

PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES OF PUNJAB

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of library professionals about Knowledge Management (KM) in State University Libraries of Punjab region. The study was conducted through survey using a pre-structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent to 30 library professionals, working in different eight State University Libraries of Punjab, by post and 20 valid responses were received. It has been concluded that 60% of the library professionals came to know about knowledge management through conferences, information regarding use of technology is highly shared among professionals, lack of rewards is a great challenge to incorporate KM in library practices, and the most benefit of applying KM is better decision making.

Keywords: Knowledge management (KM), University libraries, Library Professionals, Knowledge sharing

1.0 Introduction

In the present era, knowledge has become a key resource for competitive advantage, and Knowledge Management is perceived as a tool for improving organizational productivity and success. Organizational knowledge has been stored in numerous ways, including in human minds, documents, notes, manuals, and reports; and it has also been shared among individuals through several communication channels such as conferences, seminars, training programs, and forums. The emergence of new computer-based communication technologies has not only complemented the traditional storage and delivery methods, but has also improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall knowledge delivery mechanisms.

Knowledge Management is a concept that has emerged explosively in corporate and business world over the past decade and has been the subject of study/discussion by researchers and authors. The essential part of knowledge management is, of course knowledge. Knowledge management is a collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge in the organizations.

As a non-profit social, and academic institution, libraries have their own traditions to deal with information and knowledge. Knowledge and experiences of library staff are the intellectual assets of any library and it should be valued & shared. Changing role of librarians, as managers, also emphasizes the need to constantly update or acquire new skills & knowledge to be re-arranged.

Knowledge management: an overview

According to Davenport et al. (1998), "Knowledge management is concerned with the exploitation and development of the knowledge assets of an organization with a view to furthering the organization's objectives. The knowledge to be managed includes both explicit, documented knowledge, and tacit, subjective knowledge. Management entails all of those processes associated with the identification, sharing and creation of knowledge". This is an inclusive definition, which focuses on exploitation and development of knowledge to achieve organizational goals.

There are numerous kinds of knowledge resources. The intellectual and knowledge-based assets fall into two categories: explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge is that what we can express to others. It is formal and systematic, easily communicated and shared, as in product specifications or a computer program. Tacit knowledge is

that knowledge which comprises the rest of explicit knowledge, i.e. which we cannot communicate in words or symbols. It is highly personal, hard to formalize and therefore it is difficult to communicate. It is transferred by tradition and shared experience, for example through apprenticeships or job training.

Knowledge management and LIS

Within the last three decades, Knowledge Management has influenced the Library and Information Science profession with both opportunities and challenges. According to Gartner Group (1997), Knowledge Management is 'A discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving and sharing of an enterprise's information assets'. This definition reveals overlaps between LIS and KM. Knowledge management now has formal status as the 47th section of the activities of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to support the implementation of Knowledge Management culture in the libraries and information environment.

On the library practising side, librarians need to focus on their customers' knowledge and remain updated in their professional knowledge, in order to provide value adding services to their customers, anywhere and anytime and in desired formats. They need to manage all types of organisational knowledge to maximise its utilisation and align it to the provision of information services.

Role of Knowledge management in University Libraries

The conventional function of academic libraries is to collect, process, disseminate, store and utilize information to provide services, to the university community. University libraries are part of the university and its organizational culture. Whatever affects universities, also affects its libraries. The role of university libraries is changing to provide the competitive advantage for the parent university – a factor that is crucial to both staff and students.

The success of university libraries depends on their ability to utilize information and knowledge of its staff to better serve the needs of the academic community. Lee (2000) pointed out that the knowledge and experiences of library staff are the intellectual assets of any library and should be valued and shared. University libraries should rethink and explore ways to improve their services and become learning organizations to discover, how to capture and share tacit and explicit knowledge within the library. The changing role of librarians as knowledge managers emphasizes the need to constantly update or acquire new skills and knowledge to remain relevant to the today's functions, expand their roles and responsibilities to effectively contribute and meet the needs of a large and diverse university community.

