Knowledge management in Indian corporate sector and role of library & information professionals.

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Abstract

Knowledge management (KM) is the process of transforming information and intellectual assets into enduring value. It connects people with the knowledge that they need to take action, when they need it. In the Corporate Sector, managing knowledge is considered key to achieving breakthrough competitive advantage (Jillinda J.Kidwell, Karen M Vander Linde, Sanda L. Johnson, 2000). The purpose of this study is to explore the role of library & information professionals in India's Knowledge based corporate. This study is supposed to study new roles of librarians for maximizing the value of knowledge in an intelligent organization. The paper uses a sample comprising 10 private sector organizations. The extent of role of Library professional in Knowledge Management practices was evaluated to asses the current and potential future role in , to find the way the library & information professionals can contribute more to knowledge management, study skills and competencies required for library & information professionals, challenges and problems of corporate knowledge management, make recommendations that will promote library professionals as economic development partners and major KM roles in Indian corporate sector. The paper shows that the role of Library professional in KM is favored by the majority of corporate in India but they are also concerned about library professional's reliability, loyalty, commitment and willingness to stay in the job and better people management skills etc. Although this research presents strong evidence regarding the KM in Indian corporate sector and role of library and Information professionals, the results should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations like the study uses a sample of ten private sector organizations and the findings may lack generalization. The paper tries to bring forth concern areas for KM in Indian private sector organizations and Role of library & information professionals in it.

Keywords: Knowledge management, library & information professional, Indian corporate sector, private sector.

1. Introduction

Knowledge is now being seen as the most important strategic resource in organizations, and the management of this knowledge is considered critical to organizational success. If organizations have to capitalize on the knowledge they possess, they have to understand how knowledge is created, shared, and used within the organization (M. Ipe, 2003).

Knowledge is critical for development, because everything we do depends on knowledge. Simply to live, we must transform the resources we have in to the things we need, and that takes knowledge. And if we want to live better tomorrow than today, if we want to raise our living standards as a household or as a country- and improve our health, better educate our children, and preserve our common environment-we must do more than simply transform more resources, for resources are limited. We must use those resources in ways that generate ever- higher returns to our efforts and investments. That, too, takes knowledge, and in ever-greater proportion to our resources (World Development Report 1998/99).

Knowledge is increasingly becoming an important asset in wealth creation and growth of economy. Several new jobs are being created by new knowledge-based industries. In fact, knowledge is now

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one of the major components for competitive advantage for an organisation. These knowledge assets reside in many different places such as: databases, knowledge bases, libraries and people's heads and are distributed through several channels sometimes one division of a big organization repeats work of another division simply because it did not keep track of, and make use of existing knowledge in other division. Libraries as major knowledge resource centers of business organizations need to know what the organization's corporate knowledge assets are and how to make effective use of these resources for organizations success(Kim, 1999)..

The new knowledge economy is in period of rapid change - a paradigm shift - for librarians and libraries. Librarians and information professionals are in a position to transform themselves into value-adding knowledge professionals. However, this will require a radical change in how they view their roles and jobs within knowledge-based organizations. It will require them to visualize a world of rapid change, instantaneous communications, and the transformation of organizations from those based on identifiable boundaries to networks of business relationships (Chase, 1998). This is one of the key challenges facing the professionals managing knowledge resources in the changing landscape of information in the corporate world.

It is shown that libraries are major contributors to the knowledge economy and a study commissioned by the British Library using a technique known as 'contingent valuation' shows that for every £1 of public funding the British Library receives annually, £4.40 is generated for the UK economy (British Library 2004). The public benefit of education and research and the contribution of libraries to this end have never been so clearly articulated. The role of libraries as a massive research and learning resource that could be better exploited if considered in the total knowledge context is also recognized through programmes such as The Wider Information and Library Issues Project (WILIP).

