Knowledge Management and Academic Libraries in IT Era : Problems and Positions

Md. Wasim Raja
Professional Assistant
Centre for Urdu Language, Literature and Culture
Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India

Md. Zubair Ahmad
Semi Professional Assistant
Centre for Urdu Language, Literature and Culture
Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India

Arun K. Sinha
Librarian I/c & Faculty Dept. of Library & Information Science
Tilka Manjhi, Bhagalpur Universit, Bhagalpur, Bihar, India

Abstract

The paper explores how information technology and related automated systems can support librarians' endeavour towards better implementation of knowledge management. Provision of adequate budgetary support, professional training and a pro-active outlook are key factors for an effective knowledgement management strategy.

Keywords: *Knowledge, Management, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Manager, Technology, Information Technology, Library, Academic Library, Library Professional.*

Introduction

In the present age of information technology (IT) both information and knowledge have become essential ingredients due to multi-dimensional use and application in the society. They have also been playing an important role to change and improve the current society for future vision.

Knowledge Management is an emerging field, much tooted or hyped since late 1990s. Knowledge Management is a complex process, which deals with creations, acquisitions, packaging and application of knowledge. It is the systematic, explicit and deliberate building renewal and application of knowledge related effectiveness and returns from its knowledge assets. Library & Information Science professional and Knowledge Manager have realized the importance of knowledge management.

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

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.

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. The relationship between the knowledge and social development can be understood with the help of the following flowing chart:
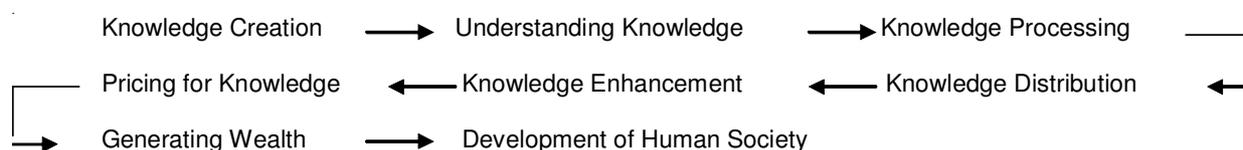
Definitions
According to Srinivasan, *"Knowledge Management refers to a collection of process, technologies and principles that serves to promote a learning environment supportive of the search community goal."*

Knowledge Management is the process of capturing value, knowledge and understanding of corporate information, using IT systems, in order to maintain, re-use and re-deploy that knowledge. [Source: OIC Document Management]

Knowledge Management is the systematic process of finding, selecting, organizing, distilling and presenting information in a way that improves an employee's comprehension in a specific area of interest. [Source: Knowledge Management Server]

Concepts of Knowledge Management
Data → Information → Knowledge, and → Wisdom

The following chart indicates how knowledge can be transferred as wisdom
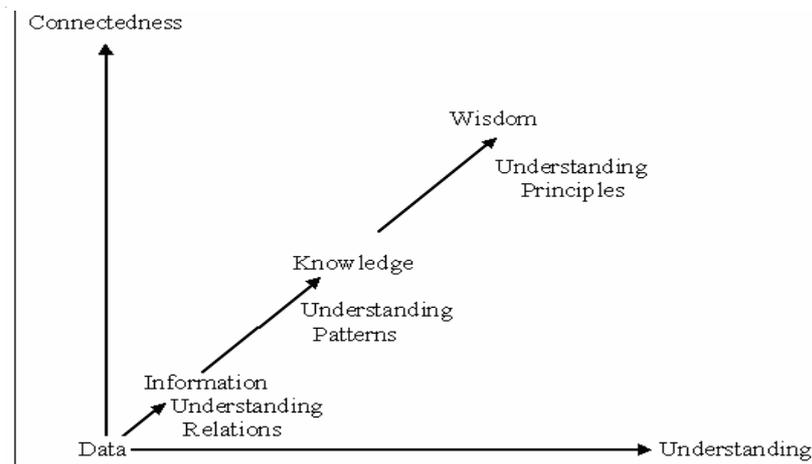
Principles of Knowledge Management
Thomas H Davenport has formulated ten principles of knowledge management as listed below:

- Knowledge Management is expensive
- Effective management of knowledge requires hybrid solutions of people and technology
- Knowledge Management is highly political
- Knowledge Management requires knowledge managers
- Knowledge Management benefits more from maps than model, more from markets than from hierarchies
- Sharing and using knowledge are often unnatural acts
- Knowledge Management means improving knowledge process
- Knowledge access in only the beginning
- Knowledge Management never ends
- Knowledge Management requires a knowledge contract

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

Benefits of IT in Knowledge Management
The combination of computers, databases, and telecommunications, especially the Internet, provide managers with an incredible number of options for improving the way organisations function. Whenever, IT provides a systematic and professional approach to the management of Information Technology service provision. Adopting its guidance offers users a huge range of benefits that include:

- Reduced service costs
- Save the time of users as well as staffs
- Quality and quantity improvement
- Improved user services
- Improved customer/user satisfaction through a more professional approach to service delivery
- Improved productivity
- Information Technology helps to maximizes the benefits
- Provides confidence to managed and cover risk to achieve the organizational goal

- Faster and easier recovery of data and disseminate the information

- Reducing risks and errors

Tools for Knowledge Management

Key types of knowledge related tools are given below which is effective in managing and handling information and knowledge and thereby maintaining the knowledge base organization:

- Intranets/Extranets

- Electronic Document Management

- Data Analysis Data Warehousing

- Help Desk Technologies

- Mapping Tools

- Machine learning

- Workflow management systems

- Groupware

- Information Retrieval Tools

- Data Warehousing: Metadata

- Portals

- Agent Technologies

- Ontology's (Computer based)

Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries

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.

