

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (KM) AND ROLE OF LIBRARIAN

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Abstract: - *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. Knowledge Management (KM) is an emerging field, much tooted or hyped since its inception. The development of Knowledge Management (KM) in the present scenario has become a great concern for libraries and librarians. Nowadays, library and information science schools don't just teach librarians about cataloging and acquisitions, but also about building information systems and relationships that exists between users and these systems. Due to rise in the interest surrounding Knowledge Management (KM) there is a significant change in the nature and scope of library profession. The librarians of today must have to grab the opportunities that exist in the new information era. In essence, the challenge for librarians is to apply the competencies to manage knowledge rather than only information. This research article deliberates on the concept of Knowledge Management, and the role of librarian in the context of knowledge management.*

Keywords: Knowledge Management (KM), Knowledge Economy, Information Systems, Information Management, Knowledge Librarian (KL).

1. Introduction: The concept Knowledge Management (KM) has emerged and became popular in the business world during the last decade of the 20th century. It was the business world that first recognized 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 business to gain competitive advantage. The applications of Knowledge Management (KM) have now spread to other organizations including government agencies, research and development departments, universities and others. Knowledge embedded in the organization's business processes and the employee's skills provides the firm with

unique capabilities to deliver customers with products or services. Knowledge Management (KM) is a form of expertise-centered management, which draws out tacit knowledge making it accessible for specific purposes to improve the performance of organizations.

Traditionally, the management of information has long been regarded as the domain of libraries and librarians. Librarians and information professionals are trained to be experts in information searching, selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, repackaging, disseminating, and serving. However, professionals in Information Technology and systems have also taken Information Management (IM) as their domain because of the recent advances in Information Technology and systems, which drives and underpin Information Management (IM). One of the clearest evidence of this is that the positions of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) in many organizations are generally held by information technologist instead of librarians. In fact, most of the work of CIOs consists of developing and managing the Information Technology infrastructure and systems, and not merely managing the information (Aghoghovwia, D. U. 2014a).

However, at their very core, individuals in the fields of librarianship and Knowledge Management (KM) are both in the business of information and both can be considered as information professionals. In fact, the goals of both librarians and knowledge managers within

any organization should be very similar, if not the same. In many instances, the Knowledge Managers may focus on ways to mine and best deliver internal content, while librarians may focus more on researching and finding information from external sources. Thus, in the process of knowledge creation, every library and librarian should strive to be an enabler and facilitator by mobilizing all its efforts and resources. It is now time for libraries to reposition themselves in the central stage of and as a leading player in Knowledge Management (KM).

This research article reviews the concept of Knowledge Management (KM). It also discusses the role of libraries and librarians in Knowledge Management (KM).

2. Concept: Basically, Knowledge Management (KM) is a process, which deals with knowledge creation, acquisition, packaging and application or reuse of knowledge. It mainly consists of the following four steps viz. Knowledge Collection, Organization, Data protection and presentation, and Dissemination of Knowledge Information. Knowledge Management (KM) is the way to keep knowledge growing through sharing and such sharing is best done either in material or human terms (Raja, M. W., Ahmad M. Z., & Sinha, A. K. 2009a).

The concept of Knowledge Management (KM) can be discussed with the help of the following words i.e. 'data' and 'knowledge' as follows.

Data = Simple, discrete facts and figures;
Information = Data organized for a meaningful purpose; and
Knowledge = Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experience and information (Tendulkar, M. B. 2017).

The term 'Knowledge Management (KM)' has been viewed by many in different ways, but all they are concerned with and have emphasized on need and importance of Knowledge Management (KM).

According to the Harvard Management Update, "knowledge management is the formal, directed process of figuring out what information a company has that could benefit others in the company, then devising ways of making it easily available."

According to the Gartner Group, "knowledge management is the 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 uncaptured expertise and experience resident in individual workers."

As stated in the Knowledge Management Server, "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.

