

Towards an Enterprise Repository Framework

Dina Jacobs^{1,3}, Paula Kotzé^{2,3} and Alta van der Merwe^{2,3}

¹triVector, 12A Garsfontein Office Park

645 Jacqueline Drive, Garsfontein, 0081, South Africa

²Meraka Institute, P O Box 395, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa

³School of Computing, University of South Africa

P O Box 392, UNISA, 0003, South Africa

dina.jacobs@trivector.co.za

{paula.kotze, alta}@meraka.org.za

Abstract. The enterprise architect is dependent on the functionality of the enterprise repository to define and maintain the enterprise architecture. Two of the specific functionalities are typical ‘warehouse’ related functionalities. The one requirement is to integrate multiple business process reference models as source models, similar to the reuse of data from different sources in a data warehouse environment. The second requirement is the flexible visualization of business process models that has a ‘slice-and-dice’ flavour as used in the data warehouse domain. By means of analogical reasoning, our research investigates using the theoretical foundation of the data warehouse domain to contribute to the definition of an enterprise repository framework. Based on the similarities found, an enterprise repository framework is derived.

1 Introduction

The enterprise repository is a key enabler for the enterprise architect to define and maintain the enterprise architecture. Two of the critical success factors for the enterprise architect (with specific reference to the business architecture domain in this paper) are the ability to integrate multiple business process reference models and to enable flexible visualization of business processes. The objective is to accelerate the definition of the business architecture and to enhance the completeness checking, the validation, reuse and understanding of the business architecture, with the result being a comprehensive business architecture definition.

The concept of a data warehouse is well established, where the data warehouse is defined as an extension of a database to enable the analysis of data from various databases and to create different views with consistent content to support decision-making. The concept of an enterprise repository originates from the use in literature of the concept of a warehouse populated with business process models (e.g. see [2, 9]). The purpose in our research is to explore whether it is possible to use the theoretical foundation of the data warehouse domain to contribute to the definition of an enterprise repository framework (ERF). An enterprise repository framework provides a basic conceptual structure, including a common vocabulary and a definition, to give context to further discussions of the enterprise repository concept.

To achieve this we used a process of analogical reasoning. Analogical reasoning, is finding an analogy for a given thing or situation, where the analogy is in some way like the given thing [16]. The similarities in the requirements that initiated the data warehouse solution, and the use of the concept of multiple business process reference models and flexible visualization as requirements for the enterprise repository, are the point of departure for the analogical reasoning.

Section 2 of this paper introduces the theoretical foundation of this paper, discussing the enterprise architecture domain and the underlying concepts of the data warehouse domain. This is followed by a short discussion in section 3 of our research design and the rationale to use analogical reasoning to derive the ERF. In order to confirm that it is indeed valid to use analogical reasoning, the argument of section 4 focuses on the similarities and differences between the data warehouse and enterprise repository domains. The similarities provided us with a set of components of the data warehouse domain that could be considered in deriving an ERF, whilst the differences highlighted the areas to be redesigned as part of the ERF. Section 5 proposes a framework for an enterprise repository, derived from the data warehouse framework. Section 6 provides some practical examples, whilst section 7 concludes.

2 Background

2.1 Enterprise Architecture Domain

Stevenson [15] relates a quote from Saarinen in Time Magazine of 2 July 1956 to the concept of enterprise architecture. Saarinen states, ‘Always design a thing by considering it in its next larger context – a chair in a room, a room in a house, a house in an environment, an environment in a city plan’. Similarly, as depicted in Fig. 1, a business process is represented by a business process model, a business process model is part of the business architecture, and the business architecture is a domain of the enterprise architecture. The enterprise architecture domain, part of the information management discipline, focuses on bridging the gap between business and information management.

Enterprise architecture, according to Whitman, Ramachandran and Ketkar [17], provides the mechanism by which the reality of the enterprise and its systems can be aligned with management intentions. The business architecture, one of the enterprise architecture domains, is representative of the enterprise, domain and systems levels [11]. On enterprise level the business architecture addresses the business and management decisions, portfolio of businesses, mission, business strategies and visions. On the domain level the business architecture includes the definition of the services and products, as well as the business processes. On systems level the business requirements for the systems and data management are included. The business architecture on domain level includes business process models, reflecting how activities are coordinated in the course of a business process [11].