Review of Literature

Various information resources searched and consulted on the selected topic such as LISA (Library and Information Science Abstract), Emerald database, Proquest database and other open access sources. The most relevant studies identified are reviewed, as mentioned below:

Daland (2016) overviewed "Managing knowledge in academic libraries. Are we? Should we?". It was investigated in this study that whether academic libraries are managing their knowledge in a different way in 2016 or not. This study has correlated the concept of knowledge management with Wiig's knowledge management circle of building, holding, pooling and using knowledge and IFLA's 10 points of "Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices". The author accepted that there is little literature available on KM for librarians as knowledge workers and the focus has also been on information management in academic libraries. It was suggested in the study that more research work is required in future to identify the challenges and benefits of KM, to enhance library staff competencies and skills.

Ali and Khan (2015) explored "Perception of Knowledge Management among LIS Professionals: a survey of Central Universities in North India". The stratified random sampling method was used in this study to identify 16 central universities in north Indian states, out of which, only 11 central universities participated in the survey. Data was collected from 75 LIS professionals, including University Librarians, Deputy Librarians and Assistant Librarians. In response, 48 LIS professionals responded after getting email reminders, telephone calls and personal visits.

Analyzed data shown that majority of respondents were male (64.58%) and maximum (43.75%) respondents have MLISc degree in Library & Information Science. Responses revealed that all the respondents are aware about the concept of KM, but 31.25% respondents agreed that KM can be defined as the acquisition, sharing and use of knowledge within organization, including learning processes and management information systems. Further, results shown that 50% accepted that KM can help make libraries more relevant to their parent organization and their users and 75% respondents agreed that KM can encourage LIS professionals to gain new skills. It was

suggested by the study that training programs must be organized for LIS professionals, to train them as knowledge managers.

Biranvand (2015) & others investigated knowledge sharing among Librarians working in Public Libraries of Iran. 180 librarians were covered in survey by using questionnaire method. The study findings revealed that trust is the most important factor in increasing job effectiveness and speed of doing duties. Furthermore, education and consultation programs can also improve librarians' performance. On the basis of results, this study also made some recommendations to enhance the desire of librarians to do knowledge sharing, as to inform them about advantages of knowledge sharing, by offering communication tools, to ensure staff about only right use of their shared knowledge etc.

Marllia (2013) presented a literature review with the preposition of identifying trends and applications of knowledge management in the areas of library science. The study revealed that there are differences between the concepts of information management and knowledge management, also characterized as barriers to the implementation of KM. 147 abstracts were included in this study, based on broad areas like new professional roles of information and libraries, competence of librarianship and information science in KM, traditional library services, theoretical aspects of KM, management point of view, KM models and methodologies, organizational learning/innovation, data banks/bases and knowledge, KM tools and practices and others. It is suggested as the results that it is necessary to make KM as a part of library routines, in order to avail benefits from the improvements that can be achieved through KM, perfection in services and satisfaction of library users.

Siddike and Munshi (2012) explored "Perceptions of Information Professionals about Knowledge Management in the Information Institutions of Bangladesh". This survey was conducted by sending research questionnaires to 80 information professionals, by post, working in different libraries of Bangladesh and 40 responses were received back. The results indicated that 62.5% respondents were male, as majority; 90% of the respondents first read about KM in literature; 43% professionals agreed that KM is just another fad like TQM; 50% respondents strongly agreed that KM is a new term for what information professionals are already doing; majority i.e. 65% respondents strongly agreed that information management is just another aspect of KM and information professionals have important roles to play in KM.

Aharony (2011) explored whether personality and situational characteristics influence participants' knowledge sharing in the organizations. The study highlighted the characteristics that affect librarians' attitudes towards knowledge management and collaboration. The research was conducted during the summer semester of the 2009 academic year and encompassed two main groups of Israeli Librarians: academic librarians and public librarians. The study used five questionnaires, a personal details questionnaire; perceptions towards knowledge management questionnaire; cognitive appraisal questionnaire measuring threat versus challenges; a self-efficacy questionnaire; and a self-esteem questionnaire. The data was analyzed with the help of MANOVA to examine the relationship between personal characteristics and continuous variables. Pearson correlation was also performed to analyze the variables. A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted by using attitudes towards knowledge management as the dependent variable. The results show that personality and situational characteristics influence participants' knowledge sharing in the organizations. The author also discussed the theoretical as well as practical implications of the findings.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. explore the perception of library professionals about the awareness of term KM.
- ii. identify the ways used by library professionals to know about KM.
- iii. find out the ways of practicing for knowledge sharing in university libraries.
- iv. explore the challenges for incorporating KM into library practices.
- v. find out the ways library professionals share knowledge in university libraries.
- vi. know the benefits of KM implementation in university libraries.

