



Knowledge Management Advocacy Paper

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Background

The rise of knowledge-based economies has put significance on the effective management of knowledge. Knowledge management (KM herein) mainly pertains to organizations that create knowledge and transfer it into the production of new services and products. Libraries in organizations (should) play a crucial role in the organization, storage, dissemination and re-use of knowledge.

As libraries struggle with the fallout in the digital age, they must find creative ways to remain relevant in their organizations. Similarly, organizations must make effective use of the key resources they possess and align them with their business strategies in order to survive and flourish. Knowledge is one of the most valuable resources within an organization.

Libraries as knowledge management centers should advocate the significance of KM in organizations. The purpose of this paper is to give some hints for libraries how to advocate the case of knowledge management. This paper is part of the activities of IFLA Knowledge Management Section.

IFLA Knowledge Management Section

The growing interest in KM by the IFLA community was confirmed by the approval of Knowledge Management as IFLA Section in December 2003. The KM Section is a unit in IFLA's Division III (Library Services).

With this growing interest in the implementation of Knowledge Management throughout the library and information environment, LIS professionals have expressed a need for a deeper understanding of KM's many dimensions and its relevance to their work. The IFLA KM Section endeavors to facilitate the application of KM in libraries by developing a program of activities that supports information professionals implement KM in their own organizations.

Mission of IFLA Knowledge Management Section

KM encompasses many dimensions of organizational management and the activities of the Section are intended to reflect this by providing a broad platform of integrated activities, through working co-operatively with other IFLA Sections and Divisions, and appropriate professional organizations.

The objectives of the Section are to:

- support the implementation of KM culture in libraries and information environments
- provide an international platform for professional communication and understanding of the significance of KM for librarians and their institutions

- follow the developments in KM and promote its practical implementation within the IFLA community

To meet the demand of librarians to enhance their skills in an ever-changing work environment, the Section seeks to provide theoretical and practical knowledge in areas of KM such as:

- knowledge sharing
- improved measures of performance
- being value-oriented rather than just service-oriented
- explore the "pros and Cons" of KM implementation
- utilize interactive communication in information settings to enhance knowledge sharing
- using IT for converting knowledge into information for use
- knowledge retention and preservation

Definition of knowledge management¹

The IFLA Knowledge Management Section defines KM as a process of creating, storing, sharing, applying and re-using organizational knowledge to enable an organization to achieve its goals and objectives. KM is extending the concept of "knowledge" beyond existing concepts like "memory", "storage", and "information". The term covers such areas as tacit knowledge (expertise), implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge and procedural knowledge.

The management of knowledge is a complicated and difficult, although rewarding activity in a company.

Definition of advocacy

According to Wikipedia², advocacy is *“an activity by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions.”* It includes activities such as *“media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research or conducting exit poll or a filing of an amicus brief.”* Advocacy utilizes marketing and public relations tools.

The issue – advocate KM in organizations: the role of libraries

Knowledge management (KM) causes changes to the nature of work in organizations. The concept is expanding within organizations and continuously penetrates them. The wealth of knowledge created in organizations push libraries to take the initiative to handle, save, store, organize and preserve knowledge. Librarians are transforming to become knowledge managers. Their current role in organizations seems to change.

Libraries and information centers are in a changing environment. In this transition stage, they can take the lead to promote KM in their working surroundings. Besides

¹ IFLA Knowledge Management Section. Communication Plan, January 2017 – December 2018, available at: https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/km/publications/2017-2018cp_2.pdf

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advocacy>, accessed on Aug.1, 2017.

the wide development of KM, libraries have still a long way to go to persuade about the value of knowledge management in organizations.

Some potential reasons that organizations still hesitate to embrace KM are:

- undervalue of knowledge
- ignorance of the significance of knowledge management
- lack of understanding about the knowledge management function as an added-value activity which generates income
- luxurious and costly process in terms of the introduction of knowledge management systems.

Libraries must converge with knowledge management to support enterprise success. Changing the mindset to achieve the vision of libraries as critical community hubs enables the embracement of knowledge management.

Scope

This advocacy plan aims at the promotion of concerns and the effective communication of the meaning and significance of knowledge management in organizations.

