LIBRARIES

IN THE CHANGING DIMENSIONS
OF
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

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Knowledge Management: Changing Role of LIS in the Digital Environment

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Introduction

Libraries are treasure house of knowledge in various formats. Since late 1990s information society has been witnessed the transmutation by the application of information and digital technologies and the internet has further transformed the information society to knowledge society. Lack of proper knowledge sharing systems brings digital divide between the knowledge creators and the knowledge seekers in the digital age. Managing knowledge is one of the most important tasks of the society and is crucial for the survival and success of the organization, whether it can be an industry, research organization, private enterprise or an education system. Knowledge Management Systems act as a knowledge provider and play significant role in effectively accessing the knowledge resources of an organization and enhances the process of transfer and sharing of knowledge among the seekers irrespective of its nature.

Knowledge Management (KM) is a bridge depicts knowledge creation/development at one end and its transfer/sharing at the other end makes the access to knowledge very easy. KM has become the key concern for library professionals since they are responsible for creating an organizational culture among the knowledge creators to share their professional insights and personal experience and make them accessible to the community. Knowledge management makes the organization alive to meet its goals. In the Information and

Communication Technology environment the technologies like blogs, wikis, social networks, etc., gives opportunity for knowledge management. Accordingly the role of library professionals, as a knowledge manager has also been changed drastically.

Knowledge Management (KM): A Conceptual Framework

It is difficult to have a single definition for Knowledge Management (KM) because it is an interdisciplinary approach and is scattered in diverse areas of a system. Considering the area of Library and Information Science different writers defined KM in different ways. According to the Gartner Group (1998) KM is 'a discipline that promotes an integrated and collaborative approach to the process of information asset creation, capture, organization, access, and use. Information assets include databases, documents, and, most importantly, the non-captured expertise and experience resident in individual workers. Within the context of International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA-2012), KM is defined as 'a process of creating (generating, capturing), storing (preserving, organizing, integrating), sharing (communicating), applying (implementing), and re-using (transforming) organizational knowledge to enable an organization to achieve its goals and objectives. (Nazim & Mukherjee 2011) explains the Library Professionals' Views On KM 'as accessing information, sharing it, on a need to know basis, to either increase the professionalism or the value of the individual employee, which then increases the performance of the library'.

We often refer to a library as a store house of knowledge, because a library stores documents which contain information and knowledge. Considering the library, KM is a combination of services and technologies. Considering the library, KM is a combination of services and technologies and the technology is a tool for KM. Considering the library environment in the present society KM is a combination of services and technologies. However the expanding dimensions of libraries due to unprecedented transformation of the society towards digital mania have changed the role of library professionals to meet the demands of knowledge seekers.

Need for KM in Libraries

In the digital era libraries are treasure house of human knowledge and the technology has caused dramatic changes in the scholarly communication system which leads to information explosion. Knowledge has two dimensions;-Explicit knowledge (documented), which is static and expressed in words, and Tacit (subjective) knowledge which is dynamic and difficult to share and both to be managed by realizing its need and importance in libraries. There are many reasons to be pointed out to express the need of KM in libraries as follows:

- Provide better and quality service to the user community to cope with the changing needs and expectations of the user
- KM can help libraries remain competitive in an era of constant change by facilitating the rapid transfer of knowledge.
- KM helps to improve efficiency, accuracy, and consistency of information use within the organization
- KM provides a systematic approach to organizing the knowledge of a library's employees, and can make this knowledge available to other librarians and staff in order to improve the organization
- Rapid growth of ICT and its applications necessitates new ways of information handling to expand the access of knowledge for the users.
- Changing and diverse nature of emergence of knowledge and the diverse needs of the knowledge seekers
- KM eliminates the digital divide between Knowledge generator and knowledge user
- KM strategy can facilitate improved communication between all levels of the organization which is an essential factor for the success and survival of libraries

Advantages of KM

Library professionals have important roles to play in knowledge management programs. Knowledge can be captured from Internal or research reports, projects, assignments, Theses and Dissertations, Working papers, Presentations, gray literature, case studies, experts etc. on given subjects and make them accessible. Despite having differential focus in defining KM, it is commonly agreed that KM is managing the personal, unspoken, and implicit knowledge of individuals which is gained through one's life-time experience. It also involves the personal work-efficient skills imbibed through insights gained from routine execution of works.

