Title	How library practitioners view knowledge management in libraries: A qualitative study
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Citation	Library Management, 30(8/9): 643-656
Issue Date	2009
Type	Journal Article
Text version	author
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10119/8470
Rights	Copyright (C) 2009 Emerald Group Publishing, Md Roknuzzaman, Katsuhiro Umemoto, Library Management, 30(8/9), 2009, 643-656. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/01435120911006593
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How library practitioners view knowledge management in libraries: A qualitative study

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How library practitioners view knowledge management in libraries: A qualitative study

Abstract

Purpose – The main purpose of this paper is to explore library practitioners' views of knowledge management (KM) and its incorporation into library practice.

Design/methodology/approach – The study is based on the review of literature available in secondary sources, and the result of interviews of ten library practitioners worldwide. The respondents are purposively selected from the participants' lists of two international conferences held in 2008. The interviews were conducted through e-mail using a short, structured, and open-ended questionnaire.

Findings – The ways of knowing and degrees of understanding of KM concepts among the library practitioners are varied. But the most library practitioners have focused on a shallow perception of KM for its incorporation into library practice – dealing with only explicit information and/or knowledge. This study also finds some of the reasons for responding to KM, e.g. increasing value of knowledge in the knowledge economy, role of information technologies, opportunities for improved library practices.

Research limitations/implications – The study is limited in its scope conducting interviews of only 10 library practitioners worldwide, and hence, generalization may not be derived from the findings.

Practical implications – The paper suggests that library practitioners need to broaden their understanding, change their traditional mindset, and to apply a holistic approach of KM system design and library practice, focusing on both explicit and tacit knowledge.

Originality/value – The paper investigates the original views of library practitioners regarding KM in libraries.

Introduction

The decade of 1990s witnessed the emergence of a new economy based on knowledge. The growing value of information and knowledge in social systems, and the way of managing them has created unique challenges for the organizations, information institutions, managers, and workers. Hawamdeh (2008) argues that the emergence of the knowledge-based economy, the threat of globalization, and the intensification of

competition have profound implications for organizational growth, adaptability, sustainability and survival. For many organizations and countries alike, innovation and knowledge management (KM) are no longer luxury items, but rather necessities and a means of sustaining economic development and competitiveness. As an important innovation of the global knowledge economy, KM has gained much popularity among a number of professional groups notably human resources, IT specialists, and librarians, who are taking their claims, seeing KM as an opportunity to move centre stage (Corrall, 1998).

The history of KM is not old, but it has a long root in library practice in the sense of managing codified or recorded knowledge. However, the initial appeal of the emerging field was on business. Among the library and information science (LIS) community, the perceptions of KM are varied, and the literature suggests that there is no universal agreement of how and to what extent KM is related to LIS. A minority of authors suspect about the future of KM considering it as an oxymoron (Broadbent, 1998), and a nonsensical management fad (Wilson, 2002), while some others find close relationship between LIS and KM, and describe KM as librarianship or information management by another name (Koenig, 1996, 1997; Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Therefore, in spite of a wide variety of perceptions and attitudes of LIS community towards KM, most authors consider KM from more positive view points and call for full involvement of LIS people in KM (Broadbent, 1998; Corrall, 1998; Butler, 2000; Abell and Oxbrow, 2001; Southon and Todd, 2001). Though not many libraries has known to undertake the knowledge management initiatives, the keen interest of the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) community in Knowledge Management (KM) over the past few years has led to the transformation of the Knowledge Management Discussion Group into a full-fledged IFLA Section (Hamid and Nayan, 2005). Thus, responding to the exciting and emerging phenomenon of KM, library practitioners have shown their keen interest in the filed, but this demands for a deeper understanding of its ramifications and relevance to their work.

