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# KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING STRATEGIES IN INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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**Abstract** Knowledge sharing is believed by many organisations as a panacea for knowledge creation, and an important activity to boost innovation, improve productivity, and increase understanding among knowledge workers. Knowledge sharing has become a crucial activity in knowledge management and is adopted by many organisations especially in the develop countries. In Indonesia, there are not many organisations that implement knowledge management, however knowledge sharing is quite popular and is being used by organisations including library. There are not many libraries in Indonesia that implement knowledge management initiative formally; however, some libraries are conducting knowledge sharing regularly and that has become a formal programme in the libraries. Many libraries have knowledge sharing initiative for many purposes and they have different strategies when conducting knowledge sharing. This paper is investigating the knowledge sharing strategies, the technology that they use, and the knowledge sharing purposes and benefits as well as the knowledge sharing obstacles in university libraries in Indonesia. There are five university libraries that implement knowledge sharing. The purposes of this paper are (1) to describe the knowledge sharing strategies in those libraries, (2) to describe the technology and facility that support knowledge sharing in those libraries, (3) to explain the purposes and benefits of knowledge sharing for the librarians and the libraries, (4) to explain the obstacles during the knowledge sharing implementation, and (5) to describe how the knowledge documentation process works and how the knowledge is reused. The paper output is a recommendation of knowledge sharing best practices that can be used by other libraries to enhance their productivity. The research methodology is using quantitative approach, and the research population is all university libraries in Surabaya, while the sample criterion is university libraries that have been conducting knowledge sharing regularly for at least 12 months. The main data is gathered by interviewing the head and staff of the libraries and knowledge sharing coordinators by using semi-structured questionnaires. The research results show that those libraries have different names of the knowledge-sharing programme, and they allocate regular time for knowledge sharing. Furthermore, some libraries use social media for knowledge sharing and building a knowledge worker group. All library staffs are encouraged to get involved in knowledge sharing. The aim of knowledge sharing is to share best practices and lesson learned; the librarians also share their knowledge about their daily task, how to solve problems, and ideas for library development. The knowledge sharing obstacles are that not many librarians can express their ideas (shy/ silent), and some of participants treat this sharing activity as a mandatory activity. However, those libraries did not implement open access for the knowledge that is created from knowledge sharing.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Sharing, University Library, Knowledge Sharing in Library, Knowledge Management

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## INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing is strongly associated with knowledge management and there are not many organisations in Indonesia that have implemented a formal knowledge management. Only some multinational private or government organisations in the form of state-owned enterprises (BUMN) such as PT *Telkom*/ Telecommunication Indonesia (Hapsari, 2010), PT Java-Bali Power Plan (PJB Jawa-Bali) (Saraswati, 2010), PT PLN/ electricity Indonesia (Hakim, 2013) implement knowledge management. Those organisations are public service and profit-oriented organisations. However, non-profit organisations that implement knowledge management are still rare, especially libraries. Despite this,

many organisations are pioneering initiatives for knowledge sharing for some reasons, for example to boost innovation in both products and services (Irdiani, 2012). The global economic and information age urges the libraries to adopt knowledge sharing in order to enhance knowledge creation. Library is similar to other organisations; through knowledge sharing, it can accelerate the process of knowledge creation and reuse of knowledge, so the library services and products are constantly evolving.

In Indonesia, the library is still perceived as a book storage organisation which runs through lending books by some people, has incomplete and out of date collections (Kusumawati, 2010), and is a place for problematic employees (Latif, 2011; Prasetyo, 2013). The profession of

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librarian is often considered as less promising by the young generation. This is supported by poor library condition, for instance condition of the school library in Surabaya (Karnaji *et al.*, 2012), the monotonous product and services in library such as unsatisfactory OPAC (Purnawati, 2008), spatial design that supports less to user's comfort (Purnawati, 2008), and lack of human resource creativities.

From the illustration above, it is clear that libraries need to reform their product and services as well as their image and brand. This will possibly happen if the library employees have knowledge and always create new knowledge. New knowledge is easily created if people share with each other. Therefore, now some libraries in Surabaya conduct formal knowledge sharing, which means that the activity has become a part of the library management policies. Right now, there is one knowledge sharing activity between university librarians. Community of practice was initiated under Indonesia university libraries forum (FPPTI). FPPTI was founded in 2000 and is supported by the national library as a place where all university libraries can share and develop a good library.

Among many libraries that are still oriented to traditional concepts, there are some libraries that have more advanced vision by applying knowledge sharing with various purposes, especially enhancing knowledge creation among staff in order to be able to produce both products and services innovation in the libraries.

