Agency, and OSD organizations that develop, provide, and maintain policy and knowledge assets for the DoD AT&L workforce is currently being formed to create a network of DoD AT&L knowledge providers. The new network will develop the overall system architecture and knowledge access methods, and identify major linkable elements for the system. Major elements of the system will include:

- a virtual reference library for all mandatory DoD AT&L policies issued

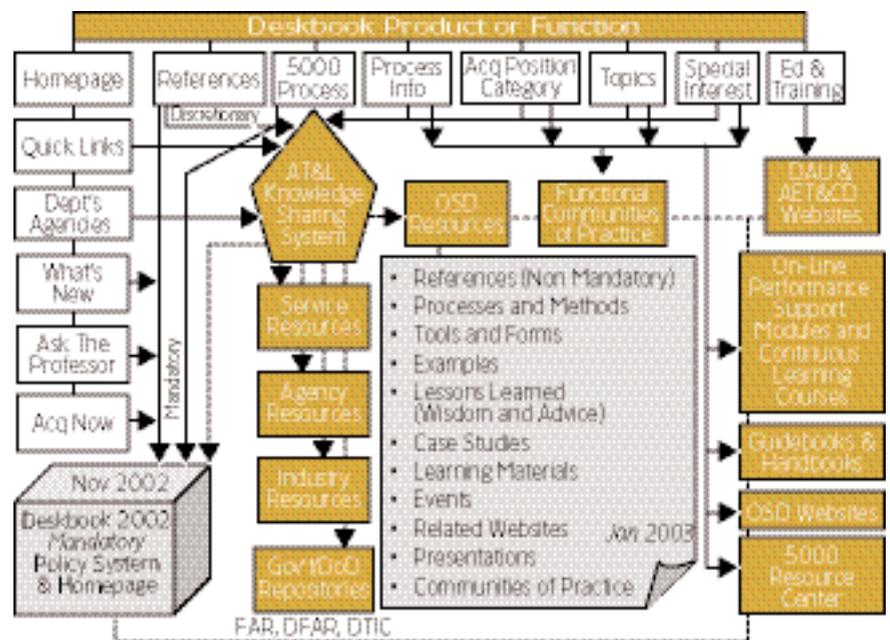
by an Acquisition Executive, Acquisition Agency head, or Major Command commander, which affect the DoD AT&L workforce career fields;

- an organized listing of links to active CoPs supporting the DoD AT&L career fields/competencies, critical busi-

ness processes/practices, initiatives, products, and organizations;

- an organized listing of valuable Service, Agency, OSD, DoD Industry, and Academia Web sites specifically focused on providing DoD AT&L knowledge and expertise;

FIGURE 3. Transition of Deskbook Products and Services to AT&L Knowledge Sharing System



- a DAU “knowledge object” repository of: course materials; OSD/Service/Agency guides and handbooks; continuous learning courses/job support modules; and
- multiple knowledge access approaches/tools to help users find the knowledge/expertise they require in a minimum amount of time. These tools will include a robust and selectable search capability, knowledge map indexes for all competency areas, and knowledge gateway documents that allow direct linking to other knowledge assets from top-level sources such as the 5000-series documents.