Perceptions of KM concepts

Knowledge management has been described as a process or set of processes (Abell and Oxbrow, 2001; Townley, 2001; White, 2004), a method of management (Shanhong, 2000), a new dimension of strategic information management (Ponelis and Fair-Wessels, 1998), or the use of organizational knowledge through sound practices of information management and organizational learning (Broadbent, 1998). KM in view of process has been defined by White (2004) as the process of creating, storing, sharing and re-using

organizational knowledge (know-how) to enable an organization to achieve its goals and objectives. From management or business perspective, KM is considered as a method of management that works for converting intellectual assets of workers and staff members in the organization into higher productive forces - competition power and new value (Shanhong, 2000). Corrall (1998) describes that KM involves taking a more holistic view of information, not only combining internal and external information-previously practiced in some corporate libraries, relatively rare in other sectors-but also coordinating planning and control (monitoring) information, and consolidating informal (soft) and formal (hard) information.

The awareness and application of knowledge have always been at the centre of librarians' work, and hence, some authors have tried to convince that KM is an old concept (Hawkins, 2000; Heijne, 2004), and a new name for what librarians or information professionals have been doing for years (Townley, 2001; Ajiferuke, 2003). KM has been described as librarianship in new clothes (Koenig, 1997), or simply a case of new wine in old bottles (Rowley, 1999; Schwarzwalder, 1999 cited by Davenport and Cronin, 2000). Davenport and Cronin (2000) describe KM in the LIS context as 'information management' (management of internal and external publications) by another name. Corrall (1998) remarks that librarianship is often used to describe as the organization of recorded knowledge, and some people view KM as just an up-market label for information management, hence, she certainly believes that KM is the job for librarians.

Despite a link between information management and knowledge management, many authorities have tried to distinguish KM from librarianship and information management (Koenig, 1997; Schwarzwalder, 1999; Southon and Todd, 2001; Morris, 2001; Davenport, 2004). Davenport (2004) claims that KM is a domain that is distinct from both librarianship and information management because what is managed is wider, and more challenging. Although Ferguson (2004) is not agreed with the notion that KM and IM are completely distinct, he, however, can see significant differences in the emphasis of each, and also raises a question of the hyperbolic claims about KM being 'souped-up' librarianship. Differentiating KM from IM, Owen (1999) describes that traditional information management is focused on information as an object and on explicit, factual information managed through automated systems. Its object is to support internal processes and ensure the quality of business operations. Knowledge management, in its broadest sense, is focused on knowledge as a concept and on tacit knowledge embodied in individual people and in the organisation as a whole. Its

primary aim is to facilitate knowledge-rich relations and to ensure ongoing development and innovation.

Opportunities for library practitioners

A body of literature argues that KM expands the horizon of LIS and offers a number of opportunities for LIS people (Abell, 2000; Butler, 2000; Hayes, 2004; Morris, 2001; Rooi and Snyman, 2006; Sinotte, 2004; Southon and Todd, 2001; Townley, 2001). There is an increasing number of job opportunities with new job titles and positions emerged from KM. Ferguson (2004) finds some positions for library and information profession in KM environment from the 'sample job description' compiled by Bishop (2002) covering Competitive Intelligence Leader, Knowledge and Information Manager, Intranet Content manager, and Knowledge Coordinator. Malhan and Rao (2005) argue that the new roles of knowledge professionals in knowledge-intensive organization proposed by Skyrme and Amidon (1997) are more or less the same as the current job titles and activities of librarians and information professionals. These new roles and functions are: Knowledge Engineer, Knowledge Editor, Knowledge Analysts, Knowledge Navigator, Knowledge Gatekeeper, Knowledge brokers, and Knowledge Asset Managers. The skills of information professionals, e.g. organizational knowledge, networking, subject knowledge, cataloguing and classification, indexing, abstracting, researching, and training are valuable when an organization deploys elements of a codification strategy (Butler, 2000).

The opportunities emerged from KM can also be seen as challenge for LIS professionals to survive in the competitive and complex academic and professional environment. Despite the similarities between knowledge management and information management, not all LIS professionals have the ambition necessary to gain access to more senior knowledge management roles (Ferguson, 2004). The challenge for the information professional lies in applying competencies used in managing information to the broader picture of managing knowledge (Bishop, 2001). Traditionally, information professionals' roles were limited to the identification, acquisition and organization of explicit knowledge or information. Today, that role is being expanded to include other forms of knowledge activities- tacit and implicit knowledge in the form of skills and competencies (Hawamdeh et al, 2004). Managing the 'tacit' intuitions and 'know-how' of organizational members or knowledge workers has become a great challenge for information professionals (Bishop, 2001; Maponya, 2004). Since KM focuses more on human as well as organizational issues, a new set of skills and competencies are needed for library practitioners to work in KM environment.

