

Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries and the Role of Library Professionals

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ABSTRACT

The study and development of knowledge management in recent years has become the key concern for librarians and libraries. It offers academic libraries the opportunity to improve effectiveness between information and knowledge management and it will also examine the role of librarians/libraries in knowledge management and suggests that librarians/libraries in the digital and knowledge age should be in charge of knowledge management in their respective organizations in order to leverage the intellectual assets and to facilitate knowledge creation.

Keywords: Knowledge management, Librarians, Academic libraries.

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is an expensive commodity, which if managed properly, is a major asset to the modern library. Knowledge management is concerned with the exploitation and the development of the knowledge assets of an organization with a view to furthering the organization's objectives. The knowledge to be managed includes both explicit, documentary knowledge and subjective knowledge, which resides in the minds of employees. Knowledge management embraces all the process associated with the identification, sharing and creation of information.

In library and information science, Ranganathan (2011) was the first to advocate that a universe of subjects is synonymous to a universe of knowledge and therefore proposed the concept of knowledge management in libraries. In librarianship, it is the creation, storage and collaborative sharing of employees' information within the academic library environment. In sharing and collaboration, a library's effectiveness and efficiency, productivity and profitability is enhanced. KM is therefore the process of capturing, organizing, and storing information and experiences of workers and groups within an organization and making it available to others. It is used in this paper to refer to a process that focuses on five related library activities – capturing, classifying, exploiting, sharing, and applying both the explicit and the implicit know-how for the benefit of the library, librarians, the library users, and the academic community. KM in academic libraries may include:

* A process of collecting, organizing, classifying and disseminating information throughout a library, so as to make it purposeful to those who need it;

* It involves identification of categories of knowledge needed to support the overall library activities by combining indexing, searching, and technology to help libraries in organizing data stored in multiple sources and deliver only relevant information to users.

II. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT – CONCEPT

Colleges, universities and their libraries are social organizations where workers transform resources for use by consumers through the function of teaching, research and services. Knowledge management may be defined as the set of process that create and share knowledge across and organization to optimize use of judgment in the attainment of mission and goals. It is an emerging discipline developing on the interstices of organizational psychology, Library and Information Science, Economics and Computer Science. KM is the art of creating value from organization's knowledge assets.

Herein are some of the description about Knowledge Management by the world's leading thinkers on Knowledge Management:

“Knowledge Management is the discipline of enabling individuals, teams and entire organization to collectively and systematically create, share and apply knowledge to better achieve their objectives.”

- (Ron Young, CEO/CKO, and Knowledge Associates International.)

“Knowledge Management will deliver outstanding collaboration and partnership working. It will ensure the region maximizes the value of its information and knowledge assets and it will help its citizens to use their creativity and skill better, leading to improved effectiveness and greater innovation”

- (West Midlands Regional Observatory, U.K.)

“Knowledge Management it is also described as a collaborative process through which organizations generate value for their intellectual assets. Educators generate value when they conduct, report results and sometimes develop new products.

Knowledge management has evolved from the combination of two factors-intellectual capital and intranets. Three Main Types of activities are covered under the Knowledge Management.

Knowledge Generation:

Creation of new ideas and new patterns.

Knowledge Codification:

Converting one form of knowledge to another form of knowledge.

Knowledge Transfer:

Ensuring exchange of knowledge between individuals and departments or units of the organization.

Knowledge Management in academic library:

Role of knowledge management in libraries have become more and more important along with the development of knowledge economy. As a new method *Knowledge Management* in libraries leaves much to be desired in its theoretical system. Knowledge Management in libraries should include such aspects as follows

II.KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION MANAGEMENT

Knowledge Innovation Management in libraries refers to the management of the production, diffusion and transfer of knowledge as well as of the network system constructed by related institution and organization. It includes three aspects- i) theoretical, ii) technical and; iii) organization innovation management. Theoretical innovation management is to enrich and enlarge the theoretical and practical research constructed by institution. It supports the evolution from conventional libraries to electronic or digital libraries. Organizational innovation management supports to create an effective management system adaptable to the operation procedures of libraries.

III.KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION MANAGEMENT

Libraries may play the part of knowledge pool, and use diverse media and channels to disseminate various new knowledge. Dissemination or communication of knowledge is an integral part of KM. Technology helps libraries to share knowledge recourses and expertise. . Availability of open resources on internet and www in “*anywhere, anytime*”

IV.KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION MANAGEMENT

Library should attach importance to provision of services for people to networks. It may be possible by setting up virtual libraries or Information Centers for enterprises, government Human Resources Management- We should pay full attention to diversity and variation of library staffs' requirements, strengthen management of different library staffs by applying contingency management approach.

Knowledge management is a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time. KM is being used to improve library operations. Form theoretical point of view, knowledge can be considered as a pyramid. All knowledge beings at the bottom of the pyramid with data and unfiltered facts. . Libraries have excelled at creating scholarly information and intelligence from data but they have not been as successful in generating organizational knowledge to achieve library goals. Knowledge Management is one way to develop and apply the organizational knowledge needed to improve library operations and effectiveness by developing skills.