Academic libraries are under pressure from two sides: reduced budget and increased demand from faculty and students. The implementation of Knowledge Management in academic libraries is mainly driven by its mission rather than by the competition from Internet-based reference services or electronic books.

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 multi-disciplinary 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"

Barriers to Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries

Every library professional who works in academic, public or any special library wants to use the techniques of knowledge management to achieve the organizational goal and provide better service to its users but due to some following barriers they are not able to use that:

- There is no co-operation between senior and junior staff.

- Generally, the junior staff cannot share their knowledge and ideas when they feel there is no benefit of this in terms of salary increases.
- Every library cannot participate in terms of modern technology and its management
- Lack of communication skills.
- Lack of staff training.
- Lack of sufficient budget / funds
- Lack of tool and technologies
- Lack of Centralised policy for Library Cess

Suggestions

The IT and knowledge need to work together and focus on getting the right information to the right people at the right time. The entire librarian and information scientist community should have knowledge management strategy or framework to use the IT to disseminate the information as demanded or required. The following points are identified for the better implementation of knowledge management in libraries mostly in Academic Libraries:

- To provide sufficient budget
- To provide special fund for the new technologies
- To equip library with new technologies with network facility
- Inter change of technical staffs among organizations/ libraries
- Staff sharing to develop their professional skills
- Organize a training programme and inter-change of staff for time being on National level (at least once in every two year for two months)

- UGC may establish a monitoring centre specially for libraries to monitor the standardisations of library and provide assistance

Conclusion

However, due to the complicated nature of knowledge *per se* and its management, it is often difficult to estimate or demonstrate the value of knowledge management. In spite of the fact that there are many knowledge base products in the market, none of them is suited for libraries or flexible with the dynamically changing environment in the IT era. Libraries, with limited budget and human resources, should utilize the current management structure and technology to implement Knowledge Management, either bottom-up or top-down. With a concerted effort, use of Information Technology in Knowledge Management will help to increase libraries' operational efficiency and cater to the ever-increasing needs of clientele.

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.

Information technology and systems can provide effective support in implementing knowledge management. 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.

With knowledge management, academic librarians contribute to the improvement of employees' capacity in knowledge creation; it promotes and strengthens relationships and inter-networking between libraries, librarians, and users. KM creates enablement to mine and extract the wealth of knowledge in library employees. The problem today is that in an agrarian economy, land was the main resource. During the industrial revolution, coal, iron ore, labour and other natural resources were the key. Justification For Knowledge Management In Libraries. In the knowledge economy era, libraries are very importance to vocational training and lifelong education of librarians. It raises their knowledge level and ability in knowledge acquisition. Article source: Managing knowledge in academic libraries. Are we? Should we? is licensed by CC BY 4.0. References: Todd, R. J., & Southon, G. (2001). Educating for a knowledge management future: Perceptions of library and information professionals. The Australian Library Journal, 50(4), 313-326. â†©. Townley, C. T. (2001). Knowledge management and academic libraries. College & research libraries, 62(1), 44-55. â†©. Daland, H., (2016). Managing knowledge in academic libraries. Are we? Should we?. Knowledge management is a broad term and describes many components in the identification of information production and delivery system (Cronin, 2001). These elements include (but are not limited to) the categories of knowledge needed to support overall business strategy; *Corresponding author. This study is limited to finding out the role for librarians and libraries in knowledge management and manpower production in Nigeria. It seeks to identify and understand the ways in which these roles impact manpower pro-duction which will contribute to the realization of Vision 20:2020. It is limited to surveying academic librarian in the South Eastern States of Nigeria. LITERATURE REVIEW. Knowledge management (KM) definitions. The Knowledge Management Diagnostic (KMD) proposed by Bukowitz and Williams (2002) was applied. The efforts made were in regard to understand if the method could be used in identifying knowledge generation and consequently increase performances. The data collection occurred through a questionnaire answered by the managers. The KMD is divided into: tactical and strategic process and composed by seven different sections: Get, Use, Learn, Contribute, Assess, Build / Maintain and Discard. Each section was specifically distributed allowing the evaluation of the whole organization or a single sector. Knowledge management (KM) is the process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organization. It refers to a multidisciplinary approach to achieve organisational objectives by making the best use of knowledge. An established discipline since 1991, KM includes courses taught in the fields of business administration, information systems, management, library, and information science. Other fields may contribute to KM research, including information and media...