COURSE-II PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTERS

UNIT-3 : GOVERNANCE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Topic: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Internet and related technological developments has transformed the nature of library and information services. In the midst of these changes, knowledge management (KM) has emerged as a further significant influence on library practice. KM, as an emerging discipline, focuses on the various management processes that facilitate finding, **identifying, capturing, creating, storing, sustaining, applying, sharing, and renewing knowledge** to improve an organization's performance. Libraries embrace vast amounts of knowledge in various areas and its management is considered important for providing quality information services, making effective decisions, improving their overall performance, and becoming more relevant to their parent organizations.

However, the KM, as a multidisciplinary subject, integrates a range of concepts, theories, and practices from different disciplines. Although the concept of KM emerged in the business community, it has attracted the attention of professionals from other disciplines, including LIS.

Knowledge meaning: Knowledge is an understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning. Knowledge can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.

Management meaning: Management is an individual or a group of individuals that accept responsibilities to run an organization. They Plan, Organize, Direct and Control all the essential activities of the organization.

➤ Definitions of KM

- **White, T.** defined KM as "a process of creating, storing, sharing and re-using organizational knowledge (know-how) to enable an organization to achieve its goals and objectives".

- **IFLA** defined KM is a process of creating (generating, capturing), storing (preserving, organizing, integrating), sharing (communicating), applying (implementing), and reusing (transforming) organisational knowledge to enable an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives.

➤ CHARACTERISTICS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

- It is a way of working that has an impact on people and culture.
- Something that people need to believe in and participate in.
- It is comprehensive and organization-wide approach which supports business objectives.
- It encompasses knowledge creation, management and sharing.
- The management of information with meaning (knowledge).
- It reflects the needs of the organization and its employees.
- It is ongoing – changing with the business.
- Sponsored and led by senior management.
- It is about well thought out content management.
- Knowledge management means to an end (to achieve performance indicators).

- Knowledge management means supporting staff in fulfilling their roles.

➤ KNOWLEDGE ASSETS IN LIBRARIES

Knowledge in an organization is classified either as **explicit** or **tacit** knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is defined as formal and systematic knowledge, which can be expressed in words or numbers and can be documented, published or stored in databases as electronic records. Some examples of explicit knowledge include commercial publications, a telephone directory, e-mail, the web, databases, intranets, self study material, instruction manuals, and reports of research findings.

Tacit knowledge is subjective and experience-based knowledge which is difficult to articulate or write down and communicate. Some examples of tacit knowledge are skills, experiences, insights, intuitions, and judgments. Tacit knowledge can be shared between people through face-to-face communications, telephone conversations, e-mails, discussions in formal and informal meetings, communities of practice, mentoring and training, and personal interactions, that can be stored to help next generation of users.

➤ TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE IN A LIBRARY SYSTEM

Wijetunge, P. identified four types of knowledge in a library system:

1.Internal tacit knowledge, which consists of senior and experienced employees with a sound knowledge of work procedures, rules and regulations, etc. and the unarticulated knowledge of the librarians themselves.

2. Internal explicit knowledge, which consists of reports, guidelines, theses, databases, minutes of meetings, and any other type of tangible knowledge content generated within a university.

3. External explicit knowledge, which consists of tangible material in the form of books, journals, reports, CD/ROMs, and any other media, produced outside a university.

4. External tacit knowledge, which consists of personnel external to a university with expertise knowledge, i.e, service personnel, subject experts, and any other person who provides expertise to university libraries.

In libraries, **explicit knowledge** is either created within the organization, such as **reports, memos, policies and guidelines, working process**, **theses, minutesof meetings**, etc., or acquired from external sources, including **books, journal articles, databases, external reports, government information,** etc.

Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, resides in senior and experienced employees with a sound knowledge of work procedures, rules and regulations, etc. and the unarticulated knowledge of the librarians themselves. Both types of knowledge (explicit and tacit) are recognized as the key knowledge resources of a university or library that is managed properly. An infrastructure is essential for bringing explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge together and making KM efforts successful.

- ➢ **STAGES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

  1) **Knowledge Creation:-** Companies create a great amount of knowledge or information in their daily business activities. It would be essential for the company to have a system of managing the newly created information so it can be reused to solve new problems or leveraged to value-add to

other business activities. Knowledge is created by two ways either as Explicit or tacit Knowledge. Explicit knowledge is put in paper and it is recorded and made accessible to others. Tacit knowledge is created in minds of employees. This kind of information could be very useful for the **R&D team** to come up with new improved products.

2) **Storing Knowledge: -** Knowledge is stored and organized in a repository. The decision on how and where lies with the organization. But the objective of this stage is to enable the organization to be able to contribute, organize and share knowledge. Without storing the knowledge, its transfer for the purpose of learning and utilization, both internally and externally, will be difficult to achieve.