Business process models are therefore positioned within the enterprise architecture domain and are an important component of comprehensive business requirements. It is possible to close the gap between the enterprise architecture, business

process models and comprehensive business requirements by stating that, to some extent, comprehensive business requirements, including business process models, constitute part of bridging the gap between business and information management.

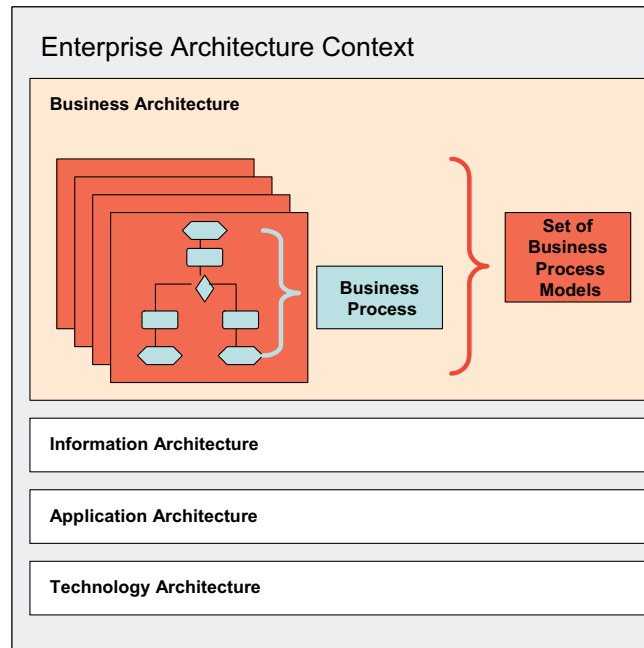


Fig. 1. Enterprise architecture context.

With business process models defined as part of the enterprise architecture domain, business process reference models can be defined as artefacts similar to business process models. In this context, business process models that are predefined business process models, and available for reuse, are referred to as business process reference models [12].

To reuse these business process reference models, the warehouse concept is introduced as part of the enterprise repository. The enterprise repository is a shared database of information about engineered artefacts [1], specifically enterprise architecture artefacts within the context of this discussion. Since the warehouse concept as part of the enterprise repository is not well defined in literature, the intent is to propose an enterprise repository framework (ERF) including warehouse concepts.

A framework is a basic conceptual structure used to solve or address complex issues. The complex issue, in this instance, is to define an ERF to specifically address the warehouse related functionality required from an enterprise repository. The framework should at least cater for the integration of multiple business process reference models and the enablement of flexible visualization of business processes. The proposed ERF should include the basic components of an ERF and provides a common vocabulary and definition for further discussion of the concept.

2.2 Database versus Data Warehouse versus Repository

The foundation for the data warehouse, as well as the repository, is the database. A repository and a data warehouse are two specific variations of a database. Considering the enterprise repository as warehouse, the questions are whether it is a repository extended with data warehouse functionality or a data warehouse extended with repository management functionality. The dynamic interaction of these components is provided in Fig. 2. The objective of Fig. 2 is to position the concepts database (A) versus repository (B) versus data warehouse (C) and enterprise repository as warehouse (D). The typical functionality and content addressed by each variant of a database is indicated per component.

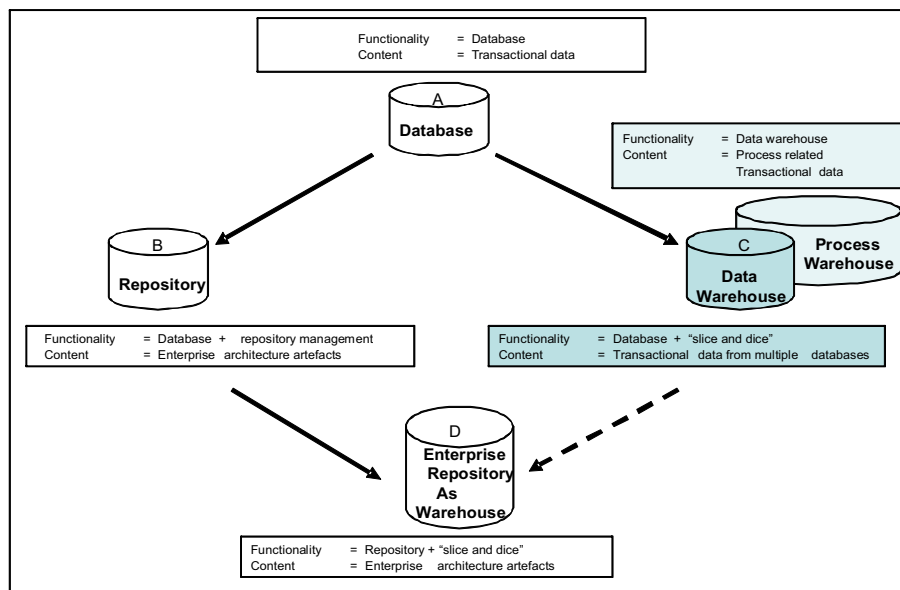


Fig. 2. Database vs. repository vs. data warehouse vs. Enterprise repository (as warehouse).