India is becoming a major global source of R&D; about 100 multinational corporations have already set up R&D centers in the country, leading to the deepening of technological and innovative capabilities among Indian firms. But even so, "India is still a relatively closed economy compared with other Asian economies," notes Carl Dahl man, co-author of the report titled "India and the Knowledge Economy: Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities". "India should increasingly tap into the rapidly growing stock of global knowledge through channels such as foreign direct investment, technology licensing, and so on, so that it can catch up to countries like China, where reforms have moved ahead much more rapidly"(Utz, A., & Dahlman, C. (2005).

An important part of India's innovation system is the diffusion of modern and more efficient technologies in all sectors of the economy. According to Dr. R.A. Mashelkar, Director General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of India, "India is already gaining international repute for its innovations in areas ranging from pharmaceuticals to software. IT will achieve even more as it improves the efficiency of public R&D, increase private R&D, and encourages greater university-industry linkages. It is leveraging traditional knowledge with modern science and exploiting public-private partnerships to support grassroots innovations which can improve the quality of life for the poor. An example is the Computer-Based Functional Literacy program, initiated by Tata Group to overcome illiteracy through innovative use of IT" (Utz, A., & Dahlman, C. 2005)

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Preceding the World Bank Knowledge for Development report and its recommendations by some eight years, was a report from the Island state of Singapore titled *Library 2000: Investing in a Learning Nation* (Singapore Ministry of Information and the Arts 1994) noted that the future belongs to countries whose people make the most productive use of information, knowledge and technology. Singapore had recognized that these were the key factors to economic success, not natural resources, of which she had very little.

As per Teleo's Indian Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises (MAKE) Report-Executive Summary (2006; 2010) growth of knowledge management in business enterprise in India is as follows:
• Many of the Indian MAKE leaders adopted their

corporate knowledge strategies during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Although starting several years after pioneering Western companies, Indian-based organizations have been very successful at benchmarking and transferring knowledge best practices found in Asian, European and North American MAKE Winners.

Today, only a few Indian MAKE leaders have reached parity with their Western MAKE counterparts – most Indian organizations still lag regional and global MAKE leaders.

- Indian MAKE leaders are focusing on intellectual property, intellectual assets and brands, but as a rule still do not have in place enterprise-wide intellectual capital management strategies.
- Advanced IT-enabled collaborative knowledge sharing tools are now a core competency for MAKE Winners. It appears, however, that Indian, Asian and North American MAKE leaders are more 'innovative' in applying new Internet-based tools to effectively share and reuse knowledge in an increasingly global workplace.
- European and North American MAKE Winners have improved their scores in managing customer knowledge. Many Indian organizations continue to fall well below the MAKE leaders' standards. In order to move into higher value-adding product/service segments, Indian enterprises must focus on this important knowledge performance dimension.

In educational institutes, librarians were traditionally entrusted with the responsibility of information management. Protecting against information overload has been one of their primary functions & will remain so even after the educational institutes' transformation into knowledge centers. In fact a large chunk of consultants in the field of KM have been librarians in the past (Bapna, Bansal, 2011). So these librarians now need to move on merely from information support role to the center stage to collaborate and play a pro-active role in the emerging knowledge society.

In summation, India is very well positioned to take advantage of the knowledge revolution to accelerate growth and competitiveness and improve the welfare of its citizens, and should continue to leverage its strengths to become a leader in knowledge creation and use. In the twenty-first century, India will be judged by the extent to which it lays down the appropriate "rules of the game" that will enable it to marshall its human resources, strengths in innovation, and global niches in IT to improve overall economic and social development and transform itself into a knowledge-driven economy (Utz, A., & Dahlman, C.2005).

India is becoming a major global source of Research &Development (R&D) and about 100 multinational corporations have already set up R&D centers in the country, leading to the deepening of technological and innovative capabilities among Indian firms. But even so, "India is still a relatively closed economy compared with other Asian economies," notes Carl Dahl man, co-author of the report titled "India and the Knowledge Economy: Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities". "India should increasingly tap into the rapidly growing stock of global knowledge through channels such as foreign direct investment, technology licensing, and so on, so that it can catch up to countries like China, where reforms have moved ahead much more rapidly"(Utz, A., & Dahlman, C. 2005).

