KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE LIBRARIES IN A KNOWLEDGE BASED SOCIETY

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Abstract

Today knowledge has become the driving force for social development and people's demand for more information and knowledge are increasing day by day. Therefore in knowledge based society library has become a treasure house of human knowledge, participate in knowledge innovation and become an important link in the knowledge innovation chain. This paper highlights the concept, practice and application of Knowledge Management in the libraries. Also focuses the librarian's role as a knowledge manager in knowledge based society.

Keywords: Knowledge Management/ Knowledge based society/ Knowledge innovation/ Tacit and explicit knowledge.

1.   Introduction

Over the past few years, Knowledge Management is emerging as a dominant force in the overall strategy of the organizational management. In July 1999, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister said, "the knowledge economy is the economy of the future". In knowledge economies, knowledge, expertise and innovation - rather than land and machinery- are the primary assets of an organization. Since these assets are crucial to the successful operation and competitive advantages of an organization, they must be effectively managed. And Knowledge Management is the response to this challenge. Moreover, as information and knowledge has become an important productive factor for the modern economic system, the society will inevitably require intensified management of information and knowledge.

In the knowledge based society, Knowledge Management has received considerable attention in the library and information community. The libraries have applied knowledge management principles to provide effective library services and user satisfaction. Nowadays , there has been a significant advanced in IT, which offered new possibilities to the knowledge management processes in libraries and enhanced traditional knowledge management methods and sources by new models and methods such as Digital library, Internet, Library Consortia and Expert System.

2. Knowledge Based Society

Twenty first century will be the century of knowledge. Only those nations will survive and succeed, which will build themselves by understanding the dynamics of the knowledge and create true knowledge society. In fact, Knowledge Management is a sub component of knowledge based society or knowledge economy. What is knowledge based society? A knowledge based society has the following characteristics:

- it uses knowledge through all its constituents and endeavors to empower and enrich its people;

- it uses knowledge as a powerful tool to drive societal transformation;

- it is a learning society committed to innovation;

- it has the capacity to generate ,absorb, disseminate and protect knowledge and also use it to create economic wealth and social good for all its constituents; and

- it enlightens its people to take an integrated view of life as a fusion of mind ,body and spirit.

3. Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is concerned with the expectation and development of the knowledge assets of an organization with a view to furthering the organization's objectives. Knowledge Management is about enhancing the use of organizational knowledge through sound practices of information management and organizational learning. It is the process of transforming information and intellectual assets into enduring value. It connects people with the knowledge that they need to take action, when they need it. The key to Knowledge Management is capturing the knowledge process how information centre get their work done and how various elements of information connect to this.

Knowledge comprises of two basic types i.e. Tacit/Implicit and Explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is highly people dependent and is created when insights or experiences are added to information. Tacit knowledge resides within individuals or becomes embedded in organizational routines and procedures. It is not verbal and so is difficult to articulate, codify, measure, spread and store. Whereas, Explicit knowledge is less dependent on people and can be codified, measured, spread or stored. Information is data that has had context or meaning added. Data is a collection of records or facts. Together, information data make up explicit knowledge .Librarians and information managers are familiar with explicit knowledge and information .This is precisely the material they have been purchasing, organizing, housing and supplying to users for as long as their professions have existed. The management of tacit knowledge remains a challenge for librarians.

4.   Contents of Knowledge Management in Libraries

Knowledge innovation management in libraries refers to the management of the production, diffusion and transfer of knowledge as well as of the network system constructed by related institutions and organizations. It includes three aspects:

■   Theoretical innovation management of knowledge

■   Technical innovation management

■   Organizational innovation management

Theoretical innovations management is to enrich and enlarge the theoretical and practical research fields of library and information science through pursuing the latest development trends in library science the world over.