KM in library practices

Although the library world often claims the ownership of KM, in practice, the adoption of KM in libraries is not as pervasive as in business sector. But KM in non-profit organization can improve communication among staff and between top management and can promote a culture of sharing (Teng and Hwamdeh, 2002).The approaches to KM as have been described by different authors include those of team-based approach to develop and introduce new tool for capturing, managing and using informal and tacit knowledge of reference librarians in New Brunswick Libraries at Rutgers University (Jantz, 2001); an enterprise-wide, broad and evolutionary approach to KM system involving a knowledge bank, more specifically, a dynamic institutional repository for digital intellectual assets at Ohio State University Library (Branin, 2003); a database approach to make informal knowledge of reference librarians formalized at San Diego State University (Stover, 2004); organizational know-how/library know-how consisting of practical knowledge of the library, its resources and users based on Oxford University Library Services (White, 2004); and a pragmatic approach to implement KM in academic libraries utilizing the existing staffing, technology, and management structure following either bottom-up or top-down strategy (Wen, 2005). Mphidi and Snyman (2004) have focused on the utilization of intranet as a KM tool in academic libraries, especially in South Africa; while most recently Selhorst (2007) recommends the replacement of the intranet with an internal wiki followed by a knowledge audit for making use of hidden staff talent at the Public Library of Vissingen, Holland. Shanhong (2000) describes that KM in libraries should be focused on effective research and development of knowledge, creation of knowledge bases, exchange and sharing of knowledge between library staffs (including its users), training of library staff, speeding up explicit processing of the implicit knowledge and realizing of its sharing. Technological influences on library environment have facilitated libraries to be engaged in KM as Sarrafzadeh (2005) comments that digitizing libraries' resources and moving to toward digital and hybrid libraries, providing remote access to Internet-based knowledge resources, and providing twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week reference services through the web, are potentially important steps toward KM implementation in libraries.

Research objectives

A body of literature have explored library as one of the significant areas where KM can actively be applied. In the current economic climate, organizations are characterized by more knowledge incorporated in the new contents, business and services. Library as a

social organization has its own tradition to deal with information and knowledge. In a digital environment, the role of knowledge has become even more significant, and digital libraries perform many knowledge-based activities. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate library practitioners' views of KM and its incorporation into libraries. More specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- to inquire into library practitioners' ways of knowing about KM,
- to explore their understanding of KM concept,
- to examine their responses to KM for incorporating it into libraries, more particularly into digital libraries (DLs),
- to investigate the reasons for responding to KM, and
- to explore the problems of incorporating KM into library practices.

Research methods

To attain the defined objectives, we conducted an e-mail questionnaire of some selected LIS practitioners worldwide besides the review of relevant literature. It was difficult for us to locate as well as to select libraries which were practicing formal KM because of the non-availability of reliable sources or directories of KM practices in libraries. Therefore, we selected twenty (20) library practitioners purposively based on their professional and research experiences in DL and KM from the participants' lists of two international conferences: World Library and Information Congress: 74th IFLA General Conference and Council, 10-14 August 2008, Québec, Canada, and of Joint Conference on Digital Libraries, 16-20, June 2008, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. This study is a part of our earlier study (Roknuzzaman, Kanai and Umemoto, 2009), where we analysed the interview data of nine respondents (received by that time) regarding the integration of knowledge management process into digital library system. For this study, we received 10 complete questionnaires which were thematically analysed using qualitative approach of research. To ensure the anonymity of the respondents, we used a coding system for each interviewee like LP1, LP2, LP3, …..and LP10.

Analysis of interview data

Attributes of the respondents

The geographic distribution of the respondents indicates that 2 each from UK and the USA, and 1 each from Australia, Canada, China, India, South Africa, and The Netherlands. According to the data, 4 respondents were working in academic libraries, 4 in special libraries, and 2 in public libraries. The position titles of the respondents include 3 Library Directors, 2 Librarians, and 1 each of Digital Library/Knowledge

Manager, Digital Asset Librarian, System Librarian, Library Media Specialist, and Information Specialist (Information Access and Learning).