This paper aims to describe the knowledge sharing strategy implied by some university libraries in Surabaya. First is to define purpose or motivation of conducting knowledge sharing, following that is describing the types of knowledge sharing activities and facilities, documentation process of the knowledge sharing results, and knowledge sharing barriers during the implementation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Knowledge Worker and Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge worker is responsible for the creation and growth of innovation. It should be able to create products and services for the organisation and most importantly to create a strategy (Davenport, 2005). All employees of an organisation can be categorised as knowledge workers; this is because all employees hold information and knowledge which can be contributed to the organisation. But, there is an important condition to make an employee a knowledge worker – there should be equal access to information and gaps should be omitted between employees of the organisation (Rosen, 2011). From the above results, the librarian can be categorised as a knowledge worker with librarian is the

library engine, in which the library progress and drawbacks are at the hands of the librarian.

To encourage knowledge creation, a knowledge worker needs to perform knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is not like when we cut a cake in some pieces and distribute them among different people. In knowledge sharing, each individual brings a cake and returns with a bigger one. Knowledge sharing is about working together, helping each other and collaborating. Peter Senge revealed that knowledge sharing is not limited to what is given by others and what we will get. It however means when someone volunteers to help others (colleagues) to build new capacity, it results in action. Knowledge sharing is like a learning process (Gurteen.com).

### Knowledge Sharing Strategy

Based on the knowledge sharing tools, it is mentioned that there is no one particular strategy for successful knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing strategy should be adapted to the context and conditions of the organisation. It is better to choose a strategy by involving the audience because the success of knowledge sharing depends on roles and contributions of the entire audience. There are some alternatives to determine a proper knowledge sharing strategy; those are (1) choose knowledge sharing strategy by looking at a variety of strategies and do not depend on a single strategy, (2) define the purposes of knowledge sharing, (3) pay attention on knowledge broker and leader in knowledge sharing, and (4) determine the knowledge sharing strategy (Tsui, 2006).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. Descriptive method is used to describe the strategy of sharing knowledge (knowledge sharing) in the university libraries in Indonesia. The population of this research is all university libraries in Surabaya. The number of universities in Surabaya is 60 including both private and public universities (Surabaya.go.id). The sampling technique used is purposive sampling method with some criteria: (1) university libraries that conduct knowledge sharing formally and in routine manner, (2) libraries must have implemented knowledge sharing for at least one year. The sample comes to five university libraries, viz. Airlangga University (Unair), University of Christian of Petra (UK Petra), University of Surabaya (Ubaya), Institut Teknologi of Sepuluh November Surabaya (ITS), and Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Perbanas (STIE Perbanas). The data and information gathering is done through questionnaires that are sent to the heads of the libraries and some library employees. In addition, to gain more in-depth information, we interview some of the head librarians and library employees.

## DATA FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data and information that have been collected are shown in Table 1. The table comprises information about five university libraries with ten categories.

**Table 1: Knowledge Sharing Strategy in Academic Libraries**

Category	Unair	ITS	Ubaya	UK Petra	STIE Perbanas
Knowledge sharing activity	Morning Aspiration & Librarian meeting	Morning enlightenment	Library Internal Discussion	Morning Sharing	Morning Motivation
Number of employee	70	42	36	22	5
Knowledge sharing objectives	(1) to share knowledge about library activities (2) to share the seminar / workshop / training experiences and knowledge	(1) to share the seminar / workshop / training experiences and knowledge, (2) to share the library and university policies (3) to increase confidence among staff (4) as a evaluation media for staff	(1) to share the seminar / workshop / training experiences and knowledge, (2) to share the library and university policies, (3) to solve problems in the library	(1) to share knowledge about library activities and information technology (2) to increase collaboration among staff	(1) to increase communication and collaboration among staff (2) to solve problems in the library, (3) to build creative works culture
Knowledge sharing schedule	Every Tuesday morning 07.15-08.00	Every morning from 08.00-08.30	Every three months on Saturday morning	Every morning from 7.30-08.00	Every day during semester break
Information technology	Social network media (Facebook)	Web portal	e-mail	Mailing list, e-mail	Intranet / LAN
Knowledge sharing facilities	Conference room; computer; LCD projector	Library lobby (public area)	Conference room, coffee break/snack, LCD projector	Conference room, LCD projector	Conference room
Strategy to motivate staff to do knowledge sharing	To point out some knowledge broker / coordinator to motivate all library staff	The programme is compulsory for all library staff	The programme is compulsory for all library staff	(1) The programme is compulsory for all library staff, (2) To point out a PIC to ensure the programme is running, (3) support from the head of the library	(1) The programme is compulsory for all library staff, (2) support from the head of the library, (3) create family work culture
Knowledge sharing barriers	Lack of documentation of the knowledge sharing result	(1) Lack of time, (2) many staff not ready to do knowledge sharing, (3) there is no support to do open access	Lack of staff commitment	(1) Lack of staff commitment, (2) Lack of documentation of the knowledge sharing result	Lack of time
Documentation of knowledge sharing	Rarely done	(1) paper-based monthly report, (2) digital report uploaded in ITS digital library	Paper-based report and it is saved on the secretariat	Digital report (soft-file) and it is saved on the coordinator computer	Paper and digital (file) based report that is saved in the staff server
Knowledge reuse	Staff rarely use those knowledge	Staff can easily download the document from the digital library	Staffs might borrow the document from secretariat	Staffs need permission from the coordinator to use those documents	Staff can easily access the document through intranet/ LAN