Component A is the definition of the database concept. According to Date [4] a database, in general, is both integrated and shared. Integrated means that the database may be thought of as a unification of several otherwise distinct files, with any redundancy among those files partially or wholly eliminated. Shared means that individual pieces of data in the database may be shared among several different users as each of those users may have access to the same piece of data (and may use it for different purposes). Engles (as cited in [4]) defines a database as 'a collection of stored operational data used by the application systems of some particular enterprise'. A database is usually associated with operational or transactional data.

Component B focuses on the repository, a variation of a database. Additional functionality is required in order to manage enterprise architecture artefacts that differ from transactional data in a database. Adding this functionality to manage enterprise architecture artefacts in a database, results in a variation of a database also known as a repository. As mentioned in section 2.1 a repository is a shared database of informa-

tion about engineered artefacts [1] or enterprise architecture artefacts in contrast with the transactional data that is usually stored in a database. A business process and business process model are examples of enterprise architecture artefacts that are stored in a repository. A repository includes specific repository management functionality enabling the definition and management of these enterprise architecture artefacts.

Component C positions the term data warehouse, which arose from the requirement to extend the database concept to enable the analysis of data from various databases to create different views of the same data to support decision-making. A commonly used definition of a data warehouse comes from Inmon (as cited in [6]), Srivastava and Chen [13], Zhou, Zhou, Tao and Hu [18] and Stefanov, List and Schiefer [14]: ‘A data warehouse is a subject-oriented, integrated, time-variant, and non-volatile collection of data to support decision-making’.

Component D introduces the concept of an enterprise repository as warehouse and will be discussed in sections 3 and 4.

3 Research Design

The primary research method we used is analogical reasoning. Straker [16] states that in analogical reasoning, an analogy for a given thing or situation is found, where the analogy is in some way similar to the given thing. Other attributes of the analogical situation are then taken to represent other attributes of the given thing as well.

In order to confirm that it is valid to use analogical reasoning it is necessary to focus on the similarities and differences between the data warehouse and enterprise repository domains. Component D (Fig. 2) introduced the concept of an enterprise repository as warehouse. The requirement is to extend the concept of a repository to enable the analysis of business processes (examples of enterprise architecture artefacts) from various reference models, in order to create different views to enable a better understanding and analysis of the business processes. The functionality required is similar to the initial data warehouse requirement to extend the database concept to the data warehouse concept, namely to create different views from a set of data. The intent is therefore to extend the repository concept to include the data warehouse functionality. The definition of a data warehouse framework is to be used as foundation for the proposed ERF (the concept of a framework and ERF were described in section 2.1). The basic reasoning is that data from various sources are loaded into a data warehouse and then the user has the ability to analyse and present the information as required.

According to Gray and Watson [6], two key characteristics of a data warehouse are that it is typically a dedicated database system that draws most of its data from production systems, and users slice and dice the data in desired ways. In the article by Bobrik, Reichert and Bauer [2] on the requirements for the visualization of system-spanning business processes, there are statements that strongly relate to the data warehouse characteristics as described by Gray and Watson [6], for example:

- ‘Since we want to integrate process models from different source systems’ – similar to the data warehouse sourcing data from various production systems, the en-

enterprise repository (as warehouse) sources business process models from different sources.

- ‘One-for-all visualization will not fulfil expectations and requirements. It should permit us to aggregate or remove parts of a process schema or a process instance, filter the elements according to their types and attributes, or combine several processes in a single representation form’ – this is very similar to the slice-and-dice concept of a data warehouse as described by Gray and Watson [6].

Considering these similarities between a data warehouse and an enterprise repository, the enterprise repository (as warehouse) framework is based on the theory related to a data warehouse framework. Analogical reasoning is therefore an appropriate research approach.

