

LAPORAN PERSIDANGAN/CONFERENCE REPORTS

Knowledge Management Workshop (2 –3 Feb 2002, Kota Kinabalu)

Organised by PERPUN, this was a very focused and result-oriented workshop. The facilitators were: Cik Rosna Taib and Puan Norasiah Sharuddin of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Library and Encik Zulkefli Mohd Yusof of Multimedia University Library, Cyberjaya.

The first session was a summary presentation of some papers that were discussed at the PPTG/PSZ Conference on Knowledge Management, 2001. Knowledge Management (KM) has been defined as 'the gathering, structuring, storing and accessing of information to build knowledge and involves the creation of a culture that encourages and facilitates the creation and sharing of knowledge with an organization' and the 'achieving of sustainable superior performance by leveraging on knowledge'. Thus KM should be action and performance-oriented.

This report will highlight some of the papers presented at the Workshop.

The first paper discussed the types of knowledge – Structured Knowledge (explicit knowledge): Human Knowledge (combination of explicit and tacit knowledge) and Social Knowledge or Collective Knowledge (tacit knowledge). The knowledge management process includes knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing and application. In KM, communities of practice are informal groups of people who get together regularly to share knowledge and solve one another's problems. These groups may be formed in response to change and are self-selected. In a learning organization, like the university, all parties involved in the organization must be willing to learn and share and the organization must be a learning organization. Through sharing, the members of the organization will raise each other's competencies, help to reduce the time and expense of training employees since it is more cost and time-effective to leverage the internal knowledge available from the community of experienced employees. For the success of any KM initiative, it is noted that the top management of the organization must be involved. Specific KM managers must be appointed and assigned, and the mechanisms for structuring and updating

knowledge must be in place. Therefore KM practices take time. The second paper was titled 'Memory of Civilizations', and the practical application is the recognition of the need to preserve the 'organizational memory of the University', which includes documents of the University, minutes of meetings, reports, expertise of University staff, artifacts, etc. The role of 'Organisational Memory' is to help the present and future members of the organization to find meaning in the present and to chart the course of the future. As such, there is a need to establish an effective and efficient system of capturing, organizing and distributing the intellectual assets within the organization. The benefits of this KM initiative include: protection of organizational knowledge, making it accessible and allowing it to be reused so as to improve the knowledge of the organization, support effective decision making, improve competitiveness; and provision of the foundation for organizational learning.

The third paper discussed the importance of the librarian to be attuned to the knowledge needs of the organization. However, in the past, he/she often deals with only part of the information assets of the organization and is often not involved in its strategic issues. In the context of KM, the library must act as an agent of change and must be seen as an active contributor to the achievement of learning outcomes of its organization. Using the librarian's expertise in selection, organizing and dissemination of knowledge, librarians should initiate the KM efforts of its parent organization by identifying and creating KM projects. The University Library must convince the academic departments that it has a role to play, which complements their role in teaching, learning, research and consultancy. As such there is a need for the library to engage in discussion and dialogue with the academia in order to identify ways in which it can contribute to the learning outcomes of the academic programmes.

The fourth paper discussed the use of technology in the KM efforts. However, it is to be noted that technology is only a key enabler, a means to an end. Technology assists in the creation and acquisition of knowledge especially in the efforts to convert tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge

through the various multimedia platforms and digitization. However, the Western approach of KM has created a knowledge gap in existing commercialized databases as Western KM systems are normally insensitive to the diversity of culture and languages of the world, are monolingual, predominantly in English and biased towards the American culture. To fill the K-gap, KM features should include the inclusion of computer translation systems and other natural native language-based interfaces; search engines based on native language to find documents in a database or native language repository. There is therefore a need for Asian solutions to database development and management.

For practical examples of KM, the efforts of Perpustakaan Sultan Zanariah for Universiti Teknologi Malaysia were shared by Noraziah Sharuddin, and these efforts included the following:

- i) Knowledge mapping for creation of knowledge repositories was carried out to identify knowledge spots that reside within the organization. As a first step, the top management of UTM, starting with the Vice Chancellors, were interviewed to capture their views and rationale for their management styles and changes made, if any, to previous administration.
- ii) UTM Corporate Memory Forum is also organized to collect the tacit knowledge of key personnel and convert it to explicit knowledge.
- iii) A Directory of Expertise is also compiled to identify the UTM's core competencies and intellectual assets in the form of files containing research profiles of researchers. Data is collected by librarian cum faculty via formal and informal means. One of the ways to track down lecturers' publications is to carry out a citation analysis study of UTM staff via the Science Citation Index as well as subscribed databases of the Library. These were tabulated and analysed by the librarians and reported to the Senate. Efforts were also taken to identify publications of UTM staff not held by PSZ, and these were then digitized via the PSZ Document Management System.
- iv) Librarians in UTM also helped researchers to check the novelty or otherwise of an invention claimed by UTM researcher. Using their information skills, the librarian will work with the researcher to determine the keywords for searching the various relevant databases. The results will be tabulated and discussed with the researcher and the relevant peer group, and

the final report submitted to the Committee of UTM Intellectual property.

- v) Another effort to KM is the keeping and digitization of the photographs, speeches of the top management, minutes of meetings, MOU and MOA, etc., and making them accessible to the management via the PSZ Knowledge Management System.

The climax of the Workshop was team discussions and presentations on Knowledge Needs Analysis. The participants were divided into two groups. One group was asked to look at the strategic focus, goals, strategies and existing knowledge of the Library and the another group was also to look at the required knowledge for the achievement of new goals of KM. Although the librarians represented different organizational setup, all were of the same mind that the strategic focus of their libraries was to become a world class research library, and their goals were to provide excellent research facilities, dynamic and innovative information systems and services, to establish and develop well-equipped digital library. Their strategies would be to market the library as the information gateway of the university, be actively involved in the research activities of the University, and be skilled knowledge workers.

By comparing the existing knowledge and the required knowledge, the knowledge gap can be identified and a specific K-action plan for the Library can be drawn up to narrow and eventually fill the gap thus enabling the Library to achieve its KM plans. For example, in using the case of USM Library, the existing knowledge about researchers' profiles was 70%, and since the target was to achieve 100%, the knowledge gap was 30%. For systematic application, the library should have closer rapport with the researchers and R & D staff and the time frame set to achieve the 100% knowledge was within one year. The resulting impact is that the Library will be aware of the direction the University is moving in terms of research, and the strength of its research areas. For effective planning, we were reminded that targets and actions should be measurable and achievable. By identifying the K-gap, librarians would be able to take specific actions and plans so that the goals of KM can be achieved for their organization.

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