Hypotheses of the study

- i. Majority of LIS professionals are aware about the concept of knowledge management
- ii. Majority of LIS professionals adopt same ways to know about the term knowledge management.
- iii. There is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to understanding of knowledge management.
- iv. There is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to objectives to integrate KM practices.

- v. There is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to ways of practicing knowledge sharing.
- vi. There is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to extent of knowledge shared within Library regarding information about different aspects.
- vii. There is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to challenges for incorporating KM into library practices.
- viii. There is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to benefits of KM implementation in University Libraries.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted through survey method. Primary data has been collected by means of a structured questionnaire, which includes both open and closed ended questions. Questionnaires were sent by speed post, first, and later by e-mail to thirty library professionals, working in eight State University Libraries of Punjab. Researcher also made a visit to all the eight University Libraries and interacted with library professional staff. The purpose of any sampling is to secure a sample which will represent the characteristics of entire population. In this study, purposive sampling was used because the aim of the study was to collect data from Librarians and other library professionals working in State University Libraries of Punjab region. The sample is based on professional qualification of staff having with minimum of M. Lib. I. Sc. Degree and their professional position at workplace. The secondary data has been collected from various journals, annual reports, published papers, websites and other resources. To analyze the data, statistical techniques like percentile, mean & standard deviation have been used with the help of SPSS 17.0 software.

Analysis of data

TABLE 9.1: Distribution of Sample

Sr.No.	Name of University Library	Year of Establishment	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses Received
1	Central Library, Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot	1998	2	1
2	Bhai Gurdas Library, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar	1970	10	6
3	University Library, Guru Angad Dev Veterinary & Animal Sciences University, Ludhiana	2008	3	3
4	Mohinder Singh Randhawa Library, Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana	1959	4	3
5	Guru Ravidas Ayurved University, Hoshiarpur	Not Estab.	Nil	Nil
6	I.K.G. Library, Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar	1997	1	0
7	Bhai Khan Singh Nabha Library, Punjabi University, Patiala	1962	5	3
8	University Library, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala	2006	5	4
Total			30	20

The geographical distribution of sample is shown in table 9.1. The respondents have been selected from each of the seven existing State University Libraries, out of total eight State University Libraries of Punjab region. Twenty questionnaires (n=20) duly filled up were received back from six University Libraries. However, in one State

University, library does not exist and one of the libraries did not reply at all, in- spite of many times discussions on telephone. This represents response rate of 66.67% in terms of State University Libraries.

TABLE 9.2: Distribution of sample with regard to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	11	55.0
Female	9	45.0
Total	20	100.0

TABLE 9.3: Distribution of sample with regard to Age

Age Groups	Frequency	Percentage
30-35 years	3	15.0
35-40 Years	7	35.0
More than 40 years	10	50.0
Total	20	100.0

Surprisingly, 55% respondents are male and other 45% are female in a male dominated library profession. Half 50% of the respondents are more than 40 years of age group, while 35% respondents are between the age group of 35-40 years, and only 15% are of between age group of 30-35 years.

TABLE 9.4: Distribution of sample with regard to Professional Qualification

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
M .Lib. I. Sc.	9	45.0
Ph. D	11	55.0
Total	20	100.0

In the terms of qualification, 55% respondents are having Ph. D. degree and other 45% of the respondents have a master's degree in Library and Information Science. In addition to professional qualifications, 25% respondents have some sort of computer application qualification and skills or attended workshops to update their knowledge. Moreover, all the respondents are also having a rich working experience of ten to forty years.