2. Objectives

The following objectives have been set for the present research :

1. To asses the current and potential future role of the library & information professionals in managing knowledge resources in corporate environment.
2. To find out what way library & information professionals can contribute more to knowledge management in the Indian corporate sector;
3. To study skills and competencies required for library & information professionals proactive role in corporate knowledge management;
4. To identify key elements in the Library & information profession's response to the challenges and problems of corporate knowledge management , and in particular the type of support that might be required in order for the profession to realise its perceived role and potential within the knowledge economy arena.
5. To make recommendations that will promote library professionals as economic development partners.

3.   Research methodology

This study employed qualitative and interpretive method including an online survey and text –based survey of select libraries/KM Divisions representing large corporations across 10 different knowledge based industries in India. Respondents include both managers and heads of library and information services/KM divisions of these organizations.

3.1 Sample

This study is limited to the role of library & information professionals in corporate sector of India and covers only selected sample of 10 corporates of India. The companies selected are:

Bharati Airtel,
Ranbaxy,
Infosys,
Wipro,
Tata Consultancy Services (TCS),
ICICI Bank,
The Energy Research Institute (TERI),
Informatics,
Reliance Industries Limited (RIL),
Tata Steel.

3.2 Sampling technique

An online survey and text –based survey of select KM Units/libraries representing large corporations across 10 different knowledge based industries conducted in India.

4.   Results and discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of library & information professionals in India's Knowledge based corporate. This study is supposed to study new roles of librarians for maximizing the value of knowledge in an intelligent organization. The study will explore the developments in knowledge economy from the viewpoint of knowledge management perspective.

Efforts were made to identify the corporate which were actively involved in knowledge management activities. Therefore based on these criteria, the ten companies, which are most inclined towards the implementation of knowledge management practices were covered. Another criteria kept in mind were As per Teleo's Indian Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises (MAKE) most of these corporate awarded or nominated for the Award by MAKE and their adequate ongoing R&D activities within the organisation requiring potential role of library and information professionals.

4.1 Current and potential future role of the Library & Information professionals and skills of Library professionals

Library professional play very crucial role in knowledge management in corporate sector. To know from the corporate whether they employ library professional or not and whether they know about Current and potential future role of KM skills of these professionals or not. Their response is presented in the table 1 below:

Table-1

Does your company employ Library & Information Professionals and know their Current and potential future KM skills?	Responses	%age
Yes	7	70
No	3	30
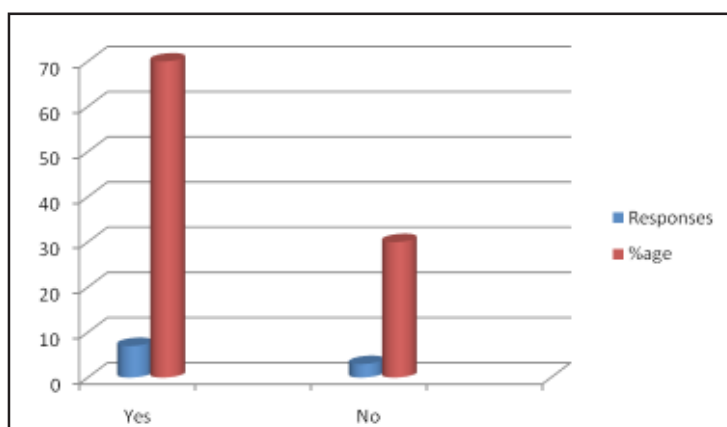
Fig. 1

It is observed that knowledge management divisions of corporate are dominated by IT professional whereas library professionals are trained in knowledge acquisition, storage, retrieval and dissemination. The response from the corporate shows that 7 (70%) of corporates employed library professionals and are very well aware of the Current and potential future role of Library & Information Professionals KM skills. Only 3(30%) of the corporate are not employing library professional as they are not fully aware about the skills of the library professionals.