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING OBJECTIVES

The five libraries' objective to conduct knowledge sharing is almost the same, in which knowledge sharing is considered as a medium of communication between library employees and library as a place of knowledge and experience exchange. Implementing knowledge sharing creates a continuous communication between the employees, especially in solving the problems that occur in the library. Another purpose is to increase cooperation and collaboration among employees in the university libraries in Surabaya. Furthermore, the purpose of knowledge sharing is to share the results of the seminars/ trainings/ workshops conducted by library employees so that all employees have a new insight about the latest issues in librarianship. Next is to share knowledge about the daily activities and solve problems that arise, so from these results can be used as an evaluation for all the library works.

## FACILITIES AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The facilities provided by the library to support knowledge sharing are quite diverse. In ITS, public space (lobby) is used as a place to conduct knowledge sharing every morning while the other four libraries provide conference room for knowledge sharing. By using library lobby for morning enlightenment the librarian feels much relaxed because there is no gap between employees. Every employee can contribute in the morning enlightenment without being underestimated by others. All participants stand in a circle which makes them know each other. The atmosphere is also very friendly and less formal but serious. On the other hand, Ubaya chooses Saturday morning to do knowledge sharing, and the library supports the programme by providing facilities such as a discussion room and some food and coffee for the participants. Other support includes providing information technology devices such as computers, LCD projector for presentations, Internet connection, LAN development, and mailing lists. STIE Perbanas uses intranet to save all files for knowledge sharing so that all employees can access those files easily. UK Petra builds a mailing list for its employees as a medium to remind them about knowledge sharing activities as well as a place to discuss problems and share the knowledge sharing result. Unair library uses social network media (Facebook) to support the sharing process outside the formal agenda, so it does not depend on only the face-to-face meeting every Tuesday morning.

Information technology is important to support knowledge sharing, especially in the digital age. It allows all employees to share the information anytime. But, technology is not the best solution for the success of knowledge sharing. The employees and their organisational culture play a vital role in knowledge sharing. As described above, all of the libraries

are equipped with only basic information technology tools and discussion rooms for knowledge sharing process. This is because the libraries try to develop a knowledge sharing culture among library employees.

## HOW TO MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES TO CONDUCT KNOWLEDGE SHARING

To motivate the employees play an active role in knowledge sharing requires the right strategy, because knowledge sharing includes activities for not only managers, but also for the entire organisation. From data gathered from the five libraries, it can be said that they all utilise the library policy as a tool to force all employees to do knowledge sharing. It means that knowledge sharing activity is compulsory to be attended by the all library employees. But, till now there is no library that applies punishment for them who do not attend the knowledge sharing, or proposes reward system for them who are active and contribute in knowledge sharing. According to King (2006), supervisory control is needed to support knowledge sharing through the organisation's policies, such as it can be embedded in contract that all knowledge and information generated by an employee belongs to the organisation. Supervisory control is highly dependent on the strong leadership and the use of power to force members to contribute.

Some researchers claim that the reward or incentive system could increase a person's motivation in doing knowledge sharing, but it is also considered to build negative habit in employees such as a habit to hold the knowledge they have (Pearisamy, 2006). To encourage staff for knowledge sharing, it needs to be given intrinsic rewards such as opportunity to go to conferences, trainings, or recognition (Sutton, 2009). Reward system is still considered to be the easiest strategy to be implemented, but a note should be given with rewards that educates the employees and supports the ongoing activities of knowledge sharing.

In addition, the role of the leader and the appointment of knowledge broker also drive employees to conduct knowledge sharing. As stated by Huisman & de Wit (2002), the knowledge broker's role is very important, where it can be a connector between knowledge sharing participants by regularly approaching various groups in the organisation.

