

Application of Knowledge Management in Festus Aghagbo Nwako University Library for Improved Service Delivery

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Abstract

The application of knowledge management in various areas of library services has helped to achieve efficiency in service delivery. The purpose of this study was to explore the application of knowledge management in Festus Aghagbo Nwako University Library (FANL) for improved service delivery. It established the fact that in FANL, KM has been successfully applied in collection development and management, cataloguing and classification, circulation and access services, reference and research services, professional development, digital library and institutional repositories, among others. This study also examined the concept of KM, brief history of KM, brief history of FANL, types of knowledge, relevance of KM in libraries, and challenges of application of KM in FANL. The paper concluded that KM is applied to a high extent in FANL for improved service delivery. Major recommendations made include: continuous organization of seminars and workshops for the library staff to enable them understand KM strategy and vision clearly for effective implementation of KM initiatives in libraries; library staff should acquire the necessary skills for effective application and utilization of KM tools and techniques; there should be sufficient provision of financial resources for the implementation and sustainability of KM initiatives in libraries, there should be sufficient technology infrastructure to keep the KM systems and tools up-to-date.

Keywords: *Knowledge Management, University Library, FANL, Library Services.*

Introduction

University libraries serve the tripartite purposes of teaching, learning and research for users. Similarly, Ogendi (2017) pointed out that university libraries are information centers established to support the vision and mission of the parent institutions which include learning, teaching and research to equip members with knowledge required to

serve society and advance the welfare of human race. The traditional functions of university libraries are to collect, process, disseminate, store and retrieve information to promote better services to the end users. The impact of globalization, a revolution in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) being witnessed on a daily basis, has changed the environment in which university libraries operate.

Enormous amounts of new data and information are currently available in university libraries and are presented in very complex forms. Libraries play a crucial role in managing knowledge and providing access to information. Thus, requisite knowledge is needed by the librarian to effectively manage the enormous amounts of new data and information.

Knowledge is an important organizational resource that needs to be effectively managed to achieve organizational goals. Knowledge management is key to improved service delivery in any organization. Lending credence to the afore-mentioned assertion, Lahiai (2022) averred that librarians' development of knowledge acquisition strategies from printed to electronic and digital resources are central to managing exponential growth of different types of knowledge. Dimou (2018) described knowledge management (KM) as the processor practice of building, getting, apprehending, sharing and using knowledge coming from various sources in order to enhance organizational learning and performance.

Instructively, there are two types of knowledge viz: tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, according to Igwe, Nnadozie and Unagha (2015) is the personal context-specific knowledge of a person that resides in the human mind, behavior and perception. It is highly personal, subjective, difficult to formalize, articulate and communicate fully, experience-based, job-specific, transferred through conversion or narrative and not captured by formal education or training.

Ugwuogu, Ugocha and Ibenne (2019) viewed, tacit knowledge as personal knowledge used by members of an organization or institution to perform their works and in the process make sense in their worlds. It is learned or acquired through extended periods of experiencing and doing a task, during which the individual develops a feel for and capacity to make intuitive judgments about the successful execution of the work or activity.

Explicit knowledge, otherwise known as know-what, is formalized and codified, collected, stored and disseminated. According to Igwe, Nnadozie and Unagha (2015) explicit knowledge comprises anything that can be codified, documented and archived. These include reports, memos, business plans, drawings patents trademarks, customer lists and methodologies. Ugwuogu, Ugocha and Ibenne (2019) described explicit knowledge as the type of knowledge that is expressed in the form of numbers, words, drawings, etc. It is knowledge that is documented and easily communicated, shared and transferred in their codified forms.

It must however be stated that knowledge management tend to be effective when thoughtfully applied in libraries. In Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library (FANL), the library staff lend themselves to knowledge management. In view of the researchers' observation as library staff in FANL, there are more explicit/printed knowledge consisting of text books, periodicals (journals, magazines, newsletters), and pamphlets that are manually preserved by library staff for

users' access for their individual information needs. These materials are managed by trained and qualified librarians, para-librarians and non-librarians. For the purpose of this research, librarians mean staff with post-graduate degrees in Library and Information Science. Para-librarians on the other hand, are staff with graduate degree, Higher National Diploma in Library and Information Science or other disciplines while non-librarians are staff with neither graduate nor post-graduate degree in Library and Information Science. It is vital to note that some of these non-professional library staff have acquired certain skills over the years due to their experiences while working in the library. There are 20 librarians, 30 para-professionals and 45 non-professionals working in FANL.

