Knowledge Management
in Academic Libraries

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Abstract—Academic libraries are information centers established in support of the mission of their parent institutions to generate knowledge, and people equipped with knowledge in order to serve the society and advance the well-being of mankind. In the digital age, academic libraries face challenges from both within (academia) and without (the business sector). Academic departments, or even faculty and students, may purchase or build their own portals to meet their academic and/or research needs.To prove their relevance and value, academic libraries must strive to provide the right amount of information to the right clientele at the right time with a right expense of financial and human resources. With a stagnant or dwindling library budget, academic libraries have to increase their operational efficiency in order to meet the challenge. One management tool that can help in this regard is Knowledge Management .Knowledge management is a viable means in which academic libraries could improve their services in the present knowledge era.This paper mainly focuses on the concept of Knowledge Management and its role Academic libraries, Objectives of Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries

Keywords: Information, Knowledge, Knowledge Management, Library, Library & Information Profession

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present information and knowledge era, knowledge has become a key resource. The conventional function of academic libraries is to collect, process, disseminate, store and utilise information to provide service to the community. However, the environment in which academic libraries operate today is changing.

Academic Libraries are pinched on both sides: reduced budget and increased demand from faculty and students. The success of academic libraries depends on their ability to utilize information and knowledge of its staff to better serve the needs of the academic community.

Knowledge management is a viable means in which academic libraries could improve their services in the knowledge economy. This can be achieved through creating an organisational culture of sharing knowledge and expertise within the library. However, organisations face innumerable challenges in nurturing and managing knowledge. The challenges occur because only a part of knowledge is internalised by the organisation, the other is internalised by individuals.

Libraries serve as the gateway to knowledge. The gateway is the digital means to access to information & knowledge sources that are needed. The gateway provides services that enable the users & researchers to locate & to gate access to resources. The gateway is the place for individual & group study & a center for interactive learning using digital resources & networks. The goals of the gateway are convenience, efficiency, timeliness, and unification of services and programmes. No doubt Libraries serve as the gateway to Knowledge.

II. THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The concept --"Knowledge Management"--was started and popularized in the business world during the last decade of the 20th century. It was the business world that first recognizes the importance of knowledge in the "global economy" of the "knowledge age". In the new knowledge economy, the possession of relevant and strategic knowledge and its unceasing renewal enables businesses to gain competitive advantage. The applications of knowledge management have now spread to other organizations including government agencies, research and development departments, universities and library Information Profession.

As early as 1965, Peter Drucker already pointed out that "knowledge" would replace land, labor, capital, machines, etc. to become the chief source of production.His foresight did not get much attention back then. It was not until 1991 when Ikujiro Nonaka raised the concept of "tacit" knowledge and "explicit" knowledge as well as the theory of "spiral of knowledge" in the *Harvard Business Review* that the time of "knowledge-based competition" finally came.In his latest book, *Building Organizational Intelligence: a Knowledge Management Primer*, Jay Liebowitz stated as:

"In today's movement towards knowledge management, organizations are trying to best leverage their knowledge internally in the organization and externally to their customers and stakeholders. They are trying to capitalize on their organizational intelligence to maintain their competitive edge."

"The thrust of knowledge management is to create a process of valuing the organization's intangible assets in order to best leverage knowledge internally and externally. Knowledge management, therefore, deals with creating, securing, capturing, coordinating,

combining, retrieving, and distributing knowledge. The idea is to create a knowledge sharing environment whereby *sharing knowledge is power* as opposed to the old adage that, simply, *knowledge is power.*"

III. DATA, INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

Data is defined as "facts, concepts instructions in a formalized manner suitable for communication, interpretation or processed by human or automatic means(UNESCO)".

Information, Marc Porat states, "Information is data that has been organized and communicated."

Knowledge, Daniel Bell defines knowledge as "a set of organized statements of facts or ideas, presenting a reasoned judgment or an experimental result, which is transmitted to others through some communication medium in some systematic form."

