

# Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries in Developing Countries: A case of Southern Africa

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## Presentation Outlines

- Introduction
- Concept of KM
- Importance of KM in academic libraries
- Latest trends in KM in academic libraries
- Research findings
- Conclusion
- Recommendations & Framework
- Questions and comments

## Introduction

- **Role of academic libraries:** “To support the mission of their parent institutions to generate knowledge, and people equipped with knowledge in order to serve the society and advance the well-being of mankind” (Raja, Ahmad & Sinha, 2009:701).
- **Today’s Changing academic environment:** (evolution in education system, advancement in ICT, changing user needs, social media/web 2.0, changes in scholarly communication, and information and knowledge explosion)
- **Universities’ main activities:** teaching, learning and research. Academic libraries need to evolve as institutional needs/envirnment change.

## **Concept of KM?**

KM as “inherent capacity of organizations to act”; as a “justified belief that increases an entity’s capacity for effective action”; a “conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time”, a “tool to accomplish our goals faster and more effectively”. In the context of this presentation, KM is defined as *a process to create, acquire, share and apply both tacit and explicit knowledge for the benefit of the university and its entire user community, providing the right information to the right customer at the right time and in the right format to accomplish parent institution’s goals.*

## **Importance of KM in academic libraries**

- Libraries are customer-oriented institutions
- Have constant demands for improved service delivery
- Librarians have inbuilt capabilities and desire to be knowledge managers
- Libraries are living force to accommodate ever changing user needs
- Knowledge generation and management is a collaborative process, KM provides libraries opportunities for internal and external collaboration through social media

## **Trends in KM practice in academic libraries (Literature Review)**

- Web 2.0 & Social media
- Virtual/online reference services
- Digitization & Digital Libraries
- Research/Institutional repositories (IRs)
- Knowledge Portals
- Communities of Practice
- Smart phones

## **Research purpose & objectives**

To explore the KM practices in SADC university libraries, the objectives were to:

- find out the reasons for practicing knowledge management;
- identify the activities undertaken to practice knowledge management; and,
- ascertain the challenges associated with knowledge management practice in libraries.

## Methodology

Used a structured questionnaire sent via e-mail. Of 50 questionnaires 25 were completed and returned (at 50% response rate).

### Limitations:

1. Difficult to establish the total number of university libraries in the SADC region & find the contact details
2. No theoretical framework was used to carry out the study

**Table 1: Participating Libraries N=25**

SADC Countries	No. of Participating Libraries
Botswana	1
Lesotho	1
Malawi	1
Namibia	1
South Africa	14
Swaziland	1
Tanzania	2
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	1

**Table 2: Reasons for practicing KM**

Reasons for practicing KM	In %	Number
To improve library services and productivity	96	24
To produce more with less	88	22
To leverage the existing knowledge	80	20
To make informed decisions	76	19
To manage information explosion	72	18
To establish best practices	68	17
To manage rapid knowledge decay	64	16
To avoid duplication of efforts	52	13

**Table 3: KM initiatives undertaken in SADC university libraries**

KM initiatives	In %	Number
Strong partnership with other libraries, e.g. joint research projects, library consortia and inter-library lending	60	15
Adoption of Web 2.0 & Social Media, e.g. wikis, twitter, blogs, tagging, Face book	60	15
Digitization of library collection	60	15
Use of virtual/online reference services	52	13
Central knowledge repositories	48	12

**Table 3: Initiatives continued...**

<b>KM initiatives</b>	<b>In %</b>	<b>Number</b>
Identification of the expertise in libraries	44	11
Internal knowledge capture system	40	10
Staff training in knowledge management	20	5
Communities of Practice	20	5
Identification of staff knowledge gap	12	3
Written knowledge management strategy/policy	8	2

**Table 4: Challenges in knowledge management**

<b>Challenges in practicing KM</b>	<b>In %</b>	<b>Number</b>
Constant budget decline	88	22
Inadequate staff training	76	19
Lack of KM strategy	72	18
Insufficient Technology	68	17
Lack of incentives/rewards	60	15
Limited expertise in KM	56	14
A lack of knowledge sharing culture	56	14
A lack of cooperation among juniors and seniors	32	8

## **Major arguments...**

- Only 15 (60%) libraries claimed to be practicing KM & preferred to be called knowledge managers
- Of 15, 14 were South African University libraries
- Only 8 (32%) libraries owned KM projects
- However, all libraries had good reasons to practice KM and participated in the survey.
- Various challenges might be hampering the implementation of KM in most academic libraries

## **Conclusion**

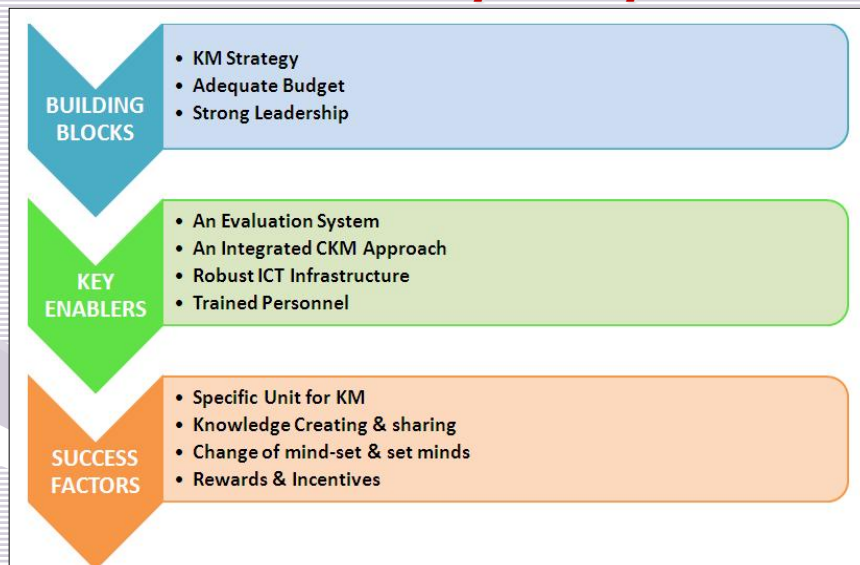
Being part and parcel of learning institutions, university libraries can play a key role in human, economic and national development. Therefore, library services need to be revamped and enhanced. KM is a way forward to survive and thrive for academic librarians. They need to buy into KM more seriously to increase their operational efficiency, prove their relevance and value to their parent institutions in realizing their overall mission and vision and consequently, contribute towards knowledge economy by providing the right information to the right customer at the right time and in the right format.



## Recommendations

- Formulation of a KM strategy
- Strong leadership
- Adequate budget
- KM priority for the parent university
- An integrated CKM approach
- Adequate ICT infrastructure
- Sufficient training in Digitization, Web 2.0 & Social Media applications
- Specific unit for KM
- Rewards and incentives
- Change of mind-set & set-minds

## A Framework for KM implementation in A University library



## References & Acknowledgements

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**Thank You**

**very much for Listening**

**Any questions or  
comments???**