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LIS Professionals in Practical Knowledge Management: A Case Study

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Abstract: The paper discusses the importance and role of knowledge in the present trends of society where competition is embedded in the mindset of every individual. Knowledge, being treated as the foremost resource for any society, is to be created, captured, organized, disseminated and preserved to cope with the challenging trends of the hour. So knowledge management has become an important task in the business community as well as knowledge service community. As librarianship deals with the handling of knowledge, LIS professionals are to be excellent in the field of knowledge management. They should have effort to learn anything that can amplify their service efficiency. Here, in this regard, a practical scenario of 48 leading libraries of Manipur, India is highlighted. The finding of the study shows that it is far off to attain up to the mark in this field. To bring the improvement of technical know-how and services of the libraries for providing modern facilities, opinions and suggestions given by the concerned professionals are herein summarized.

Keywords: Tacit and explicit knowledge, knowledge management, knowledge coordinator, retrieval tools and methods.

0. Introduction

Our society at present has emerged through many different phases of societies with different peculiarities. At the very outset, our

life was in a nomadic stage when there was no question of society. They moved from one place to another in search of food. In course of time, they acquired the knowledge of agriculture which led to a more stable and permanent life and also it was the beginning of establishing our society. Our lives, in this agricultural society, were entirely engaged and depend on cultivation of crops, vegetables and rearing of domestic animals. The product of such activities meant everything to them. Thereafter, with the advent of machinery and technology due to human endeavor in search of substitution instead of human labour as well as an easy method in working, they entered industrial society - a purely innovative society. During this period the development of our society sped up comparatively. Today, from the last 2-3 decades, a new society has been emerging where knowledge is the mainstay and is treated as a primary resource instead of capital and labour. In a sense, even the natural resources are also meaningless without knowledge of its extraction and utilization. Development of any society depends upon the efficient utilization of existing knowledge their people. Therefore, the most important factor for success in knowledge challenges of the 21st century is to produce immense skilled man power or workforce to suit the needs of the emerging knowledge society. So, knowledge is displacing natural resources, labour, monitory process and capital as quintessential economic resources. Knowledge is the input to produce the essential requirement of overall development of the society. To enhance the growth of knowledge, it is no doubt that knowledge management is very much needed as any work for competitive development is based on information and knowledge and an increasing complexity of knowledge is required to manage in a proper way.

1. Steps in Knowledge Management

Knowledge management has become recently, a field of study emerged not only in business administration but in the library also. It may be briefly defined as the process of collecting, organizing, storing and disseminating knowledge. Knowledge management is concerned with bringing together all the intellectual capital within the organization as well as from all other sources. The general objectives of knowledge management according to J. C. Binwal are:

- To create knowledge repositories;
- To improve knowledge access;
- To enhance knowledge environment; and
- To manage knowledge as an asset and to recognize the value of knowledge to an organization. (Binwal 2001)

In the process of knowledge management, four basic steps can be considered as follows.

1.1. Knowledge Collection

The available knowledge of an organization has to be identified and captured in its effective use. It may be in the patent trade mark or tacit knowledge of employees.

1.2. Knowledge Organization

Tacit knowledge which exists in an organization is inexpressible and embodied. For bringing that knowledge into focus, codification of knowledge is necessary that means converting of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. The aim of codification is to represent the knowledge asset in the form that can be shared within the organization and transferred to those who are in need of it. Knowledge map, a visual display of capture information and relationship, is the tool which allows the seekers to find out their required knowledge.

1.3. Knowledge preservation

Once the knowledge is collected and organized it has to be stored in a suitable form in the knowledge base of the organization. The knowledge can be stored in three forms: with individual employees, with a group of employees and by computer knowledge base (Probst, Raub, & Romhardt 2000). To minimize the risk of loss of knowledge, the tacit knowledge can be shared with the group of the employees instead of individual.