KM enables to react more quickly to change and to speeds up and achieve better decision making and to accomplish tasks quickly. KM facilitates storage, retrieval and transfer of knowledge, and enables to exchange the experiences, helping people share and put information into action thereby promoting knowledge innovation of individuals.

A knowledge center can bring core knowledge management responsibilities and activities under a single umbrella rather than leaving it to dispersed individuals and teams. Economies of scale can therefore be achieved through: Avoiding duplication of efforts and resources, Pooling expertise, Achieving bulk purchasing discounts, Reusing knowledge and information in a variety of contexts, Sharing available resources and Consortia.

Barriers of KM in Libraries

There are many factors that are discouraging library professionals to have a KM system for their libraries.

- Tacit knowledge is subjective which lies in human mind and is not recorded anywhere. Documenting tacit knowledge is difficult unless until the person who has it does share.
- Updating with the Technical and technological advancement in the information and communication technologies to meet the user requirements
- Rapid and enormous growth of publication industry makes it elusive to sort-out the relevant information
- Day by day documents becoming obsolete if it loses the relevancy in the market. It is an easy task to update the obsolete documents with the relevant.
- It is difficult to digging out knowledge form the person who does not want to share his experience and knowledge with others.

LIS Professionals as Knowledge Managers

One of the major roles of library professionals in the knowledge economy is that of knowledge managers. It is evident that the library professionals can no longer meet the information needs of the user community through the traditional supply based means of collection development in the digital age. They should have the skills to extend their information management roles and change their knowledge management competencies to become an ideal knowledge manager.

- Should have skills to find, authenticate, distill, organize and manage both explicit and tacit knowledge.
- Skills in cataloguing and classification are essential to develop the content and organize it.
- Knowledge in KM tools and techniques for indexing and abstracting, which helps to categorize information and to aid the user in finding the most relevant information.
- Should have a thorough experience with different websites, databases and electronic content providers, to develop new functionality or tools to enhance the existing system.
- Library professionals should have a good theoretical and practical understanding of KM and to change as a Knowledge and information disseminators rather than custodians of information.
- Should have skill to teach and learn and to guide/navigate the users on how best and most efficiently find the information they need.
- Should have knowledge in the subject, availability of the resources and information analyzing documents, classifying and sorting them for easy retrieval.

- Need to be able to look at the roles of their different users, analyze them, identify the areas where their needs could be better met, and determine how or where the library can play a major role.
- Need to have expertise to use and integrate the technologies like web 2.0 applications social networks, mobile devices, open source software etc with library services and also sharing of content and knowledge.
- Skills in building the indexes, Institutional Repositories, Digital libraries, Electronic theses and dissertations etc.
- Ability to be flexible and to have good people skills and be customers service oriented.

According to Ricciao (2011), Library professionals should have the following skills transitions to make the KM effective,

- From being flexible to thinking laterally
- From being a team player to thinking about the organization globally, not just their professional function
- From people skills to being persuasive, selling themselves, their skills, and their ideas within the organization
- From creating, recording, and storing information effectively to thinking about how information is used and planning strategically
- From strong communication skills to effectively managing change
- From assessing and evaluating information to creating systems to connect the right people to the right information at the right time.

Conclusion

KM is a new concept for the development of libraries and it is not only the management of documents but also managing both explicit and tacit knowledge. In this knowledge economy age library professionals should have a clear idea of what to manage and what not according to the needs of the knowledge society and should have awareness and understanding of knowledge management. Analyzing a document or information, it's sorting and sharing the knowledge by understanding the user needs. To overcome the barriers in KM in libraries professionals should have a thorough understanding of the concept of KM and skills.

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