The key players as targets of the advocacy plan

The key players in knowledge management are:

- *People*. The components of a knowledge management system or project are people. Their tacit knowledge will be articulated and then recorded in a knowledge management system. People as the creators of knowledge should be persuaded to express and share their knowledge with other partners without any fear of losing it when it is articulated.
- *Senior management*. All brilliant ideas require the support of upper management. The support of senior leaders is the critical factor for the accomplishment of knowledge management because senior management establishes the priorities in the strategic plan of the organization. Support and involvement of executives lend credibility to the knowledge management initiative and anticipate sustainability. The support includes human and financial resources.
- *Libraries*. The traditional information places are transforming into knowledge management places as they constantly change and adjust to the conditions and requirements of the organization.

Advocacy objectives

The objectives of an advocacy plan relatively align with the objectives of the IFLA KM Section as follows:

- provide advocacy and advancement for all information professionals to increase their understanding of the value of KM to their organizations
- promote best practice on using applicable KM theories and tools in library and information services
- share and distribute information about KM and its development and practical implementation in an organization
- develop personnel skills that fit to the new environment of creating and organizing knowledge.

The advocacy strategy - how to persuade the targets to act

The strategy to advocate for knowledge management includes to:

- carry out a knowledge management audit to scrutinize the current situation related to KM in the organization
- produce a report with the pertinent results which helps to build the advocacy plan
- set the goals of the advocacy plan
- stress the importance of knowledge management
- pursue alliances in the hierarchical structures of the organization to ensure their approval
- persuade authorities and upper management with arguments about the value of knowledge management as it is included in the advocacy plan
- develop an environment of openness, knowledge-sharing and organizational learning
- align the advocacy plan with the mindset of the organization, understand the business and have a better understanding of the overall strategy of the business
- communicate the advocacy plan effectively by demonstrating the value of information and knowledge services to the business
- measure the consequences of advocacy.

Activity plan – details

Advocacy is a continuous process which requires time and patience. The plan must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) to become feasible and applicable. Taking small steps is more successful rather than creating a flamboyant and complicated plan.

The advocacy plan entails components that pertain to project management, such as:

- make a needs assessment of KM as a result of carrying out the knowledge management audit
- prepare a road map about advocacy
- pursue examples of advocacy in libraries to adjust it to the KM advocacy plan. Do not attempt to re-invent the wheel
- create a team to collaborate for the creation of the advocacy plan. The team members could be library staff members and trustful people from other business units
- start small, grow big: start with a pilot project, i.e. talk about knowledge management in the library or among information professionals
- build partnerships with other business units. Coalitions are essential for the implementation of a knowledge management project
- start networking, staying on the pulse of the business and keep talking about knowledge management to pertinent people
- proceed to lobbying within the organization: be part of the business and be embedded within teams or various departments across the organization
- engage in deliberate efforts to raise awareness about KM among potential supporters within the organization

- go to senior management to convince them that embracing KM is a win-win process
- grasp opportunities to advocate knowledge management: attend social events in the organization, literally walk the corridors in the business, do the elevator chats and water-cooler discussions to present the advantages of knowledge management
- get close to the business and forge strong relationships with others in the business
- show how the skills of the information professionals / knowledge managers add value to business and build advocacy skills necessary to carry out the KM advocacy plan
- work effectively and become the live paradigm of how to organize and exploit knowledge; demonstrate yourself as a trustful knowledge manager in the organization
- construct a communication plan to demonstrate the value of knowledge management in the business:
 - word of mouth: speak out about KM
 - design a brochure or a poster
 - create a banner on the library's website
 - send newsletters in the company's email addresses list
 - use the social media
 - include the advocacy actions in the library's newsletter
 - initiate an intranet news service for the staff about the benefits of knowledge management
 - create a short video about the benefits of knowledge management in the organization and publish it on the library's webpage or on the library's pages on the intranet
 - prepare a webinar to demonstrate the advantages of knowledge management in the organization, since officers often are very busy to attend seminars
- publish articles and side-bars in the staff magazine about the added-value of KM in an organization
- as library instruction and information literacy are included in the core business of libraries, instruct people about the significance of KM that sharing their knowledge is an advantage because their knowledge is spread, utilized, exploited and its value is multiplied with re-use. Stress that the knowledge holder becomes indispensable and known for the knowledge shared with others
- acquire additional and pertinent skills to knowledge management
- evaluate the advocacy plan in regular intervals in order to remain relevant and informed.

Indicators – how to judge progress

Several quantitative indicators can measure the progress of the impact of KM in the organization:

- the number of visits on the library's webpages where information on knowledge management is published
- the number of hits and likes on the Facebook page and relevant numbers for social media exposure

- the number of onsite visits to the library as the knowledge management center
- the number of articles, postings, news published
- the number of visits on pertinent videos created about KM
- any other in-house created and invented measures for judging the impact of KM to the organization

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