Scientific Society of Advanced Research and Social Change
SSARSC International Journal of Library Information Network and Knowledge
Volume 1 Issue 1, February 2016, ISSN: 2455-5207

Knowledge Management subject as a career

By this time many of you in the corporate world or who are interior to the subject Library & Information Science should have heard about the words "Knowledge Management". What is Knowledge Management (KM)? And who can go for this subject to build a profession in the coming years?

The very well known subject Library Science has been in transformation for last few decades because of the development in the topic ICT i.e. information and communication technology. The interference of IT or better say the application of IT in library science has given a chance to face-lift the whole subject by introducing more options and glamour to it. Transformation is still in the process but in an ideal world it is already there. If there is a delay then this delay could be because of our ability to accept & adopt the change swiftly.

From Library Science to Information Science and then to Knowledge Management…all these are happening because of the changes in the requirements of the users for which a library was developed many centuries back. Customer is the king and for a library, it is the user who is the customer and king with no exception. Now as a user I would like to read books, I need pin pointed information which I am looking for at the click of a mouse and I also need readymade knowledge which will help me to take a faster decision. I do not have time to process the available information. My requirement for a book can be fulfilled by a traditional library, need for my particular information may be done by a search engine where I am able to explore thousands of databases and portals through a search engine sitting at home or on my mobile. But where can I have my readymade knowledge? I require it for my business decision and also for personal usage.

We collect data while doing survey. After collecting those data, we analyze to find the meaning out of it i.e. processing of data takes place to convert those data in to meaningful information. After that people process that information to produce knowledge. This processing takes place inside human brain, which eventually helps a person to take a decision. This process is "How" part of any task which is known as tacit knowledge in KM. Now my requirement is for this "How" part which I need as a readymade product; which will guide me in finding a conclusion. For this very reason there is a need for Knowledge Management (KM).

KM - It's not about managing your own knowledge but of others. This is the challenge to any KM professional. By virtue of any human nature everybody will not be very generous in sharing his or her knowledge for the benefits of others. Insecurity and inability to understand human society's need for one's knowledge is not same with all. As a KM professional one

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needs to manage the environment by developing a situation where all will make an effort to share knowledge for own benefits, for organization and for the human society as a whole. Unless a KM professional is able to influence the others by words that "what will be there for him /her if s/he shared knowledge," no one will appear and share knowledge. But this can be done by various ways and using many KM tools which are already proved which is out of the scope of this communication and let us now concentrate on the career part of KM.

If you want to build career in KM, it is necessary that you should know the basics of library science. In my view it is essential to know how a modern digital library works to run KM show. But remember, library science is the base of KM only and only the starting point of your KM journey as a professional of this field. You need to develop your IT skill, communication skill and need to acquire knowledge about industries and corporate world, because most of the lucrative KM jobs are with big corporate.

Learning library science is not very difficult but developing skills further as stated above is not an easy amusement for KM professional. It is not mandatory or essential to know the industry in deep for which you will develop the KM system but it is important to be acquainted with "how an industry works". For example if you want to become a KM professional for a chemical industry, it is not necessary to know the chemistry as a subject in deep (although basic is required) but what is the flow of this chemical business is the need. As a KM professional your role should be of a facilitator or catalyst for all KM initiatives but not as an evaluator or reviewer of knowledge. It is practically impossible to acquire and store knowledge of many subjects for a KM person to become a reviewer. But at the same time KM

person needs to develop a very good communication skill so that he or she can run KM sessions, interact with people of varied level to engage them in KM initiatives.

Once the knowledge is captured through various KM platforms and reviewed then comes the storage and retrieval part of the same in time of need of that knowledge. For this one must develop his or her IT skills.

Knowledge traced, shared, captured, reviewed, reused and because of reuse there will be savings in terms of money i.e. ROI (return on investment) from KM programme and new knowledge will develop as an asset to the company. Knowledge cycle looks simple but practically one has to put enough effort to get the ROI.

Nothing is impossible and "challenge" is what one should look for. So I would like to suggest that join this KM profession instead of reading some negative stories on "why KM failed etc" on web. If positioned properly, KM will be the key to any business. This statement must be understood by the KM person and before that by the management to create the success story. KM programme should not be an ornament to the organization and KM person should not park him/herself like a beauty.
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As a job seeker you can relate KM with content management, information management and Change / Innovation management also. It is how you would like to position your KM system for the organization based on the need of the business. With a proper KM system in place, organization will never loose its knowledge with the movement of its executives to other organization. There will be less chance of reinventing of wheel. Knowledge is key to any business and if you are harvesting knowledge, you are investing.

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