Stephen Abram sees the process for knowledge creation and use as a continuum where data transforms into information, information transforms into knowledge and knowledge drives and underpins behavior and decision-making. Below are simple definitions of Data, Information, Knowledge, and Wisdom—all of them are available within every organization:

- *Data*: Scattered, unrelated facts, writings, numbers, or symbols.
- *Information*: Se@ organized and analyzed data.
- *Knowledge*: Information combined with user's ability and experience that is used to solve a problem or to create new knowledge.
- *Wisdom:* Forward looking and thinking based on one's values and commitment. The differences between *information* and *knowledge* can be summarized as:
- Information is visible, independent from action and decision, different in format after processing, physical product, independent from existing environment, easily transferable, and duplicable.
- Knowledge is invisible, closely related to action and decision, different in thought after processing, spiritual product, identified with existing environment, transferable through learning, and not duplicable.

A. Knowledge

Knowledge is a product of human experience and it can be defined as "the management of creating,sustaining, applying, and renewing knowledge resources of an organization including its relationship with seeker and service provider." Knowledge can be broadly divided into two types:Tacit knowledge, and Explicit knowledge

B. Management

Management is a mental process. Management as the process of coordinating total resources of an organization towards the accomplishment of desired goals of that organization through the execution of a group of inter-related functions such as planning, organization, staffing, directing and controlling.

C. Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is "a process, which deals with knowledge creation, acquisition, packaging and application or reuse of knowledge." It is basically consists of the following four steps:

- Knowledge Collection
- Organization
- Data protection and presentation
- Dissemination of Knowledge Information

Knowledge Management is the way to keep knowledge growing through sharing and such sharing is best done either in material or human terms.

IV. TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is classified into two types.
- Explicit knowledge
- Tacit knowledge

Explicit knowledge: It is formal and easy to communicate to others. It is the knowledge of rationality. That is, policies, rules, specifications and formulae. It is also known as declarative knowledge.

Tacit knowledge: It is complex form of knowledge. It has two dimensions namely technical and cognitive. This is personal knowledge, which is in human mind and difficult to formalize and also difficult to communicate.

V. OBJECTIVES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

The main objective of Knowledge management is to ensure that the right information is delivered to the right person just in time, in order to take the most appropriate decision.

The objectives are as follows:

- To promote collection, processing, storage and distribution of knowledge
- To promote scientific research
- To promote relationship between library and users
- To protect the intellectual property right, in information technology era
- To create knowledge repositories and manage knowledge as an asset
- To organize the value of knowledge and improve effective research

VI. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES

While the business world is changing in the new knowledge economy and digital age, libraries of all types are undergoing drastic changes also. The new role of libraries in the 21st century needs to be as a learning and knowledge center for their users as well as the intellectual commons for their respective communities where, to borrow the phrase from the *Keystone Principles*, "people and ideas interact in both the real and virtual environments to expand learning and facilitate the creation of new knowledge."

The aim of knowledge management in libraries is to promote relationship in and between libraries; between library and the user; to strengthen knowledge internet working and to quicken the knowledge flow. In the knowledge economy era, libraries are entrusted with an important job of carrying out researches on development and application of information resources, construction of virtual libraries, protection of intellectual property rights in the electronic era, etc., and paving the way for knowledge innovation.

Another point is that, the academic Libraries are pinched on both sides: reduced budget and increased demand from faculty and students. To implement Knowledge Management in academic libraries is mainly driven by its mission rather than by the competition from Internet-based reference services or electronic books.

Budget shortfall is a primary driving force for the implementation of Knowledge Management in academic libraries. In recent years, budgets in academic libraries are stagnant at best and declining in general.

At the same time, students, faculty and university administration have a greater expectation of academic libraries, due in part to the advancement of information technology and in part to the explosion of knowledge in the digital age. To provide the right amount of information at the right time (Ghosh & Jambekar, 2003) is more critical than ever to the fulfillment of the mission of academic libraries and their parent institutions.

