Bumps on the Head

Why does the subject of Chemistry exist? If we lived in a world where only Physics and Biology were practiced would the need for an intermediate topic be obvious? I believe it would, because adopting a distinct "chemical view" provides valuable insights, offers a consistent framework to work in and delivers a number of useful "tools" that simplify understanding. Contrast that with, for example, Phrenology, where irregularities in the shapes of a person's skull were used to diagnose aspects of personality. Two hundred years ago this was a seriously studied but today it has no serious practitioners. Surely its decline was because its insights failed to deliver much benefit and the tools it developed didn't provide effective shortcuts to comprehension.

My view is that "Data Management for E&P", or "Petroleum Data Management" or whatever you want to call our topic, is obviously more like Chemistry than Phrenology. But, every so often, I come across someone who holds the opposite view, maybe a senior oil company executive that sincerely believes that my endorsement of "data management" is just a nefarious scheme to part him from his money. In the long term of course this disagreement will sort itself out. Either, as I expect, those that practice the topic will consistently deliver value, in which case companies where sceptics prevail will get competed out of existence, or it won't in which case myself and the other believers will be the ones that disappear. However, in the long term we're all dead, rather than wait for the "judgement of history" I am impatient to prove the benefit today.

Of course part of the challenge is that there is not yet a full consensus on what the underlying topics of the subject are, for me it includes: a systematic approach to measuring the

value of data and data handling; the data lifecycle; repository roles; process maturity models; data category definitions; clarifying data ownership; enterprise architecture; service delivery; project management; and change management. Personally I believe that these topics are all closely related and fit together under a slight variant of the DAMA framework, there may be better ways to relate them, but I have not come across one yet.

Every so often I encounter a sceptic who (usually loudly) asserts that this is all just hogwash with fancy words and weird definitions to bamboozle the gullible. I find it this viewpoint so incomprehensible it is hard to argue with, but when you encounter one of these sceptics ask them to explain. Are they saying that these topics are so different they cannot possibly be integrated? Or that they are better related using a different framework? Or that the framework is reasonable but badly applied? The subject is mature enough, and widely accepted enough, that anyone who believes it is junk science should be prepared to explain why they hold that view, don't let them get away with aggressive assertions and insulting words without providing some explanation and supporting arguments.