FANL, like every other academic library, faces various challenges such as financial constraints, usage decrease, transition into digital services, demand for new services, insufficient trained and qualified staff. The limited availability of fund poses a lot of difficulties to the acquisition of updated and current explicit knowledge. Lahai (2022) noted that the reliance on donations by most academic libraries in Africa to acquire varied implicit types of knowledge such as computers and their gadgets and the replacement of their damaged parts is a problem for the parent institutions which usually lead to the systems being abandoned. The researchers observed that most of the librarians in FANL are young graduates who are inexperienced and as such need the tacit and explicit knowledge of the few experienced staff to improve on their service delivery. The most

problematic situation in FANL is in communication and collaboration among employees regarding knowledge management which influences the library operations and consequently, the quality of services provided to users. Thus, the purpose of the study is to explore the concept of knowledge management and its application in Festus Aghagbo Nwako University Library for improved service delivery.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of KM

Knowledge management means different things to different scholars and organizations. Dalkir (2005) defined knowledge management as a framework for designing an organization's goals, structures, and processes so that the organization can use what it knows to learn and to create value for its customers and community. Skyrme, (2011) defined knowledge management as the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge- and its associated processes of creation, organization, diffusion, use and exploitation - in pursuit of business objectives. In the same vein, Alan, (2012), posits that knowledge management is the systematic management of an organization's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical and strategic requirements; it consists of the initiatives, processes, strategies, and systems that sustain and enhance the storage, assessment, sharing, refinement, and creation of knowledge. Ugwu, (2013) defined knowledge management as a process or set of

processes, as a method of management, or as a new dimension of strategic information management and as the use of organizational knowledge. According to Osoba and Quadri (2017) knowledge management is defined as the ability to ensure that library management maximizes the value of their information and knowledge assets, and encourage their librarians and information professionals to use their creativity and skills better, in the aim to achieve improved patronage and greater innovations in the libraries. They noted that an effective knowledge management system in place does not only protect revenues, it may also improve retention, increase productivity, and promote innovation. Shanhong, cited in Ugwu (2013) stated that the objective of knowledge management in libraries is to promote knowledge innovation, closer relationship between libraries and between a library and its users and to quicken knowledge flow. For the purpose of this paper, knowledge management is defined as the use organizational knowledge (tacit and explicit) to improve on library service delivery.

History of KM

KM came into being in the early 1990s as a pure ICT approach. Knowledge was seen as print or digitized content. Responses to knowledge management were sought in ICT tools such as databases and (online) libraries among others. Ndagire (2018) emphasized that this transited into what most library users in recent times call information management (IM – although KM itself is often perceived as overlapping with or the same as IM). Contemporarily,

this approach translates into popular tools such as wikis, blogs, social media and discussion fora among others. Ali, Junaidu and Ibrahim (2021) reported that this approach is also called the "stock" concept because it is targeted at information storage. Furthermore, they highlighted that ICT approach is an ideal supplement to the other KM approaches, given that it stimulates the continuation of knowledge and sharing of information cum communication.

In the late 90s, the focus of KM transitioned to the personal side of knowledge. This is because it was realized that knowledge would not let itself be encased into ICT systems, but would rather be personal and subjective. The human resource or human talent development approach concentrates on the development of personal capacities, as individuals are seen as the main possessors of knowledge. It consists of methods such as technical, management and personal training, appraisal talks and formulating personal goals.