As defined in the OIC Document Management, "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.

Microsoft Corporation's founder Bill Gates said that, "as I use KM is not a software product or a software category. It doesn't even start with technology. It starts with business objectives and processes and recognition of the need to share information. Knowledge Management is nothing more than managing information flow, getting the right information to the people who need it so they can act quickly."

In the words of Lew Platt, Ex-CEO of Hewlett Packard, "If only HP knew what it knows it would make three times more profit tomorrow."

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" (Riccio, H. M. 2011).

3. Role of Librarian: Just as the business world is changing in the new knowledge economy and digital age, libraries of all types are also undergoing through drastic changes. 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 environment to expand learning and facilitate the creation of new knowledge". As a learning organization, libraries should provide a strong leadership in Knowledge Management (KM). Unlike those business organization whose aim for managing knowledge is for competitive advantage instead of competition, internal use only, and little sharing of knowledge with others, the most important mission, libraries should aim their Knowledge Management (KM) goal high (Aghoghovwia, D. U. 2014b).

Being important player, librarians are at a pivotal and key point in the development and future of the profession. Librarians have been doing Knowledge Management (KM) for hundreds of years, and the traditional library role has always been one of identifying and organizing information, sharing information resources, and connecting people to the information they need. 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 (KMPs) 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 (KM) has created new ground in the field of library and information science. In order play their role quite efficiently and effectively the library professionals should have following types of skills and knowledge:

- Knowledge of library's information sources for assets, products and services.
- Knowledge about where these sources are stored and use thereof.
- Knowledge about users including teaching staff, researcher and, one who is using these sources and ways to increase its uses.
- Knowledge about current usage of these sources and ways to increase their use.
- Knowledge of new technologies to provide better services to its clients and ability to create, share, harness and utilize knowledge.
- Knowledge and proper understanding of knowledge creation process and impact of knowledge.
- Information literacy skills creating, finding, sharing and using.
- Better understanding of the principles of organization of knowledge (Raja, M. W., Ahmad M. Z., & Sinha, A. K. 2009b).
- Knowledge of Knowledge Management (KM) tools like Intranets/Extranets, Electronic Document Management, Data Warehousing, Help Desk Technologies, Mapping Tools, Groupware, Mapping and Information Retrieval Tools, Portals etc.

Thus, the library and Knowledge Librarian (KL) will have to play a very crucial role in the extension and modification of knowledge. The growing need for Knowledge Management (KM) has influenced every component and operation of a library. Knowledge Management (KM) requires more effective methods of information handling, speedy transfer of information and linking of information with individuals and their activities. It demands library patron centered development of information systems and services and customization of information at the individual level (Sharma, A. K. 2010).

4. Concluding Remarks: With the development of Information Technology (IT) and its applications in Library and Information Centers, the concept of document management has been changed to information management and again the entire scenario of information management has started its change to Knowledge Management (KM). Knowledge Management (KM) has rapidly moved beyond the stage of a trend and has established itself as a key part of many libraries' knowledge strategy. The concept of knowledge-based economy has generated tremendous interest now-a-days. A library's status is no longer defined by the collection it housed; it is extended to include online and seamless access to information resources. The right amount of information at the right time has long since been an important factor for all kinds of libraries.

Knowledge Management (KM) is a buzzword turned business phenomenon, in the library world, and there is a lesson to be learned from the business world. For any library, to succeed in implementing Knowledge Management (KM) will require a strong leadership and vision from the top administration. Information Technology (IT) and systems can provide effective support in implementing Knowledge Management (KM). Knowledge Librarians (KL) should work together with Information Technology (IT) Professionals and others to develop the appropriate Knowledge Management Systems (KMSs). Libraries, with limited budget and human resources, should utilize the current management structure and technology to implement Knowledge Management (KM) successfully. It is now time for libraries and librarians to reposition themselves in the central stage of and as a leading player in Knowledge Management (KM).

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