Research Paper

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Knowledge Management in Libraries

Library Science

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ABSTRACT

A library can be considered a store – house of knowledge. In dictionaries the word "library" has been defined as "a building or room containing a collection of books". A library renders a great service to the society. There are a large number of Public Libraries maintained by the local authorities throughout the island. A library plays a very important role in promoting the progress of knowledge. There are many people who love reading. But they can't afford to buy books because the prices of books are very high. So when one becomes a member of a library, he can borrow valuable books. A member can borrow two books at a time and he can keep it with him for two weeks. Libraries are particularly useful for poor children. Even those who are better off can't afford to buy all the books they require for their studies. For instance, invaluable books like Encyclopedias and large dictionaries cannot be purchased. Knowledge management is a subject that has commanded increasing attention at a corporate as well as a national level. But what are the key elements of a knowledge management programme? How do these connect to the role of the library and of the librarian? Knowledge is very social, and needs the right kind of social environment in which to flourish. Knowledge management strategies should emphasize the creation of an environment or culture, which fosters knowledge sharing. These cultural aspects are particularly important in countries, organizations and associations where access to, or investment in, information technology is limited. However, even where the technology infrastructure is sophisticated, the importance of developing the social and cultural aspects of knowledge exchange cannot be overemphasized

Introduction;

Modern libraries contribute to business more significantly than traditional libraries. It is a simple supply and demand model. Modern libraries attract users by providing contents in digital form to save their time. This study examines the impact of growing congestion in the knowledge resources. The library ambience attracts the users; however the technology and innovation give the academic libraries a modern outlook. The way the knowledge information is being passed to users; traditional libraries are changing into digital libraries. They are focusing on the global perception. Institutional repositories are being converted in to digitized forms. The academic libraries are now focusing to deliver the information in the digital form through web, Online Public Access Catalogue via internet. The development of institutional repository by innovations of information technology has strengthened the professional libraries. That is why modern libraries are now called the knowledge library or the knowledge store. And the tool to deliver this knowledge is the knowledge Management 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."

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

Knowledge Management and How Can It Help Libraries?
Data, Information, and Knowledge

One's first encounter with the field of knowledge management is likely to be over discussions and arguments about definition. What is knowledge management? What is knowledge? Can you really manage knowledge? Knowledge management textbooks and introductory articles to the field often begin by describing the distinctions among data, information, and knowledge, although even here at the beginning, the boundaries blur among these broad epistemological categories.

Data are simple, discrete, facts and figures, such as names, characteristics, and amounts. Information is a bit more complex, for it organizes data for a meaningful purpose.6 Data might be a table of circulation statistics, but once those statistics are arranged, charted, annotated, or organized in a meaningful way to describe say trends in library use, you have information.

Knowledge is much more complex, and a working definition of it that I like was given by Davenport and Prusak in their book on knowledge management entitled Working Knowledge. According to Davenport and Prusak, "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. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents and repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms." While data and information are in a sense bound objects, knowledge is much more a process, a dynamic, or an ability to understand and to share understanding. We would not hesitate for example to say, "Send me the data you have on circulation for the last year," or "Give me the information you have about how students are using the library." However, we would not say in this same way, "Send me the knowledge you have on circulation for the last year" or "Give me the knowledge you have about how students are using the library." Knowledge, even in common usage, denotes something that is tied to the knower, something not easily given away. How, then, can one manage an intangible, internal asset like knowledge?

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 man-

agement 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 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 professional's should have following types of knowledge:

1. Knowledge about library's information sources for assets, products and services.
2. Knowledge about where these sources stored are and what is its use.
3. Knowledge about users including teaching staff, researcher and, who is using these sources and how to increase its uses.
4. What are the current usage of these sources and how to increase its use?
5. 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
6. Understanding of knowledge creation process and impact of knowledge
7. Information literacy skills creating, finding, sharing and using
8. Understanding of the principles of "Organization of Knowledge"

Barriers to Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries

Every library professional that 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.

Suggestions

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 especially for libraries to monitor the standardizations of library and provide assistance.

Conclusion:

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.

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