Brief History of FANL

Professor Festus Aghagbo Nwako University Library (FANL), located in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, is named after the pioneer Vice- Chancellor who contributed to the development of the university. The library was established in 1991 as the main library of the then Anambra State University of Science and Technology (ASUTECH) which later became Nnamdi Azikiwe University in 1991. In 2005, the University library was named after Professor Festus Aghagbo Nwako. Anasi (2023) noted that the library was

commissioned in March 2008, but opened its gate to users in January 2009. The main library holds over 127,432 volumes of books and about 6,129 journal titles. The library holdings cover all fields of knowledge. The library houses four departments with seven sections: Circulation, Reference, Acquisitions, Serials, Bindery, Africana and Special Collection. As a multi-campus university, the library has a number of branch libraries; Medical library at Nnewi, the Pharmaceutical Sciences library at Agulu, the Law library and all faculties have its own library.

FANL is the main Library of Nnamdi Azikwe University Awka in Nigeria. It is a two- storey building with a basement and each floor is occupied by different sections within the library unit. The ground floor is occupied by the Reception desk, Security unit, Acquisition section, Cataloguing section, African Section and Project Section. The Circulation, Reference and Serials sections are on the first floor. The second floor houses the University Librarian's office, the General collections, and Short loan sections. The general collection is divided into two sections; Science and Arts. Textbooks on various disciplines are available in these sections. The Bindery, Archives, and Zik's Research Centre are available in the basement. There is a separate building that houses the digital section of the library.

Types of Knowledge

Knowledge is what an individual possesses after assimilating facts and putting them into context; it is intangible and perceived

as information with direction, which leads to appropriate actions. Knowledge is a mix of framed experience, values, contextual information and expert insight (Igwe, Nnadozie & Unagha, 2015). It also flows from grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. Dimou (2018), defined knowledge as an item derived from human reflection and experience. A basic element of knowledge is its production by an individual or a collective body and its integration into daily work or process. Knowledge can be constituted in concepts, rules and tools and contributes to the process of decision making for achieving a specific goal. Bello (2018), viewed knowledge as the full utilization of information and data, coupled with the potential of people's skills, competencies, ideas, intuitions, commitments and motivations. It is the body of information that might consist of facts, opinions, ideas, theories and principles. Knowledge further refers to a person's state of having information. These states include ignorance, awareness, familiarity, understanding and many others. Knowledge is stored in the individual brains or encoded in organizational processes, documents, products, services, facilities and systems. There are many types of knowledge. They are thus stated:

Tacit Knowledge. Reddy (2017) believed that tacit knowledge is know-how contained in the heads of both the librarians and every other library staff, the knowledge everyone carries in their heads about how to do things, and the lessons learned through experience. It is the innovation and

creativity which is embedded in every normal human being that helps him or her in solving some daily and challenging problems. When the tacit knowledge is expressed, codified and made public, it becomes explicit knowledge. Examples include knowledge shared during meetings, brainstorming sessions, workshops, conferences and seminars. The knowledge is then recorded in form of minutes of the meetings and conference proceedings. Documents from such events represent the insights, experiences shared, codified and disseminated in an easily transferable form. In relation to FANL, there are some experienced librarians and other library staff whose expertise or skills cover bibliography, cataloguing, shelving, collection development and others. Some of the library staff cannot express the knowledge of the jobs they perform or put them in writing, hence such knowledge remains unrecorded, yet stored in their minds. Many tasks accomplished in the library daily have no recorded workflow consequently, library staff act as they deem fit. Absence of recorded knowledge makes the staff to acquire experience acquired through daily engagement in library operations.

Explicit Knowledge. Explicit knowledge is what can be captured and shared through information technology. It can be codified into formal information that comes in tangible forms such as written books, documents, manuals, white papers, guidelines and policy manuals. Explicit knowledge is more dominant in most university libraries and FANL is not an exception. The main library holds over 127,432 volumes of books and about 6,129

journal titles. The library holdings cover all fields of knowledge. According to Lahai (2022), university libraries are considered as the custodians of the institution's knowledge in form of textbooks on varied disciplines, journals, magazines, pamphlets, gazettes, and newspapers.

