

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on Knowledge Management in Libraries Today

Karen Medin, Department of Resource Strategies and Assessment, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA

To generate a special issue specifically on Knowledge Management (KM) in libraries is difficult because a lot of what has been recognized by libraries as assessment, storage, and best practices are indeed aspects of KM though not recognized as such. This work was originally intended for a reference work, but my submissions were slim due to the lack of formal understanding that much of our librarianship is precisely knowledge management. My purpose here is to formally introduce KM so that those would-be authors will gain an appreciation for their own involvement in KM. Everything from staff training to evaluation to benchmarking with peer institutions is really part of KM. My hope is that this special issue will encourage my peers to read, address, and contribute to the umbrella category of KM in the literatures of our library and information science field and venture into those ancillary fields to glean insights or to contribute to the overall corpus on KM.

The first article, Communities of Practice Application in Knowledge Management provides an overview of what KM includes. The often repeated refrain 'KM can be anything' may be softened by a careful reading of this article. It may also give pause to those who fear treading on the uncharted domain of the interpersonal side of KM. Communities of Practice (CoPs) are introduced as a critical aspects KM. CoPs are specifically related to tasks and not merely shared interest. Dickinson and Marken identify the outcome of successful CoP work in libraries as value-laden dispositions.

The second article by Renfro and Axford highlights a particularly rich way that librarians can reach out to faculty and graduate students by introducing them to personal KM tools and methods. They underscore relevant ways that librarians can share their expertise as knowledge navigators in areas that are very close to the individual daily lives of researchers. This article also touches on that timely theme of the intensifying need for curation of information as individuals participate in content creation regularly. Librarians will appreciate the ingenuity of the approach to remaining relevant in the age of information overload.

Finally, my own work on CoP development closes out the issue. Specifically of note here is the benefit of consulting and integrating insights from other professions. I incorporate cultural studies, neuroscience, and management literature in order to better understand and anticipate what will happen and how to handle outcomes when we address three KM elements for success that we as librarians have not been entirely successful at: namely, upper management leadership and commitment, employee motivation and collaborative teamwork.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Medin
Guest Editor
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