In other words, academic libraries have felt the pinch from both sides – less budget and more demand. Moreover, they have sensed the threat of being marginalized by Internet-based information services and students and faculty's own information gathering efforts.

It is, therefore, paramount for academic libraries to operate more efficiently with reduced financial and/or human resources. Knowledge Management is such a tool that could help in this regard and at this crucial moment.

Davenport explains that Knowledge Management as a process is about acquisition, creation, packaging and application of reuse of knowledge. In any organization, the libraries are the backbone of information dissemination and the different services offered by the libraries are mainly designed to fulfill the goals/missions of the organization. The main aim of library is to provide right information to the right user at the right time. Librarians deserve a central role in the development of processes and policies that harness an organization's knowledge base. As keepers and disseminators of information within organization, librarians make substantial contributions to the successful implementation of knowledge management projects. Academic libraries are information centers established in support of the mission of their parent institutions to generate knowledge, and people equipped with knowledge in order to serve the society and advance the well-being of mankind. In the digital age, academic libraries face challenges from both within (academia) and without (the business sector). Implementation of knowledge management enhances the traditional functions of academic library. Academic departments, or even faculty and students, may purchase or build their own portals to meet their academic and/or research needs.

Knowledge acquisition is the starting point of knowledge management in libraries. Knowledge in academic libraries can be acquired through:-

- Establishing knowledge links or networking with other libraries and with institutions of all kinds;
- Attending training programmes, conferences, seminars and workshops;
- Subscribing to listservs and online or virtual communities of practice;
- Buying knowledge products or resources in the form of manuals, blueprints, reports and research reports.

Academic libraries need to gear up to equip academic librarians with the know-how they need to cope with the rapid changes of the 21st century, which is more information driven and knowledge-generated than any other area.

VII. ROLE OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The conventional role of library and information professionals was to collect, process, disseminate, store and utilize information to provide multidisciplinary services to the personal and professional needs of the library users. But now their role is not restricted to information management only. They play major role in knowledge management programmes and identifying, acquiring, developing, resolving, storing and sharing of knowledge. Library and information professionals have to manage relationships with external providers of information and knowledge and should negotiate with them. Knowledge management has created new ground in the field of library and information science. The library professionals should have following types of knowledge:

- Knowledge about library's information sources for assets, products and services.
- Knowledge about where these sources stored are and what is its use.
- Knowledge about users including teaching staff, researcher and, who is using these sources and how to increase its uses.
- What are the current usage of these sources and how to increase its use?
- Creativity and ability to learn and adapt the new technologies to provide better services to its clients and ability to create, share, harness and utilize knowledge
- Understanding of knowledge creation process and impact of knowledge
- Information literacy skills creating, finding, sharing and using
- Understanding of the principles of "Organization of Knowledge"

VIII. SKILLS NEEDED BY THE LIBRARY & INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL

Teng and Hawamdeh summed up the skills needed by the Library & Information professional in a knowledge-based environment:

- IT literacy, that is knowing how to use the appropriate technology to capture,catalogue and disseminate information and knowledge to the target audience and knowing how to translate that knowledge into a central database for employees of the organisation to access;
- A sharp and analytical mind;
- Innovation and inquiring;
- Enables knowledge creation, flow and communication within the organization and between staff and public.

It is important for academic libraries to encourage librarians to constantly update their skills and competencies in this changing environment.

IX. CONCLUSION

Academic libraries are thus playing a vital role in crossing the borders,the key to opening all gateways to knowledge. Librarians should train themselves and their staff to develop the appropriate knowledge management systems and use information technologies to equipped libraries to provide better, faster and pinpointed services to its clients/ users.

Knowledge Management helps library and information professionals in improving the services being rendered to their users. Information professionals have to recast their roles as knowledge professional. The librarian's roles should not be limited to being the custodians of information but they have to acquire skills to keep themselves updated so as to cope intelligently and objectively with the effective and efficient knowledge management in Academic libraries.

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