TABLE 9.5: Awareness of the term 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT'

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	100.0
No	-	-

In an answer to the question 'Are you aware of the term "knowledge Management?"' surprisingly 100 respondents of this survey answered in Yes. Thus, we can say that 100% respondents are literate to understand the concept of KM and thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

TABLE 9.6: Ways adopted to know about the term 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT'

Ways	Responses	Percentage
Conferences	12	60.0
Literature	11	55.0
Workshops	4	20.0
Fellow Colleagues	5	25.0
Internet	10	50.0

It is evident from above percentage that all the respondents know about the term KM by one way or other ways. Most 60% of the respondents get aware themselves of the term KM through attending conferences, along with other ways. In total, 55% of respondents get aware about KM from literature alone, 50% from Internet, 25% respondents with their fellow colleagues, and only 20% respondents attended workshops on KM. Thus, hypothesis 2 that “majority of LIS professionals adopt same ways to know about the term knowledge management” is rejected.

TABLE 9.7: Mean perception score of LIS Professionals with regard to Understanding of KM

Statements (n=20)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
It includes Information Management	4.30	.733	1
Information sharing can lead to KM	4.10	.788	2
It is a new term for what Library Professionals are already doing	3.90	1.071	3
It is same as Information Management	3.35	1.137	4

Table 9.7 shows that ‘It includes Information Management’ has been ranked 1st with highest mean i.e. $x=4.3$ $\sigma=.733$ with regard to understanding of KM among LIS professionals, whereas the statement ‘It is same as Information Management’ has been ranked last with least mean value $x=3.35$ $\sigma=1.137$. However, hypothesis 3 that “there is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to understanding of knowledge management” is rejected.

TABLE 9.8: Mean perception score of LIS Professionals with regard to objectives to integrate KM Practices

Objectives (n=20)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
to improve Knowledge sharing	4.50	.513	1
to improve employee participation	4.20	.834	2
considers KM as very important and provides full support	3.85	.671	3
to minimize knowledge development cost	3.70	.733	4

Table 9.8 reveals that main objective of KM practices integration should be to improve knowledge sharing which has been ranked 1st with highest mean value i.e. $x=4.5$ $\sigma=.513$, whereas objective ‘to minimize knowledge development cost’ has been ranked last with least mean value i.e. $x=3.7$ $\sigma=.733$. However, hypothesis 4 that “there is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to objectives to integrate KM practices” is rejected.

TABLE 9.9: Mean perception score of LIS Professionals with regard to ways of practicing knowledge sharing

Statements (n=20)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Good work practices	4.20	.616	1
By collaborative work/as members of projects team	4.10	.718	2
Preparing written documentation such as lessons learned, training manuals, articles for publication etc.	3.90	.968	3

Table 9.9 shows that employees prefer to share knowledge by adopting ‘Good work Practices’ which has been ranked 1st with highest mean value i.e. $\bar{x}=4.2 \pm \sigma .616$, whereas ‘Preparing written documentation such as lessons learned, training manuals, articles for publication etc.’ has been ranked last. However, hypothesis 5 that “there is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to ways of practicing knowledge sharing” is rejected.

TABLE 9.10: Mean perception score of LIS Professionals with regard to extent of knowledge shared within Library regarding information about different aspects

Contents (n=20)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
use of technology	4.40	.681	1
new initiatives	4.10	.788	2
future plans	3.95	1.050	3
training and development opportunities	3.85	.988	4
customer satisfaction	3.85	.933	5
processes	3.80	1.005	6
team and individual successes	3.70	1.174	7
senior management decisions	3.55	.945	8
key customers	3.35	.813	9

Table 9.10 shows that information about ‘use of technology’ is highly shared which has been ranked 1st with mean value i.e. $\bar{x}=4.4 \pm \sigma .681$, followed by ‘new initiatives’ (ranked 2nd), whereas information about ‘key customer’ is least shared within the library which has been ranked last with least mean value i.e. $\bar{x}=3.35 \pm \sigma .813$. However, hypothesis 6 that “there is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to extent of knowledge shared within Library regarding information about different aspects” is rejected.