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING OBSTACLES

The biggest obstacle experienced by the five libraries is time limitation for knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is compulsory for all employees, and gathering 22 people (UK Petra) to 42 people (ITS) every morning is not an easy task. STIE Perbanas also experiences the same problem; with only five staff to serve a big university library, it takes

almost all their time on work. Perceiving the time constraint, STIE Perbanas conducts knowledge sharing during semester breaks only, somewhat similar to UBAYA that holds knowledge sharing sessions every 3 months. Unair library's sharing activity is held once a week, every Tuesday morning in the central library and is followed by all library employees from other branches. Besides the time limitation, many knowledge sharing participants come late to the event and the unpunctual knowledge sharing forum becomes a problem. Furthermore, Unair and ITS have another obstacle such as many library employees are not confident to speak in the forum. Time constraint is often the reason for someone to not share (Lindsey, 2006), while communication is also a barrier why people don't share.

## DOCUMENTATION SYSTEM

In addition to knowledge sharing activity itself, documenting the results of knowledge sharing is one important step to support the knowledge creation process. The results of knowledge sharing should be organised into organisational knowledge that can be accessed by all library employees in the future. According to data finding, most libraries do not process or organise the knowledge sharing result seriously; they only put emphasis on the knowledge sharing for knowledge exchange. Absence of documentation makes organisation of knowledge for open access almost impossible. Libraries do not hold many knowledge resources as a result of knowledge sharing activities. We can say that open access initiatives are still a long way to go as long as those libraries are not aware and do not put more attention on documentation system. In this case, those libraries only build knowledge sharing without planning for long-term benefits, especially as an organisational learning process. The results of knowledge sharing are only reports stored in the server computer or in the secretariat. Even though ITS libraries have started storing their knowledge product in digital library portal that can be accessed by all employees, the portal is better called as institutional repository rather than knowledge product from knowledge sharing activities. Knowledge sharing is one of the activities for knowledge creation, where the whole process is carried out in four modes, i.e. creation from tacit – tacit (socialisation), tacit-explicit (externalisation), explicit-tacit (internalisation), and explicit-explicit (combination) (Nonaka, 2007). Documentation process is one form of implementation of the translating tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, so that people can easily understand about other people's knowledge.

## KNOWLEDGE REUSE

Knowledge sharing is useless unless it is used by all employees in organisation or they take advantage of the activity. When knowledge product is rarely used by the employees to help

them with work, solve problem, or make innovation in the library, it means that the knowledge sharing is less successful. In conjunction with reusing knowledge, STIE Perbanas and ITS provide the widest access for employees to utilise the knowledge sharing results through intranet and digital library portal. The employees can search and download the desired information without any permission from authorised staff. While at Ubaya and UK Petra, employees who like to utilise the knowledge product should have permission to access from the head of sub-section where the document (the information) is stored, or should come directly to the secretariat room. For Unair, library staff rarely accesses the information or knowledge product on the results of knowledge sharing, because they do not really get benefit from that knowledge. Knowledge reuse is very useful in creation of a product or innovation; and the knowledge reuse can foster organisational innovation without having to repeat the process from the beginning (Oshri, 2006).

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Knowledge sharing has not been formally adopted by all the libraries in Surabaya. But in process of implementation of knowledge sharing, libraries in Surabaya are still not maximised. It is visible from the strategy that only focuses on the implementation of knowledge sharing (face to face meeting) or just to share the results of the seminar/ training without considering knowledge sharing as a complex process for knowledge creation. The long term and the most important goal in knowledge sharing is the creation of new knowledge and innovation which has not been visible. Likewise, information technology and other facilities are very basic such as discussion room with its equipment (computer, LCD projector). Some libraries support knowledge sharing through computers and Internet networks, which needs applications that encourages collaboration virtually. Libraries are not applying reward systems/ incentives for staff who contribute in knowledge sharing; it also triggers some staff to reduce their contribution or intention to come to the knowledge sharing forum. Finally, all parties should easily access the results of knowledge sharing but those libraries have not made facilities for optimum knowledge reuse and open access. Those libraries consider knowledge sharing as an information exchange activity only, not as a knowledge creating activity.

## Suggestion for the library

- (1) Libraries should be more serious in planning the knowledge sharing strategy in accordance with the intended goal.
- (2) Leadership and knowledge brokers should be involved as much as possible to support the success of knowledge-sharing.

- (3) Libraries should provide proper rewards/ incentives to employees that can encourage knowledge creation among staff.
- (4) Libraries should encourage open access to all the knowledge products that is created during knowledge sharing through the Internet, so that all parties can mutually benefit from the results.
- (5) Libraries should encourage the creation of knowledge (documentation) as well as provide access to the knowledge for future use.

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