

Emerging Knowledge Management Competencies of LIS Professionals

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Abstract

In the age of the globalization and increased worldwide competition, many organizations and professions are looking for new ways to gain competitive advantage. Knowledge management (KM) is a relatively major topic for this concept and Librarianship is one of the professions not only vying for a position of prominence in KM, but also whose track record in the field is widely acknowledged. According to working definition of International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), KM is “a process of creating (generating, capturing), storing (preserving, organizing, integrating), sharing (communicating), applying (implementing), and reusing (transforming) organizational knowledge to enable an organization to achieve its goals and objectives”. Further, IFLA clarifies that the term knowledge is not limited to published information; it also covers tacit knowledge (expertise), implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge, and procedural knowledge. This study aims to identify, collect and critically review the research literature on the concepts of knowledge management (KM) competencies among Library & Information Science (LIS) professionals. KM differs significantly from the theory and practice of librarianship, information management, and information resource management. It requires a new set of skills among LIS professionals if they wished to have any effective role in this domain. This will require not only enhanced self-knowledge, but also an understanding of how LIS skills can be applied in a new and often commercial context.

Reviewing the literature among the various characteristics identified, five clear categories have emerged. These are: professional skills for a commercial context, communication skills, management skills, team-working skills and IT skills. To leverage these LIS skills to best effect, library and information professionals will need to acquire other skills. The success of libraries as organizations is determined by the actions of the individuals who work in those libraries, the success of those individuals in carrying out the missions of those libraries is in large measure a reflection of the type and quality of leadership. Successful library leaders demonstrate certain skills that are instrumental in the delivery of desired outcomes. Knowledge management is a major one of that and KM offers potential benefits for the development of libraries. However, the success of KM initiatives requires additional skills and competencies among LIS professionals which they are lacking. They must gain organizational political understanding, understanding of business practices and leadership skills for their involvement in KM.

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