1.4. Knowledge Dissemination

Knowledge dissemination or transfer is to bring the right knowledge to the right employees who need it in a timely fashion. The tasks involved in sharing and distributing knowledge are of three kinds namely –

(i) Replication of knowledge by transferring it quickly to a large number of employees;

(ii) Safeguarding and sharing and sharing the previous learning; and

(iii) Simultaneous exchange of knowledge which helps in developing new knowledge. (Banka 2001)

2. Role of Professionals in Knowledge Management

Professionals who are associated with the knowledge management process are the knowledge managers. Knowledge professionals are the individuals in the knowledge centre who have the skills, training and know-how to organize knowledge into systems and structures for productive use of knowledge resources. Librarians are having such excellent skills of organizing and codifying the information sources and they are involved in a continuing search for excellence in organizing and codifying information resources. In an academic library, the librarian is a teacher, designer and steward. He should know the challenging development of academic curriculum, changing human and cultural infrastructure to cater to the right information and knowledge to the students as well as academic staff. In a sense he is the knowledge coordinator. Librarians have to identify the users' needs of information and develop appropriate service and product to meet the needs. On the other hand, librarians are interpreters and guides to information. At any moment, the librarian can be a gatherer of data, a distributor of information and a source of knowledge. (Stuhlaman 2008). Nowadays, in this changing ICT environment, librarians are to be equipped themselves with a high degree of computer literacy skills and technical savvy. So what librarians need to know, to be a knowledge manager, is:

- A thorough knowledge of information sources
- A thorough knowledge of Net techniques and technology
- A thorough knowledge of organization and its context
- A high degree of common sense
- A high degree of business sense

3. Managing Knowledge in the Libraries of Manipur

This section highlights the present scenario of concerning the management of knowledge in the libraries of Manipur. For this purpose, data have been collected from leading 48 libraries using a semi structurally designed questionnaire. The libraries included in the survey are: Public library- 04; Sr. Sec. School Library - 11; College Library - 23; Special Library – 08; University Library – 02.

3.1. Staff Component

The staff component of the libraries under consideration concerning their level of training and skill can be understood from Table 1.

Table 1
Staff Component: Level of Training

N = 48

SL No.	Type of library	Trained & qualified	Trained, under qualified	Untrained	Total
01	Public Library	03	Nil	01	04
02	Sr. Sec. School Library	07	Nil	04	11
03	College Library	15	04	04	23
04	Special Library	06	Nil	02	08
05	University	02	Nil	Nil	02
	Total	33(69%)	04(8%)	11(23%)	48(100%)

Source: Questionnaire

3.2. Knowledge Retrieval Methods and Tools

The different types of libraries under discussion are found to adopt different types of knowledge retrieval methods and other techniques.

3.2.1. Retrieval Methods

The knowledge retrieval methods adopted by the libraries are presented in Table – 2.

Table 2
Retrieval methods adopted in the libraries

N= 48

Sl.No.	Methods	Yes (%)	No. (%)	Total (%)
01	Classification	37(77%)	11(23%)	48(100%)
02	Cataloguing	22(46%)	26(54%)	48(100%)
03	Bibliography	9(19%)	39(81%)	48(100%)
04	List of Addition	18(37%)	30(63%)	48(100%)
05	Current Awareness Service	11(23%)	37(77%)	48(100%)
06	S D I Service	08(17%)	40(83%)	48(100%)
07	Indexing Journal	07(14%)	41(86%)	48(100%)
08	Abstracting Journal	06(12%)	42(88%)	48(100%)
09	Review Journal	05(10%)	43(90%)	48(100%)
10	Publisher's Catalogue	09(18%)	39(82%)	48(100%)
11	Book Imprint	07(14%)	41(86%)	48(100%)
12	Union Catalogue	02(4%)	46(96%)	48(100%)
13	Centralised Catalogue	02(4%)	46(96%)	48(100%)
14	Cooperative Cataloguing	05(10%)	43(90%)	48(100%)
15	Open Access System	20(42%)	28(58%)	48(100%)
16	National Bibliography	04(8%)	44(92%)	48(100%)
17	Computer Networking	06(12%)	42(88%)	48(100%)
18	Internet Surfing	06(12%)	42(88%)	48(100%)
19	E mail	07(14%)	41(86%)	48(100%)
20	Fax	03(6%)	45(94%)	48(100%)
21	Teleconferencing	03(6%)	45(94%)	48(100%)
22	Video Conferencing	1(2%)	47(98%)	48(100%)
23	Index to Documents	04(8%)	44(92%)	48(100%)
24	OPAC	01(2%)	47(98%)	48(100%)