V.ROLE OF LIS PROFESSIONALS IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management has been seen ‘as a vehicle for enhancing the professional image and role of the information professional’ (Southon & Todd, 2001, p.n.p.). Knowledge Management is beginning to take over from information management in terms of publication output and citations LIS professionals should expand their roles, knowledge and

skills in order to take advantage of the new opportunities arising from knowledge management. However, it seems that LIS professionals have been slow to go further and save opportunities arising from KM. There is a general criticism of LIS professionals that they are not ambitious and have no high expectations due to lack of management skills but these obstacles which LIS professionals must overcome. To successfully engage in knowledge management, LIS professionals must have a holistic view and go beyond the narrow scope of their profession. This will entail an expansion in their roles and responsibilities, including the acquisition of new skills and the ability not only adapt to change, but also prepare for it and shape it. Also, KM is not owned by any single group, profession or industry, librarians need to understand the multiple perspectives of other players (Broadbent, 1998)

VI. ROLE OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONAL IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT:

- Library professionals seek to accomplish following tasks.
- Able to deal with new technology.
- Generating new knowledge.
- Expert in capturing and transferring of information.
- Sharing knowledge without any geographical limitation.
- Manage knowledge as an asset.
- Representing knowledge in documents and database.

VII. BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Every library professionals who works in an academic, public or any special library wants to techniques of KM to achieve organizational goals and provide better services to its users, but due to some of following barriers they are not able to use them. The barriers of academic libraries are;

- 1) There is no cooperation between junior and senior staff.
- 2) Generally the junior staff cannot share their knowledge and ideas when they feel there is no benefit to this in terms of salary increases,
- 3) Not every library can participate in terms of modern technology and its management.
- 4) Lack of communication skills,
- 5) Lack of staff training,
- 6) Lack of sufficient budgets or funds.
- 7) Lack of tools and technologies,
- 8) Lack of centralized library policies.

Suggestions and recommendations to implement successful knowledge management in academic libraries:

In this 21st century librarians faced lot of problems to built successful knowledge management in academic libraries. To overcome these problems librarians must be trained and followed some rules to implement KM in libraries. They must be willing to move outside the walls of the traditional library and works assiduously with technologies faculty and students. This means that librarians are no longer merely custodians of information; rather they will act as knowledge managers who will work with users in collecting and analyzing strategic intelligence act as trainers and consultants to transfer knowledge throughout the organization. They must extend their expertise beyond collection management to knowledge acquisition and management. They have to extend their expertise in selecting organizing and preserving information.

They should act as KM developers, working more closely with faculty and students to design, organize and maintain a broader range of digital assets.

1. They should act as knowledge management integrators who have a more active role in the educational and research mission of university, integrating information resources and services in their course and research projects and at the same time knowledge gatekeepers who are acting as subject experts.
2. Academic librarians are knowledge management educators who are teaching and training students and faculty information literacy programme and how to organize, preserve, and share their own information resources;

Academic librarians need to go an extra mile to understand the information and knowledge needs of users. They should be in a position to map internal and external knowledge that would assist them in increasing their efficiency. In other words, academic librarians should extend their information management roles and enhance their knowledge management competencies. Foo *et al.*, (2002) pointed out that academic librarian as knowledge workers need to play active roles in searching for innovative solutions to the issues involved in adapting new technologies into their environment. The challenge for academic librarians is to manage services, which offer users a carefully selected mix of multiple formats and media. Academic libraries should rethink their role in the whole university community. There is imperative to support the needs of the users since the teaching and learning patterns in universities have changed. As

information and research resources become more varied, this places a challenge to academic libraries. There is a serious argument that the changes in the nature of information, in research strategies and in the structure of higher education are affecting academic libraries. These changes define much of the shifting context within which academic libraries must operate. Budd (1998) suggested that the changes brought by electronic media necessitate transformation in the way librarians think about their jobs, the users of information and communication process of which they are part of. Academic librarians must strive to remain competent navigators of each medium in order to assist the library users.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge Management is important for libraries as for the businesses minus. The competitive, proprietary, and moneymaking concerns. In fact, libraries have a long and rich experience in the management of information. Many such knowledge and skills of librarianship can be applied to knowledge management. For any library to succeed in implementing knowledge management will require a strong leadership and vision from the top administration, which can influence the organization's knowledge sharing efforts in a positive way. Information technology and systems can provide effective support in implementing knowledge management. Librarians should work together with IT professionals and others to develop the appropriate knowledge management systems. Furthermore, knowledge management should never be viewed as a way to control the process of knowledge creation. In the process of knowledge creation; every library should strive to be an enabler and facilitator by mobilizing all its efforts and resources.

The best knowledge creators are academics. Knowledge creation is best performed by universities. As a learning and knowledge organization, universities should empower their libraries to develop campus-wide knowledge management systems. It is now time for libraries to reposition themselves in the central stage of and as a leading player in knowledge management.

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