3) **Knowledge Sharing:** - One of the advantages of knowledge is that knowledge is dynamic. Knowledge can be adapted and evolved through the processes of learning and sharing. Knowledge is shared and accessed by people; they can either search or navigate to the knowledge items.

4) **Use the Knowledge:** - This is end goal of knowledge practice. The knowledge management does not have any value if knowledge created is not utilized to its potential. The more knowledge is created as knowledge is applied and utilized. Without the effective utilization of knowledge, the knowledge management process is incomplete.

➢ **NEEDS OF KM FOR THE LIS PROFESSION**

The application of KM contributes to the improvement in **organizational performance**, **economic success in the marketplace**, **organizational**

creativity, **operational effectiveness**, **quality of products and services**, and **economic sustainability**.

However, KM in libraries is viewed as having the potential to make libraries more relevant to their parent organizations and their users. Successful KM initiatives help an organization to establish internal benchmarks, identify and record best practices, and create an environment of continuous learning.

➢ OPPORTUNITIES AND ROLES FOR LIS PROFESSIONALS IN KM

KMexpands the horizons of LIS and offers a number of opportunities for LIS professionals , which include competitive intelligence leader, knowledge and information manager, intranet content manager, and knowledge coordinator.

ROLES OF LIS PROFESSIONALS

Roles that LIS professionals are expected to perform in the KM environment:

- **Technology experts:** both in using and training technology.
- **Knowledge mappers/engineers:** representing or mapping tacit and explicit knowledge to enable its classification and dissemination, and identifying gaps in this knowledge.
- **Knowledge gatekeepers:** acting as subject experts and being familiar with evolving vocabulary (taxonomies, metadata, meta tags and filtering, etc.).
- **Knowledge editors:** repackaging knowledge into the most accessible, appropriate formats.
- **Networkers and knowledge brokers:** with good networks of contacts within and outside the organization.
- **Web designers:** to display and share knowledge in eye-catching ways.

- **Computer programmers:** customizing their instructions and services according to their customers' needs.

- **Knowledge and information disseminators:** rather than custodians of information.

- **Knowledge consultants:** providing expert advice beyond the usual operational zone.

- **Metadata specialists:** able to describe and dictate management and preservation strategies for digital information.

- **Knowledge asset managers:** identifying, giving advice on and managing a portfolio of knowledge assets, such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, etc.

➢ MAJOR OUTCOMES

- The concept of KM emerged in the business sector, but now it is being used in public sector organizations including academic institutions and their libraries.

- Libraries are having explicit as well as tacit knowledge embedded in working processes and experienced employees.

- Management of knowledge helps an organization to improve its quality of service.

- The perceptions of KM among LIS professionals are varied; they mostly view KM as the management of recorded knowledge, rather than sharing and using the tacit knowledge of their employees.

- LIS professionals have positive attitudes to the application of KM in libraries and see it as the best method of improving library functions and services.
- The skills of LIS professionals in indexing, cataloguing, authority control, and database management may be considered relevant for KM, but they need some additional skills in the business environment as regards managerial, leadership, and interpersonal skills.
- KM offers potential opportunities for LIS professionals, including personal career development and enhancement of their position and status within their parent organizations. However, if LIS professionals remain reluctant to change their mindset and gain new skills, they will become irrelevant to their organization and will probably lose out to people from other fields in the competition for employment.

➢ ADVANTAGES OF KM

- A survival factor for libraries to overcome the challenges library professionals are facing in a changing and competitive environment for the improvement of the future prospects of libraries;
- A method for improving knowledge-based services for internal and external users by creating an organizational culture of sharing knowledge and expertise within the library;
- A solution for the development and application of organizational knowledge to improve library operations and services;
- A means for the transformation of a library into a more efficient and knowledge-sharing organization.

➢ DISADVANTAGES OF KM

- Lack of sufficient skills and competencies;
- Reluctance of library professionals to accept changes;
- Misunderstanding of KM concepts;
- Lack of a knowledge-sharing culture;
- Lack of the provisions of incentives or rewards for innovation and sharing of knowledge;
- Lack of top management commitment; and
- Lack of collaboration and lack of resources (financial, technological, and human).

CONCLUSION

Though the concept of KM emerged in the business sector, its practices are now being used in the domain of non-profit and public sector organizations, including academic institutions and libraries. One of the most important objectives of KM is to transform an organization into a learning and knowledge-sharing organization by linking people together and creating a flow of knowledge generated by people in different units. The most valuable knowledge of an organization resides in its employees and workers, and transfer and utilization of this knowledge is one of the major challenges for most organizations.

However, organizations can make best use of this knowledge either by converting it into explicit knowledge or by providing a platform for sharing knowledge directly with others. For this, they use different tools and techniques to capture and transfer knowledge. Knowledge may be shared either face to face or remotely with the help of information and communication technologies.

However, the success of KM initiatives requires additional skills and competencies among LIS professionals which they currently lack. They must gain organizational political understanding, understanding of business practices, and leadership skills to succeed in KM.

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