Source: Questionnaire

Of the various methods of knowledge retrieval adopted by the libraries, except "Classification" with 77%, most of the Libraries scarcely adopt the rest of the methods, almost far below the desired rate, which are out of expectation. As Table 2 indicates, the knowledge retrieval methods adopted by the libraries of Manipur are not satisfactory at all. It can be presumed that they cannot disseminate the desired information to the users systematically.

3.2.2. Retrieval Tools

The retrieval tools adopted by the different types of libraries in the state can be observed as shown in Table 3:

Table 3
Retrieval tools used by libraries

N = 48

Sl.No.	Tools	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
01	Classification Scheme	27 (56%)	21(44%)	48 (100%)
02	Simple Classification	10 (21%)	38(79%)	48 (100%)
03	Catalogue Code	21 (44%)	27(56%)	48 (100%)
04	Sears List of Subject Heading	8 (17%)	40(83%)	48 (100%)
05	POPSI	Nil	Nil	Nil
06	PRECIS	Nil	Nil	Nil
07	MARC	01 (2%)	47(98%)	48 (100%)
08	Computer	16 (33%)	32(67%)	48 (100%)
09	Fax machine	01 (2%)	47(98%)	48 (100%)
10	Tape record	3 (6%)	45(94%)	48 (100%)
11	Other indexing technique	Nil	Nil	Nil
12	Photocopying machine	14 (29%)	34(71%)	48 (100%)
13	Bar code	Nil	Nil	Nil

Source: Questionnaire

In case of retrieval tools, except the adoption of classification (56%) and catalogue code (44%), use of other tools is found to be almost negligible. Table 3 gives the clue that POPSIS, PRECIS, other indexing techniques and bar codes are not adopted by any library in the state. It is encouraging that 33% of the libraries in Manipur have installed computers to use in retrieving knowledge.

3.3. IT Applications

The present status of IT Application in the libraries is not encouraging. The majority of them (71%) are going to start automation process. Out of the remaining (29%) libraries, only 17% are partially automated. No library is found to be fully automated in the state of Manipur. Most of the library staff are not much acquainted with

computer and networking. In addition to the financial problem, this is also one of the factors for hampering in the automation process. Some professionals are not taking interest in getting training because of late age in their service.

3.3.1. Experience about manual operation and operation in IT environment

While seeking experience of the library authority about the manual operation and operation in IT environment, their views are many in diversified ways. Their views are being summarized as below:

a) Operation in IT environment is far better.

b) Faster, accurate, saves time.

c) It is early to mention.

d) IT increases the efficiency of library operation.

e) IT improves the effectiveness of existing services.

f) IT offers a wide range of new services.

g) IT can perform easily a task which cannot be done by the manual.

h) IT provides gateway access to the global digital information service.

3.4. On User Satisfaction

As expected by the professionals, the level of satisfaction of the users on knowledge retrieval methods and tools has been accounted as noted below:

Table 5
Level of satisfaction of users on methods and tools

N=48

Sl.No.	Level of satisfaction	No. of Response	Remark
01	Not satisfactory	03 (6%)	29 (61%) libraries have not responded to any level
02	Partially satisfied	15 (31%)	
03	Fully satisfied	01 (2%)	
	Total	19 (39%)	

Source: Questionnaire

As Table 5 shows, the level of satisfaction of the users on the prevailing methods and tools followed by their libraries, "partial satisfaction" is found to be the highest (31%), followed by "not satisfactory" (6%) and "fully satisfactory" (2%). From the table 11, however, it is understood that the total rate of response in this case is only 19 (39%) out of 48 libraries, the rest 29 (61%) being not responded.