Relevance of Knowledge Management in Libraries

The goal of knowledge management in university libraries is to ensure that precise and vital knowledge is supplied to library users at the appropriate time (Bello, 2018). Velmurugan (2019) noted that the objective of knowledge management in libraries is the promotion of knowledge innovation. According to Reddy (2017), KM in library is the insights, understandings and sensible understandings that every librarian possesses. It is an essential resource that permits professional and paraprofessional librarians to feature intelligently. He maintained that KM in an academic library may include:

- a) A process of collecting, organizing, classifying and disseminating information throughout a library so as to make it purposeful to those who need it.
- b) Capturing the tacit and explicit knowledge that employees really have and are needed by the employer and the users in the repository, and then filter the surplus out.
- c) Identification of categories of knowledge needed to support the overall library activities by combining indexing, searching and technology to help libraries organize

data stored in multiple sources and deliver only relevant information to users.

Patil (2013) averred that KM in libraries should be focused on the effective research and development of knowledge, creation of knowledge bases, exchange and sharing of knowledge between library staff and users, training of library staff, speeding up explicit processing and realizing of its importance to the library. On this note, FANL has varied information/knowledge assets that it manages. The library staff collects information resources, classifies and catalogues them using Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LC). The catalogue card process serves as a direction to give quick access to the library materials on the shelves. Thus, the collection and shelving of books require special skills. In FANL, there are librarians, para librarians and non-librarians. The managerial skills are attributed to librarians, while the para- and non-librarians engage with technical skills supervised by the librarians as they shelve processed materials and loan them out to the users.

Knowledge transfer is an essential aspect of knowledge management in libraries. Garfield (2019) defined knowledge transfer as the process by which one or more people (the source) teach other people (the recipients) what the source knows so that the recipients are able to put that knowledge to effective use. This can be through: formal teaching by the source with the recipients as students; presentations by the source to the recipients; informal discussions between the source and the recipients; demonstration by the source for the recipients;

apprenticeship by the recipients assisting the source; writing by the source with subsequent reading by the recipients; recipients trying things out under the tutelage of the source; formal mentoring of the recipients by the source. Knowledge transfer can be applied in FANL when the library staff prioritize the formal teaching of library users and establish informal discussion with them on the services provided by FANL that will meet the academic and research needs of library users.

Application of Knowledge Management in FANL

Knowledge management can be applied in various areas of library services to enhance efficiency, productivity, and user experience; support lifelong learning and research; foster collaboration and innovation among staff; and stay relevant in a rapidly changing information landscape. In FANL, knowledge management is applied in the following areas:

- *Collection Development and Management:* KM helps librarians identify the needs of the users, select and acquire information resources (printed and electronic) that satisfy the information needs of library users; weed out obsolete and irrelevant materials; conduct collection analysis or evaluation which involves an analysis of how well the information resources are currently meeting needs and how likely the materials are to continue meeting the needs of current and future users. KM also helps in the replacement of lost or damaged items;

- *Cataloguing and Classification:* KM helps in collection processing which involves identifying library collections on arrival with the ownership stamp, accessioning the materials after validation; maintaining accession register where all the materials acquired are recorded; cataloguing and classification of library materials: identifying subject headings and classification numbers, preservation of library collections.
- *Circulation and Access Services:* KM ensures proper shelving of library materials, making available the shelf guides and bay guides to the readers in an open access environment. It optimizes charging and discharging processes, manages user registration, and improves resource availability.
- *Reference and Research Services:* The primary role of a reference librarian is to provide information services and support to library users. KM supports the reference librarian to develop frequently asked questions and find their answers. KM provides reference librarian with the knowledge about users' information needs and interest. With KM, reference librarian offers in-person assistance, telephone assistance, research consultations, library tours and orientations, reader's advisory services, and others.
- *Professional Development:* Librarians in FANL participate in professional development opportunities where they share knowledge with one another and with other stakeholders. They write and

present papers in professional conferences and workshops organized within the library and outside. They engage in mentoring activities such as library orientation for new library staff, workshops and training, conference attendance, online courses and webinars, research activities, encourage librarians to publish research output.

- *Digital Library and Institutional Repositories:* KM ensures effective management of digital content, meta data, and preservation. It helps in the proper management of theses and dissertations, conference proceedings, research papers, and other intellectual output of an institution.