The research approach followed was to:

- Identify requirements from the enterprise architects to confirm the basic components to be included in a proposed ERF.
- Select a generic definition of a data warehouse framework to be used as foundation for the proposed ERF.
- Review a similar analogy between a data warehouse and a design warehouse, highlighting potential differences and similarities to be expected in the comparison of the data warehouse framework and the proposed ERF.
- Propose an ERF based on the data warehouse framework.

4 Similarities and Differences between the Requirements of a Data Warehouse and Enterprise Repository as Warehouse

In this section, we focus on the enterprise repository requirements, define the data warehouse concept, derive a representative data warehouse framework and refer to a similar analogy.

4.1 Enterprise Repository Requirements

Based on the work of Kirchmer, Brown and Heinzl [9] and Bobrik et al. [2] there were at least five components to consider for the proposed ERF, namely:

- Source business process models from business process reference models.
- Build/populate a repository with business process reference models.
- Store business process models in a repository.
- Analyse business processes.
- Create alternative views of the business processes.

The approach followed was a logical process of using multiple business process reference models as source data, to extract, load and transform the multiple reference models into the repository, to manage the content of the repository, and then to provide flexible visualization of the business process models in the repository.

4.2 Data Warehouse Framework

In order to use the analogy of a data warehouse framework it was important to define a data warehouse and select a data warehouse framework. The Inmon definition of a data warehouse, as quoted in [6], was used: ‘A data warehouse is a subject oriented, integrated, time-variant, and non-volatile collection of data to support decision making’.

This definition of a data warehouse was adjusted to describe an enterprise repository (as warehouse) with the specific enterprise architecture artefacts being business process models. An enterprise repository (as warehouse) for business process model artefacts is a business process-oriented, integrated, time-variant and non-volatile collection of business process models to promote the use of business process reference models, and to support the flexible visualization of business process models to minimise the causes of an inadequate business architecture.

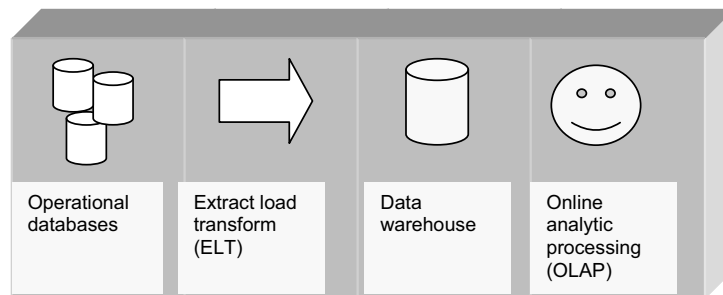


Fig. 3. Derived data warehouse framework.

A data warehouse framework (Fig. 3) was derived from the proposed data warehouse frameworks by Gray and Watson [6], Dehne, Eavis and Rau-Chaplin [5] and Chelluri and Kumar [3]. The component represented by all three of these sources was the *data warehouse* component. Although not included in all three, the *operational databases*, as included by Chelluri and Kumar, was selected as it is a prominent component and part of the envisioned ERF to represent the business process reference models as source for the business processes. The back-end extraction [6], cleaning and integration [5] or operational data store [3] were combined and renamed to *extract, load and transform*. Lastly front-end use [6], OLAP (Online Analytic Processing) and front-end tools [5], and query interface [3] were combined as online *analytic processing* in the derived data warehouse framework.

4.4 Similar Analogy

Our focus was next on the question whether it is possible to learn from similar analogies with a data warehouse framework. Laureri and Moke [10] discussed a design warehouse, inspired by the model of a data warehouse. A key message is certainly not to underestimate the complexity of the warehouse concept. They described rules that

characterise a design warehouse. The applicable rules from the ERF perspective were rephrased to include:

- The *business process model memory*, independent from the source business process model reference models.
- *Multi-representation orientation*, referred to as flexible visualization within the enterprise repository context.
- *Semantic complexity of business process models*, as a reflection of reality and the complexity of the navigation through the business process models is thus implied.
- *Durability* (independence of data from their process of creation) referring to the possibility to represent the business processes even if the original business process reference models are not available as source.