3.4.1. On Users Response

As observed by the library professionals, the overall response of the users on the prevailing knowledge retrieval methods and tools of the libraries is understood from Table 6 and its corresponding figure.

Table 6
Overall Response of the users.

N = 48

Sl.No.	Degree of response	No. of response	Remark
01	Poor	02 (4%)	24 (50%) libraries have not responded to any level
02	Fair	06 (13%)	
03	Good	13 (27%)	
04	Satisfactory	03 (6%)	
	Total	24 (50%)	

Source: Questionnaire

Table 6 indicates that the overall response of the users in this regard as observed by the library (only 24 libraries out of 48 libraries under study), the variable "good" is placed at the top (27%) followed by "fair" (13%), satisfactory (6%) and poor (4%) respectively.

3.5. Problems and Suggestions

The library professionals working in different types of libraries of the state are found to encounter a number of problems in the management, planning, adoption of knowledge retrieval methods and tools.

3.6.1. The Problems

The problems they encountered are seen from Table 7:

Table 7
Problems encountered by Professionals/staff

N = 48

Sl.No.	Problems	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
01	Lack of infrastructure	30 (62%)	18 (38%)	48 (100%)
02	Lack of trained manpower	33 (69%)	15 (31%)	48 (100%)
03	Financial crunch	31 (64%)	17 (36%)	48 (100%)
04	Absence of systematic planning	14 (29%)	34 (71%)	48 (100%)
05	Lack of interest on the part of authority	20 (42%)	28 (58%)	48 (100%)
06	Want of team work	19 (39%)	29 (61%)	48 (100%)
07	Space problem	18 (37%)	30 (63%)	48 (100%)

Source: Questionnaire

Concerning the problems encountered by the professional staff, as the table 7 shows, lack of trained manpower (69%), financial crunch (64%) and lack of infrastructure (62%) are highest. The majority of them do not have much problem in other areas as the rate of the same being lesser.

3.6.2. The Suggestions

It is a good indication that the professionals also suggested a number of points for the improvement of the existing methods and tools adopted by the libraries.

Of the 48 libraries under study, 27 (56.25%) have strong suggestions towards the overall improvement of the knowledge retrieval methods and tools to make the same user friendly. Their suggestions have been analysed and are being listed below:

a) Improvement of overall infrastructure of the library;

b) To appoint qualified librarians with sufficient trained manpower;

c) To give timely orientation programmes of the staff to keep up to date knowledge in their field;

d) To give training to the staff for working on IT environment;

e) Staff should have an interest in getting trained on IT application or any development;

f) Sufficient financial support from the authority is must;

g) The authority of the parent body should have interest to make a service library;

h) Procurement of up to date collections;

i) At least one separate reading room should be there in the library;

j) Full automation is needed;

k) Devotion to the service is required by the library staff;

l) Regular power supply should be there;

m) Staff and user should have good relations;

n) Users should be aware of the latest advancement;

o) User education should be conducted from time to time;

p) Adequate users' terminals should be provided if the library is automated;

q) The library should have adequate space; and

r) The library software package should be user friendly so as to be handled easily by the users with little knowledge of IT.

4. Conclusion

The above piece of study is the existing scenario of managing knowledge in some leading libraries of the state of Manipur. The

overall condition of the libraries of this state regarding knowledge management is not accountable. In fact, the status, in comparison with changing global trends, is in an embryonic stage. Knowledge management is concerned with the way knowledge is captured, organized, retrieved, disseminated, preserved and utilized. The changing trends of ICTs are incorporated with the Library and Information Services. So in every library, well trained manpower is very much required to make a meaningful library. The authorities of the parent institutions should also have a keen interest to have such a library for the development of an intellectual society. Implementation of the suggestions given by the professionals will also be helpful for improving the condition of the libraries to some extent. To cope with the changing of time, the mindset of LIS professionals also has to be changed from continuous training to continuous learning. The continuous updating of emerging knowledge will help us to provide the demands of the hour. And such organization fully equipped with ICTs as well as competent professionals will attend competitive advantages on a wider basis.

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