TABLE 9.11: Mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to challenges for incorporating KM into Library practices

Challenges (n=20)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Lack of rewards/recognition for knowledge creation and sharing	3.50	1.051	1
Lack of expertise to identify knowledge resources within/outside the library	3.45	.999	2
Lack of knowledge capturing and sharing culture	3.30	.923	3
Reluctance of the Library Professionals to accept the change	3.10	1.210	4
Lack of Top management commitment to incorporate KM practices in the Library	3.00	1.338	5
Misunderstanding of KM concept	2.95	.887	6
Lack of training	2.95	1.317	7

Lack of time to learn	2.85	1.424	8
Lack of IT infrastructure	2.85	1.565	9
Lack of financial resources to initiate KM	2.70	1.261	10

It has been observed from the above table 9.11 that LIS professionals have shown their agreement towards the statement ‘Lack of rewards/recognition for knowledge creation and sharing’ is ranked 1st challenge for incorporating KM into Library practices with mean value i.e. $x=3.5 \pm \sigma 1.051$, followed by 2nd ranked challenge i.e. ‘Lack of expertise to identify knowledge resources within/outside the library’, where as ‘Lack of financial resources to initiate KM’ has been ranked last challenge for incorporating KM into Library practices with least mean value i.e. $x=2.7 \pm \sigma 1.261$. However, hypothesis 7 that “there is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to challenges for incorporating KM into Library practices” is rejected.

TABLE 9.12: Mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to benefits of KM implementation (knowledge sharing) in University Libraries

Benefits (n=20)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
better decision making	4.60	.503	1
improved future prospects of the Library	4.50	.513	2
improved collaboration within different sections of the Library	4.45	.510	3
reduced processing time by avoiding duplication of work	4.40	.598	4
improved Library operations and services	4.40	.681	5
increased employees acceptance of innovations	4.30	.657	6

As far as concerned with regard to benefits of KM implementation (knowledge sharing) in University Libraries, table 9.12 shows that ‘Better decision making’ is ranked 1st ($x=4.60 \pm \sigma .503$), followed by 2nd ranked benefit i.e. it is helpful in improving the future prospects of the library, whereas the statement ‘increased employees acceptance of innovations’ has been taken into less consideration with least mean value i.e. $x=4.3 \pm \sigma .657$ and has been ranked 6th in last. However, hypothesis 8 that “there is no difference in mean perception score of LIS professionals with regard to benefits of KM implementation university libraries” is rejected.

Summary of the Findings

- i. Majority of the respondents belong to the category of Male (55.0%).
- ii. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group of more than 40 (50.0%).
- iii. Majority of the respondents having Ph. D. as professional qualification (55.0%).
- iv. It has been revealed that all the respondents are aware of the term ‘Knowledge Management’ (100.0%).
- v. Majority of the respondents came to know about the term KM through attending conferences (60.0%).
- vi. Majority of the respondents are strongly agreed that knowledge management includes information management ($x=4.3$), followed by the statement that information sharing can lead to KM ($x=4.1$).
- vii. Majority of the respondents highly agreed that the main objective to integrate KM practices is to improve knowledge sharing ($x=4.5$), followed by to improve employee participation ($x=4.2$).
- viii. The maximum number of professionals prefer to share knowledge by adopting good work practices ($x=4.2$), whereas ($x=3.9$) professionals prefer to prepare written documentation such as lessons learned, training manuals, articles for publication etc.
- ix. Information about use of technology is highly shared among library professionals ($x=4.4$), whereas information about key customers is least shared ($x=3.35$).
- x. Majority of the library professionals strongly agreed that lack of rewards/recognition for knowledge creation and sharing ($x=3.5$) is the biggest challenge for incorporating KM into library practices.
- xi. Majority of the respondents agreed that highest benefit of KM implementation in University libraries will be better decision making ($x=4.6$).

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of present study, it may be stated that knowledge management is a combination of information management, communication and human resources. Thus, State University libraries of Punjab can improve their services and become more responsive to the needs of users, by capturing, sharing and utilization of knowledge and experiences of their professionals. University libraries also need to create an environment in which knowledge can be shared and valued among the staff, with 'active', not 'archive' knowledge.

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