Challenges of Application of KM in FANL

The application of knowledge management in organisations including libraries has many challenges. Noreen (2018), observed that one of the biggest obstacles to the application of knowledge management in academic libraries is lack of training. In support, Abell and Oxbrow (2001) noted that library staff may lack necessary skills and training for effective application and utilization of KM tools and techniques. Rowley (2007) revealed that information overload is another challenge to the application of KM in libraries. The sheer volume of information resources available can make it difficult for library staff to identify, capture, and share relevant knowledge. Contributing to this discourse, Corral and Schofield (2017) opined that limited financial resources can restrict the

implementation and sustainability of KM initiatives in libraries. Chua and Lam (2005), observed that lack of a clear KM strategy and vision can hinder the effective implementation of KM initiatives in libraries. Rowley (2007) maintained that the rapid pace of technological change can make it difficult for libraries to keep their KM systems and tools up-to-date.

Other major challenges discussed in literature are: lack of understanding of knowledge management concepts, lack of clear KM strategy and vision, insufficient technology infrastructure, lack of a culture of knowledge sharing, lack of incentives or rewards for innovation and knowledge sharing, lack of commitment from top management, lack of collaboration, and lack of resources (Ugwu & Ezema, 2010; Nazim & Mukherjee, 2013). Roknuzzaman and Umamoto (2009) identified staff resistance to change, as another hindrance. Townly (2001), in support stated that library staff may resist KM initiatives due to fear of change, lack of understanding, or perceived threats to job security. Awoyemi and Okojie (2024) reported that the major problems with the application of KM in academic libraries are budget decline, lack of clear guidelines and policy on knowledge management, inadequate staff training, inadequate technology and lack of appropriate rewards and incentives among others.

Some of the challenges highlighted above are also applicable to FANL. The researchers identified these challenges: lack of clear KM strategies and policies, insufficient funding, limited technological infrastructure, inadequate training and

skills for KM application, poor communication and collaboration among staff, lack of a culture of knowledge sharing, unclear objectives and scope of KM initiatives, absence of defined roles and responsibilities among the staff, insufficient alignment with library's overall mission and goals and lack of formalized KM processes and procedures, inadequate infrastructure like hardware and software, insufficient staffing and expertise and difficulty in sustaining KM efforts due to resource constraints, outdated infrastructure, insufficient network bandwidth and storage, difficulty in integrating KM systems with existing library systems, insufficient staff training and skills acquisition. Ugwu (2013), posited that training of staff is very crucial in the application of KM in libraries. Training modes like conferences, train the-trainer workshop, seminars and continuing education programmes are opportunities for skill acquisition. In FANL, staff should imbibe knowledge sharing culture to enhance the application of KM. According to Olubunmi (2015), knowledge is a resource locked in the human mind, and those who have it should be willing to share it.

Conclusion

Knowledge management is key to the delivery of quality services to library patrons. KM can be applied in various areas of library services for efficiency in service delivery. In FANL, KM has been successfully applied in collection development and management, cataloguing and classification, circulation and access services, reference and research services,

professional development, digital library and institutional repositories. The application of knowledge management in libraries has many challenges such as lack of skills and training for effective application and utilization of KM tools and techniques, information overload, limited financial resources, rapid pace of technological change, poor communication and collaboration among staff, lack of knowledge sharing culture, inadequate and outdated infrastructure, insufficient staffing and expertise, insufficient network bandwidth and storage, difficulty in integrating KM systems with existing library systems, insufficient staff training and skills acquisition. It was concluded that knowledge management in Festus Aghagbo Nwako University Library is applied to a high extent for improved services delivery.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Library staff should sustain the use of knowledge management for improved delivery of library services.
2. The university and library management should continually organize seminars and workshops for the library staff to enable them understand KM strategy and vision clearly for effective implementation of KM initiatives in libraries.
3. Library staff should acquire the necessary skills for effective application and utilization of KM tools and techniques.
4. There should be sufficient provision of financial resources for the implementation and sustainability of KM initiatives in libraries.
5. There should be sufficient technology infrastructure to keep the KM systems and tools up-to-date.
6. Appropriate rewards and incentives should be introduced to encourage knowledge sharing among the staff.
7. The university and library management should monitor the activities of staff to ensure consistency in the use of knowledge management for improved library service delivery.

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