Ways of knowing about KM

The analysis of interview data signifies the fact that library practitioners became aware of KM concepts through different ways of knowing, e.g., explicit knowing, experiential knowing and knowing from job market.

Explicit knowing

Personal reading, research, writing, and attending to academic and professional conferences, workshops, and seminars, were the important sources for the LIS practitioners to know about KM as reported by four of the respondents. During the mid-nineties, the emerging concept of KM was getting more popular among the academic and professional societies, and a number of journal publications were blooming. LP6 remarked that it was an exciting moment for her to know about KM from the IFLA conference first, but it was difficult for her to recognize any difference between KM and IM in practice. Although it was exciting for some to know about the emerging area of KM, one of the respondents (LP3) recognized KM from reading Shera's (1965) concept of librarianship long before the emergence of formal KM concepts. Shera (1965) argued that librarianship is "the management of human knowledge, the most interdisciplinary of all the disciplines- and because it is concerned with the philosophy of knowledge it is potentially the most deeply philosophical of all the professions, and hence it should address the philosophy of philosophy of knowledge."

Experiential knowing

Three respondents recognized KM from their practical work fields either in libraries or in corporate or in human resources organizations. LP1 reported that their library was more technology-oriented, and she had advanced level of IM practice – mostly related to business process management. She also had experience in dealing with KM tools and technologies including intranet, metadata, groupware technologies, etc., and she did some project works on KM related to system development that had special relevance to libraries. LP7 recognized KM first time from a corporate organization where he was a business information manager and one of his responsibilities was the management of know-how of the organization during the late nineties. LP4 came to know about KM and its application during 1999 when he was a Learning Resources Manager in a Human Resources Organization. He identified two of the important areas of KM, e.g

organizational learning, and knowledge sharing- very relevant to DL practicing. In DL practice, many of the tools, technologies, skills and competencies are KM-oriented, and knowledge organization systems of a DL encompass different schemes for organizing information and promoting KM. Thus, some of the practitioners just heard about the concept of KM for the first time from others, but they recognized it from their library practice although in many cases the concept was narrowly traced within the scope of IM and the application of some tools and technologies in library and information system. Practitioners who had opportunities to work in corporate and human resources organizations, gained experience of managing know how, organizational learning or sharing knowledge of human resources.

Knowing from the job market
The emergence of KM, as it is already mentioned, created niche markets for information and knowledge related positions, and some practitioners recognized KM from the circulations of KM position titles outside of libraries. In Australia, UK, USA, and South Africa, the trends of KM positions in industry settings were remarkable, but there was a little scope for the LIS graduates. Some practitioners found that the industries required for some skills like resource management, knowledge mapping and organization, information system design, etc. which were relevant to their library practice, and these were recognized as IM-related jobs. However, LP8 and LP9 became aware of KM concept not from library practice but from industry-oriented job positions and skills, and they explored their own positions in libraries. LP8 stated that:

> It was early nineties when I became aware of KM from the job circulations of an industry, and I was confused to find some of the positions belonging to ours, but LIS graduates had no opportunity… I was convinced that KM should be a practice of librarianship… We are doing some KM activities without any formal and written policies.

Understanding of KM
Library practitioners have conceptualized KM from four major viewpoints: information management, systemic, tacit, and cultural points of view.

Information Management (IM) points of view
All of the respondents considered KM as a process although there were some variations in their understanding and perception. Some argued for KM as a process similar to IM in DL practice, while others considered KM not just as IM, but a broad concept in

which IM is an important part. As for example, LP2 remarked that "KM is nothing but what we are doing in our everyday business in libraries." Similarly LP5 asserts that "for me IM was a natural successor to data or record management, and KM is the natural successor to IM, and in practice there is no difference." Another respondent reported that KM is a "business process involving a range of practices used by an organisation to locate, create, represent, and distribute knowledge assets of that organization" (LP7). Two other respondents described KM as "not only a process but also a method, technique and above all a discipline that deals with the production, organization, storage, dissemination, utilization and evaluation of knowledge in order to achieve organizational goals" (LP1 & LP8). However, KM denotes not only the management of knowledge itself but also the subsequent management of its environment.