Evolutionary Release Schedule

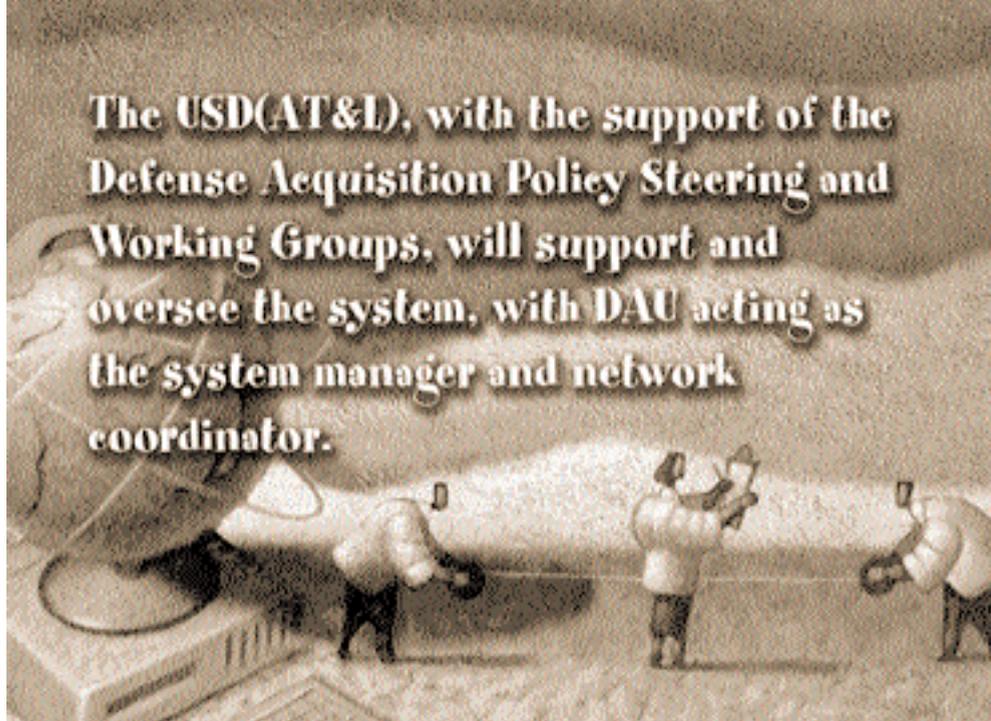
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2002

The first release of the new DoD AT&L Knowledge System will focus on the new Acquisition Deskbook 2002 reference library for all mandatory acquisition and logistics policies. The release is envisioned for October/November 2002. Along with this release, the user will be provided with multiple alternatives to access discretionary information and knowledge.

One of the alternatives will be regular access to and search of the documents in Acquisition Deskbook 2001, which was updated for the last time in March 2002. Through the new Acquisition Deskbook home page, users will also access new discretionary knowledge provided by DoD AT&L Network System members such as the emerging Program Management CoP; DAU course materials for students; continuous learning courses and online performance support modules; and resources identified by the Services, Agencies, OSD, Industry, and Academia. This will be an interim system for approximately three to six months until the second release formally replaces the Acquisition Deskbook's discretionary information with a distributed and empowered system provided by the AT&L knowledge providers' network.

JANUARY 2003

The second release will focus on the efforts of the DoD AT&L knowledge providers network to build on the new



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Acquisition Deskbook 2002 reference library with their shared knowledge resources. Knowledge files in the legacy Acquisition Deskbook will be reviewed for applicability and accuracy and transferred to appropriate OSD and Service repositories/Web sites. In addition to more discretionary resources being offered to the workforce, this release will focus on better access tools (knowledge document gateways) and integrating methodologies to minimize the time needed to get to just the right knowledge to support the task at hand. This release is planned for January 2003.

In addition, a six-month cycle of feedback, assessment, planning, and updating of the system will take place. It is envisioned that additional members will continually join the DoD AT&L Knowledge Sharing Network, and the stand-up of additional CoPs will enrich the system.

Transition Process

Until the new system is released in January 2003, the legacy Acquisition Deskbook will remain online, and a transition Web site at DAU will provide transition information and updates of major importance to the workforce. This transition information center will also act as a development site for the new AT&L Knowledge Sharing System, allowing the workforce access to the new knowledge resources continuously provided by the

network. An online “requirements” survey will allow the workforce to provide input on their specific product and functional needs to maximize the effectiveness of the new system.

Acquisition Deskbook CD

As a part of the Acquisition Deskbook transformation activity, a new CD will be produced and distributed in January 2003. The exact contents of the CD have not yet been established, but as a minimum it will include a reference library of mandatory policy and regulatory documents from OSD, the Services, and Agencies. Other documents that are considered “mandatory” by user organizations for remote operations demanding the use of a CD will be considered for central storage in the new Acquisition Deskbook repository. A network of OSD, Service, and Agency representatives will determine requirements and identify documents to be centrally managed and loaded on future Acquisition Deskbook CDs.

Editor's Note: The most current and accurate information regarding the Acquisition Deskbook transition is available at <http://deskbooktransition.dau.mil>; the latest information on how to get a CD, how to download it to burn a copy locally, and all production and distribution information is available at <http://web1.deskbook.osd.mil/cdms/welcome.asp>.