5 Proposed Framework for Enterprise Repository as Warehouse

Considering the required components for an ERF, the definition of a data warehouse, the derived data warehouse framework, and the fact that a similar analogy to a data warehouse was used to define a design warehouse, the conclusion is that there is strong evidence that there are enough similarities to continue with the analogical reasoning to define an ERF. Fig. 4 was the result of the translation of the data warehouse framework components to the following proposed ERF components:

- Usage of multiple business process reference models as source models: Within the data warehouse framework operational databases or other external sources are used as input to the data warehouse. Within the enterprise repository context existing business process models are used as source data, specifically existing business process reference models.
- A process to extract, load and transform multiple business process reference models into a repository: Within the context of the data warehouse framework the Extract, Load and Transform (ELT) is about populating the data warehouse with data from the different operational databases. Within the context of the ERF ELT is about populating the repository with multiple business process reference models and other business process models.
- A description of repository functionality for managing enterprise architecture artefacts: The repository is similar to the data warehouse but with the additional capability to manage enterprise architecture artefacts.
- Flexible visualization of business process models: Instead of a comprehensive online analytic processing (OLAP) functionality that is text- and number-based the enterprise repository focuses on the flexible visualization of business process models, including the additional challenges related to the manipulation of graphics.

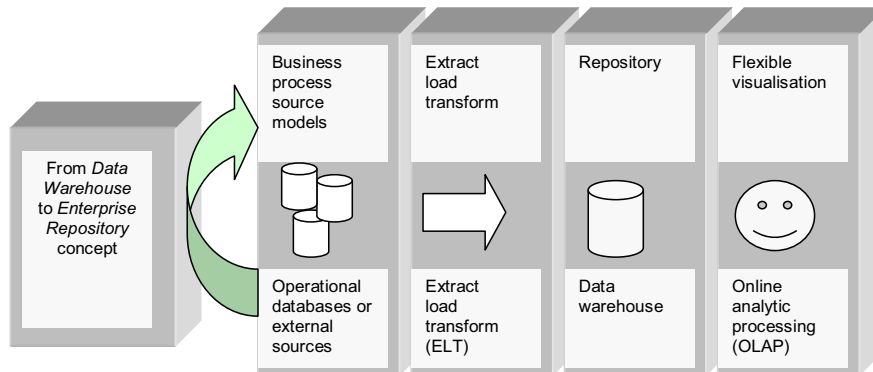


Fig. 4. From data warehouse framework to enterprise repository framework.

6 Practical Examples

For illustrative purposes, we briefly provide two examples to illustrate the Extract-Load-Transform (ELT) concept (section 6.1) and flexible visualization (section 6.2).

6.1 Practical Example Extract Load Transform (ELT)

For illustrative purposes of ELT, three sets of business process reference models were successfully integrated in an enterprise repository [8]. The intent was to select two sets of business process based reference models, as well as another set of application based reference models. Integration of two sets of business process based reference models was an indication that the business process reference model content may overlap. The method to integrate overlapping models differed from integrating complementary models. Integration with a set of application based reference models was an indication of the complementary nature of non-overlapping reference models. By creating a relationship, navigation to another set of models was possible. As proof of concept, the following business process based reference models and an application based reference model were selected:

- As business process based reference models, the Supply-chain Operations Reference-model (SCOR) and IndustryPrint 3.0 reference model were selected to illustrate dealing with overlapping content. The SCOR reference model is an industry-specific reference model and IndustryPrint is a consulting reference model.
- As application based reference model, the SAP Solution Manager BPR reference model was selected enabling complementary integration.

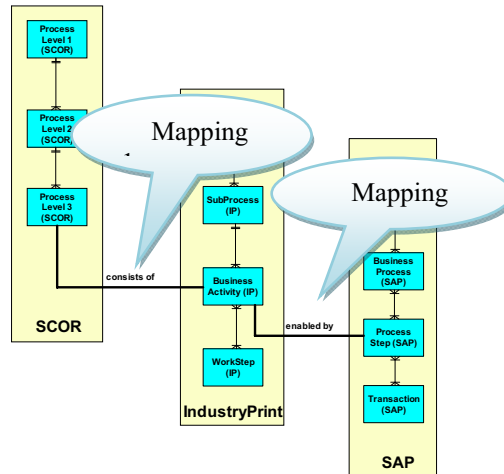


Fig. 5. Mapping of a meta-model.

The proposed ELT method consists of the following steps:

<p>Metadata model creation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse each business process reference model. Create a metadata model for each business process reference model.
<p>Mapping of meta-model (Fig. 5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping of a consolidated meta-model.
<p>Extraction process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the needed entities and relationships from the source business process reference models.
<p>Loading process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a temporary repository. Merge the selected entities and relationships to the temporary repository.
<p>Transformation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merge the content of the temporary database into the business process warehouse repository. Create relationships between the entities of the different business process reference models.