Systemic points of view
Since DL is system-oriented and many tools and technologies of KM are familiar to DL practice, LIS practitioners see KM from system perspective. KM systems usually emphasize on information and communication technologies, which hold the primacy of both as a domain for knowledge creation and possession and as a facilitator to the knowledge distribution and management process. LP1 noted that "KM systems including enterprise content management software, intranet, and recent addition of wikis can facilitate DL activities, and many of the management tools and soft wares of DL can be relevant to KM system." Therefore, for some, KM is not a particular technology but an integrated system based on advanced repositories, enterprise content management system, expert system, and systems for collaboration, networking, and sharing knowledge.

Tacit points of view
Besides info or techno-centric conceptualizations, some consider KM from human or tacit points of view. For Polanyi (1966), tacit knowledge is personal, context-specific, and therefore hard to formalize and communicate. Nonaka (1991) distinguishes between explicit and tacit knowledge as "explicit knowledge is formal and systematic. For this reason, it can be easily communicated and shared, in product specifications or a scientific formula or a computer program. Tacit knowledge is highly personal. It is hard to formalize and therefore difficult, if not impossible, to communicate." It is evident from our study that KM is seen as "becoming aware of the knowledge inside the heads of people in organizations in order to use it more efficiently for improving user services" (LP10).

Cultural points of view

It is said that knowledge is culturally derived, acquired, and transferred, and skills and competencies developed through acquiring new knowledge are culturally dependent. The practice of KM is deeply rooted to the organizational culture and embedded in individual believe and perceptions. The following quote demonstrates the importance of cultural bases of KM in DL:

> "IT predominantly influences on both KM and DL practices, but digital space provides people little scope for cultural interaction. For me, simple IM or document management is the starting of KM, and real KM involves more than software and technology, it requires cultural transformation of organizational knowledge creation, processing, storing, disseminating and turning into innovation…and again, KM in digital libraries, must take culture into consideration, as it is a set of behavioral strategies like learning organization and communities of practice" (LP8).

Responding to KM

Not all respondents were practicing KM in their libraries; however, the majority of them have positively accepted KM, while two respondents (LP2 and LP5) have opined that KM will not bring any value to DL arguing "DL itself works as a KM system, and a well-planned and well-designed DL can provide DL community with access to digital knowledge resources." The positivists, on the other hand, have argued that although KM belongs to the domain of LIS, it has been rediscovered by the business community, and hence, DL community should reconsider KM as a blessing for them. They also have noted that certainly a well-planned and visionary KM project can promote decent library practices in digital environment. Among the positivists, four respondents have suggested a pragmatic approach of incorporating KM into DL. Take a look at the authors' KM work in *Library Review* for the detail of the integration of KM process into DL system (Roknuzzaman, Kanai, and Umemoto, 2009, pp. 372-386).

Based on the analysis of the interview data of nine (9) respondents (excluding one from the present study), the authors have developed a framework of an existing DL system that consists of digital resources, technological infrastructure, experience and expertise, and DL services. There exist some commonalities between DL and KM, especially in the areas of their objectives, contents, people, process and technology. Considering the broad perspectives and the potential benefits of KM, the authors have argued for the integration of KM process into DL system by utilizing the existing structure of DL and the used life cycle process of information management (IM) in the name of a formal KM process. The incorporation of KM process into DL system would

upgrade the existing DL system consisting of five elements such as, digital resources, digital technologies, experience and expertise, DL services, and a KM process. The centrally designed KM refers to the process of management and maintenance of DL knowledge assets using a life cycle process of acquisition, organization, storage and retrieval, dissemination of knowledge with receiving feedbacks. Thus, the pragmatic approach of KM in DL system includes the following five steps:

- *Acquisition of knowledge.* The process of acquiring DL knowledge resources through the identification of existing resources, creation of new knowledge, conversion of knowledge from traditional to digital format, and gathering resources from the web, etc.
- *Organization of knowledge.* The process of building the knowledge base of a DL by converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge in a usable form, and by providing means of codifying, categorizing, indexing, and accessing explicit information and/or knowledge.
- *Storage and retrieval of knowledge.* The process of storing the organized knowledge in the organizational repositories for preservation as well as multiple uses through the application of a number of retrieval tools and techniques.
- *Dissemination of knowledge.* The process of transferring knowledge by means of different approaches and services that facilitates practicing, sharing, applying, utilizing, and using information or knowledge in DL.
- *Feedbacks.* The process of receiving responses from the knowledge consumers in DL as regard to the extent of satisfying their knowledge needs.

The practitioners believed that the pragmatic approach of KM and its application in DL can support DL in strategic and business planning for library practices, developing a knowledge-based culture in DL, managing intellectual assets, promoting knowledge sharing environment, designing innovative knowledge services in DL, and building a strong leadership position for DL people.

Reasons for responding to KM
Increased value of knowledge in the knowledge economy
Most of the library practitioners considered knowledge economy as one of the important drivers for libraries' movement towards KM. The value of knowledge has always been a central to library practice, but the new, knowledge-based economy places its significance more on than before from the viewpoint of new theories, frameworks, tools, technologies, and methods in creation, organization and effective diffusion of

knowledge. In the context of the proliferation of web-related technologies and increasing value of knowledge resources in organizational success, libraries must respond to KM. LP3 stated that "knowledge has become a driving force for societal and economic development, and KM has become a key concern for many organizations. Library is also a social organization, and the demand for information and knowledge by its clientele is increasing day by day. And I think we are going to a new dimension where survival and competition will be the key factors." Considering the challenge of the complex economic issues of the knowledge society, another respondent stated that:

> In the context of digital revolution and emerging knowledge economy, libraries are moving towards businesses, and the tasks of business process management have become more complex for the traditional librarians … They need to respond to this new trend and excel their assets to compete and survive…If they fail to do this, others will take the advantage and put them out of business! (LP6).

Library itself is a knowledge-based organization
The collection and maintenance of recorded knowledge by librarians is a practice as old as civilization itself. Historically, as a basis for collection, organization, storage and distribution of knowledge and information, libraries represent an important link to the knowledge innovation and management. Culturally, libraries are rooted in human knowledge, and librarians are familiar to the schemes of organizing knowledge. LP3 stated that:

> "…we, the librarians are always doing our business with human knowledge- be it with documents/information or technologies or users' behavior, or our staff's knowledge. Since ours is a knowledge-intensive organization, we should respond to KM from broader view of expanding our knowledge activities…we have many things in libraries to reconcile with formal KM… we just need to take initiatives, and to change our mind-set."

The role of Information Technology (IT)
The dynamic of technological advancement has appeared to be an important determinant in the knowledge economy. New technologies have dramatically transformed the library world too. There are two basic approaches to KM for which IT can provide support in organizations: codification and personalization (Hansen, Nohria and Tierney, 1999). DL is completely dependent on IT for codification task, i.e. organization, processing, and retrieval of explicit or structured knowledge, and building

a common knowledge storage for sharing or economic reuse of knowledge. IT can also support knowledge sharing by facilitating people to locate as well as to communicate each other. Considering the role of IT in KM, some practitioners considered it as one of the key drivers for KM in libraries as LP7 mentioned that:

> I think, the rapid advancement of ITs has a great impact on the emergence of both knowledge economy and KM. DL has owned many sophisticated digital technologies which have facilitated the gathering as well as transmitting and sharing information and/or knowledge effectively.

Opportunities for improved library practices

Another reason for considering KM is the promotion of existing library practices and better services for clientele. Some of the respondents believed that by facilitating knowledge management in libraries better services can be rendered to clients, for example: if library workers are aware of the knowledge of their colleagues and/or if they have better possibilities for sharing knowledge and/or work more efficiently, then all this is beneficial for the service they provide for their clients. One of the respondents stated: "KM has brought opportunities for best practice in libraries, and libraries can improve their knowledge-based services for internal and external users through creating an organisational culture of sharing knowledge and expertise within the library" (LP4).