Technical innovation management is to manage the network system constructed by institutions and organizations that relate to the full course of technical innovation .In their evolution from conventional libraries to electronic/digital libraries, libraries should make technical break through and progress and build up technical facilities to support knowledge management.
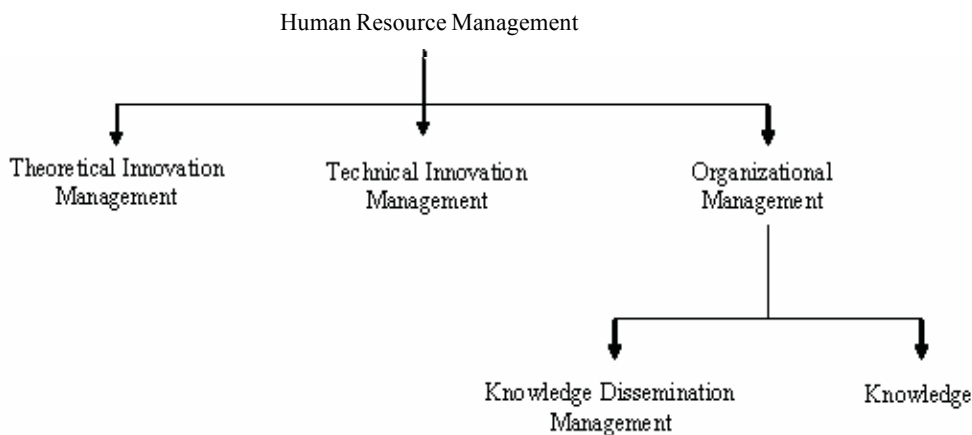

Figure : Knowledge Innovation Management

Organizational innovation management is to create a set of effective organizational management systems adaptable to the requirements in the electronic library era, to support and strengthen the knowledge management activities, by optimizing the functional departments and operation procedures of libraries.

Knowledge dissemination is of equal importance as compared to knowledge innovation. Knowledge creators do not have much time to look for knowledge users. Though there are a multitude of knowledge   users, it is very difficult to acquire knowledge that

already exist in the minds of knowledge creators as restricted by various objective and subjective conditions. Therefore, libraries may play the part of knowledge tosser, use diverse media and channels to disseminate various new knowledge. In the 21st century, the Internet, with its mass information approach and extensive contents, will provide people with the main approach to searching knowledge and acquiring information.

5.   Application of Knowledge Management in Libraries

An effective Knowledge Management programme is a long term project and requires significant commitment from the organization. How to manage knowledge will become an important subject facing libraries in new future. Knowledge Management 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 sharing up explicit processing of the implicit knowledge and realizing of its sharing.

With the help of the Knowledge Management processes, libraries convert data and information stored in various sources into knowledge and deliver only relevant knowledge to users. Knowledge Management within libraries involves organizing and providing access to intangible resources that help librarians and administrators carry out their tasks more effectively and efficiently. Knowledge Management in libraries is the combination of different processes such as acquisition of knowledge from different sources (print, electronic and human) and classification, storing, indexing and dissemination of that knowledge using people, process and technology in such a way by which library could fulfill the mission of the parent organization in term of users' satisfaction. It is to promote relationship in and between libraries, between library and user, to strengthen knowledge internetworking and to quicken knowledge flow. The libraries are moving from collection management to knowledge management and digital technologies offering new information services and products. The application of Information Technology (IT) enlarges the scope of knowledge acquisition, rises knowledge acquisition speed and reduces knowledge acquisition cost. IT is indispensable in the application and exchange of knowledge and other fields. It functions as a source and tool for knowledge innovation.

6.   Librarians as Knowledge Managers

Librarians have major advantages as knowledge players, by enhancing the efficiency in the quality of the services they provide. The role of librarians in Knowledge Management is just to continue many of the roles that the librarians have played already with the help of information technologies. But librarians and information specialists if want to be key players in the emerging Knowledge Management phenomenon, they have to understand the multiple perspectives of the other players. Librarians as successful knowledge manager should have the following qualities:

- Librarians should have theoretical and practical experiences in designing and implementing information system.

- Knowledge about library's information sources or assets, products and services.

- Understanding the needs of the users including faculties and researchers and sharing the information.

- Knowledge about the emerging library trends and technologies and their application in libraries.

- Knowledge about the digital library concepts, current and new advances in the scholarly communication systems, electronic publishing, and creating knowledge databases.

- Having knowledge about library's own competencies and capabilities.

7. Conclusion

Knowledge Management requires a holistic and a multidisciplinary approach to management processes and an understanding of the dimensions of knowledge work. It is an evolution of good management practice sensibly and purposely applied. Knowledge Management occupies a very outstanding position in the creation of the knowledge innovation system. Libraries in a knowledge based society should develop their own Knowledge Management Systems. An efficient Knowledge Management System is one that will enable libraries to store information sources manually or electronically and facilitate the process of retrieving, sharing, tracking and distributing these information sources efficiently with their users. Knowledge Management and the sharing of knowledge can help libraries with the improvement of the quality of their services as well as the creation and maintenance of a learning culture.

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