The conclusion was that the proposed ELT method can be used to consolidate multiple business process reference models into an enterprise repository. The mapping of the consolidated meta-model was the key to a successful ELT process. As with the data warehouse ELT process the meta-model integration remains a complex and human intensive task. A secondary outcome was the demonstration of the potential value of the use of multiple business process reference models as accelerator to define the business processes, to enhance the completeness of business process models and to improve the understanding of the business process models.

6.2 Practical Example of Flexible Visualization

Examples of flexible visualization can be classified as follows:

- Enterprise architecture views per domain.
- Individual and merged viewpoints.
- Swim lane-based views.
- Notation-based views (BPMN vs UML).
- Scenarios (Refer to Fig. 6 and Fig. 7).
- Aggregation and reduction based views.

We briefly discuss *scenarios* as illustration of flexible visualization. A scenario is a specific path through a set of business process models. Fig. 6 illustrates the recording of a path from three different business process models (Fig. 6 is for illustrative purposes and detail content is not readable IDS Scheer AG [7]). Conceptually, the three business process models are combined in a single model. The selected objects are recorded and a new model is created to represent the scenario. The source models are the acquisition, supply and maintenance models. The recorded objects indicated by the red line will be used to generate a new model. The objects that are not recorded will not be part of the new model.

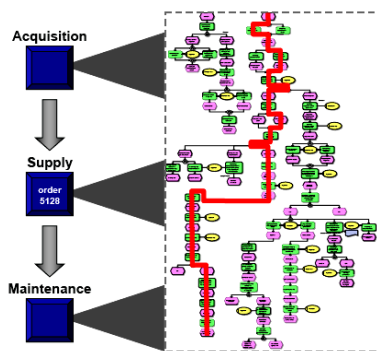


Fig. 6. Scenario IDS Scheer AG [7].

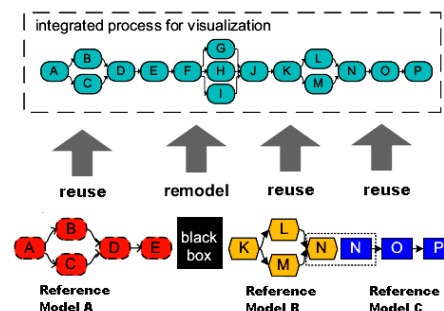


Fig. 7. Mapping of scenario from reference models.

Fig. 7 is a variation of a diagram by Bobrik et al. [2] to illustrate the visualization of system-spanning business processes in a complex enterprise environment. The difference is that Bobrik et al.[2] is sourcing the information from different systems, thus a bottom-up approach based on business activity monitoring, business process diagnosis and log data. In Fig. 7 a top-down approach based on the reuse of multiple business process reference models is illustrated. Such a top-down and bottom-up approach should be seen as complementary and not as contradictory. The business process reference models could provide context to the tasks executed by the systems as well as the manual activities. The end user is interested in the integrated model for visualization.

Three reference models are reused

- Reference model A with A, B, C, D and E as activities.
- Reference model B with K, L, M and N as activities.
- Reference model C with N, O and P as activities.

There are no existing reference models for activities F, G, H, I and J. These acti-

veties are modelled as a new process and added for future reuse to the enterprise repository. The duplication of activity N was resolved as part of the review and integration. The end result is the process as required by the end-user by re-using existing processes from the enterprise repository and extending the enterprise repository.

7 Conclusions

The argument of our research originated in the practical experience of defining a comprehensive business architecture. The intent was to learn from a theoretical foundation in defining an enterprise repository framework. The proposed enterprise repository framework was based on such a theoretical foundation, namely a data warehouse framework.

During our review of published research we couldn't find a framework for the concept of an enterprise repository as warehouse. We did, however, find references to the concept of a business process model warehouse, the characteristics of a data warehouse, and a similar analogy between a data warehouse and a design warehouse. These sources were all considered together with the analogy to the data warehouse framework as input in the development of the ERF we proposed. The proposed ERF is a requirement specification of some of the functionality to be provided by the enterprise repository to assist the enterprise architect. However the proposed ERF also provides context for the enterprise architect to position the value of the use of multiple business process reference models and the importance to consider flexible visualization to add value for the end user of the enterprise repository content.

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