Problems of incorporating KM into library practice

LIS practitioners find the history and root of KM in library practice, and they are more interested to KM, but in practice, they are lagging far behind the corporate or other sectors. LIS practitioners identified a number of factors as the obstacles of incorporating KM into libraries which are as follows:

Reluctance of the LIS practitioners

The response of LIS practitioners to KM is comparatively slow and they are reluctant to incorporate KM into library practice because of their traditional mind set. LP6 reported that her superior was not willing to incorporate KM due to his traditional beliefs in KM. Some librarians do not want to take any initiative for positive changes in their libraries due to their lack of skills in the concerned filed. Although there is the similarities between knowledge management and information management, Ferguson (2004) essentially remarks that not all LIS professionals have the ambition necessary to gain access to more senior knowledge management roles.

Misunderstanding of KM concepts

The leaders of many libraries posses narrower perceptions of KM, and they do not know what exactly is meant by KM, its relation to IM, and in fact, they are not aware of the benefits of KM in libraries. KM is usually misinterpreted as information management or content management activities of a library. For this lack of understanding of KM, library authorities or decision-makers often do not show any interest in KM.

Lack of resources

Many libraries suffer from shrinkage of budget and skilled human resources, two of the important factors for any KM project. The revenues of most of the academic, national, and public libraries usually come from the national or provincial governments through their parent organizations, which are not sufficient for initiating KM project. Library human resources have some excellent skills like management, record management, communication, client service, using information tools and technologies, etc. usually related to managing explicit knowledge, but they lack in managing talents of the staff, marketing capacity, strategic planning, project management, tacit knowledge sharing, etc.

Lack of knowledge capturing and sharing culture

Libraries and librarians are very active and efficient in acquisition and dissemination of printed or digital information, but they are not familiar with capturing and sharing tacit knowledge embedded within the experience, talent, and intuition of the library staff. IP10 found that their library workers lacked a sense of 'collective ambition' which is an essential condition for knowledge sharing. She further remarks that most KM systems in libraries are not user friendly and prevent – rather than stimulate – people to share knowledge. In fact, the existing library environment and mechanism do not support and appreciate staff to share and utilize experts' tacit or internal knowledge. LP9 mentioned that:

> "… to me the most important factor is the absence of knowledge sharing culture in libraries. You know, the existing organizational culture does not favor capturing the hidden knowledge of our experts, and the staffs are not willing to share their expertise with others…This is happening only for the lack KM policy and existing cultural frame of our libraries."

Lack of collaboration

A successful KM project requires a strong partnership and collaboration with other libraries or allied corporate organizations. Five of the respondents reported that they had

some collaborative programs for exchanging library materials and conducting joint projects, but these were not related to KM. However, they strongly believed that without collaboration, cooperation, and partnership, it would difficult for the libraries to introduce full-fledged KM programs.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the ways of knowing and degrees of understanding of KM concepts among the library practitioners are varied. Because of its emerging multidisciplinary nature and varying perspectives, there is no generally agreed-upon definition of KM, nor is there a standard framework to provide a common platform. In spite of having a range of understanding of KM concepts, most library practitioners have focused on shallow perception of KM for its incorporation into DL – dealing with only explicit information and/or knowledge. One of the respondents have rightfully remarked that "I am very amazed by the fact that many libraries excel in managing information and knowledge captured in books and documents, but they fail in locating and managing the knowledge potential in the heads of their own people. Consequently, they cannot 'manage' this knowledge in order to reach their strategic goals more efficiently" (LP10).This study also reinforces the fact that library practitioners have excellent data and information management skills, but they need to gain additional skills to work in KM environment.

The pragmatic approach of KM practice in DL will not be succeeded if the practitioners view KM just as the application of some KM tools and technologies along with their traditional practice of IM. We therefore, suggest that library practitioners need to broaden their understanding, change traditional mindset, and to apply a holistic approach of KM system design and library practice focusing on both explicit and tacit knowledge. They should renovate existing library environment and promote knowledge sharing culture by the initiation of communities of practice, management of best practices, change management, organizational learning, and use of appropriate knowledge-sharing technologies.

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