So the Library professionals Current and potential future role in KM is favored mostly by the corporate sector in India.

4.2 Library professionals personal qualities and improvement required to contribute effectively in KM

Corporate have different beliefs and prejudice about the role of library professionals in KM so their perception about some personal traits, skills etc of library professionals taken from them. The responses received from all the corporate presented in Table 2 below :

Table-2 :

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Responses	Total
Be reliable be Loyal	50%	0%	20%	0%	30%	10	100%
Be committed to the job	50%	0%	20%	0%	30%	10	100%
Be willing to stay longer in the job	50%	0%	20%	0%	30%	10	100%
Resist change	50%	0%	20%	0%	30%	10	100%
Be a good example for others	50%	10%	20%	0%	20%	10	100%
Have problems with technology	70%	10%	20%	0%	0%	10	100%
Be productive	50%	0%	10%	10%	30%	10	100%
Fit in with organisation	50%	0%	10%	10%	30%	10	100%
Have better people skills	50%	0%	10%	0%	40%	10	100%
Be less flexible	70%	10%	20%	0%	0%	10	100%
Be less willing to train	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%	10	100%
Be less promotable	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%	10	100%
Have lower expectations	70%	0%	10%	0%	20%	10	100%
Be difficult to train	80%	0%	20%	0%	0%	10	100%
Be better performers	40%	0%	20%	0%	40%	10	100%
Offer better return on investment	40%	0%	10%	0%	50%	10	100%
Be have less creative	70%	10%	20%	0%	0%	10	100%
higher levels of stress	50%	0%	10%	0%	40%	10	100%
Be less motivated	70%	10%	20%	0%	0%	10	100%

It is viewed from the table that as far as reliability, loyalty, commitment and willingness to stay in the job of the library professional are concerned 5 (50%) of the corporate strongly disagree 2(20%) corporate are uncertain but 3 (30%) corporate strongly agree with the view.

Regarding resist to change of the library professional concerned 5 (50%) strongly disagree, followed by 2(20%) are uncertain and 2(20%) are strongly agree with view and remaining 1(10%) is disagree with view.

As far as be a good example to others is concerned 5(50%) strongly disagree followed by 2(20%) are uncertain followed by 2(20%) are strongly agree and remaining 1(10%) agree with the view.

Regarding the view that library professionals have problems with technology, be less motivated, be less flexible concerned 7(70%) corporate strongly disagree followed by 2(20%) are uncertain with the view and remaining 1(10%) disagree with view.

The view regarding library professionals be productive and fit in with organization concerned 5(50%) corporate strongly disagree followed by 3(30%) strongly agree with view and 1(10%) agree with the view and remaining 1(10%) uncertain about the view.

Regarding the library professional having better people skills and have higher levels of stress is concerned 5(50%) corporate strongly disagree followed by 4(40%) strongly agree with the view and remaining 1 (10%) is uncertain about the view.

Regarding the view be less willing to train and be less promotable is concerned 7(70%) strongly disagree with the view followed by 2(20%) disagree and remaining 1 (10%) uncertain about the view.

Regarding the view that library professionals have lower expectations is concerned 7(70%) corporate are strongly disagree followed by 2(20%) strongly agree and remaining 1 (10%) uncertain about the view.

Regarding the view be difficult to train is concerned 8 (80%) corporate strongly disagree followed by 2 (20%) are uncertain about the view.

The view that library professionals be better performer is concerned 4(40%) corporate strongly disagree followed by 4 (40%) strongly agree and the remaining 2 (20%) are uncertain about the view.

The library professionals offer better return on investment view is strongly agreed by 5 (50%) corporate followed by strongly disagree by 4(40%) corporate and remaining 1(10%) corporate is uncertain about the view.

The view that library professional be less creative is strongly disagreed by 7(70%) of the corporate followed by 2(20%) corporate uncertain and remaining 1(10%) is disagree with view.

So the majority of the corporate strongly disagree that library professionals have problems with technology, have lower expectations ,be less motivated, be less flexible, less willing to train, less creative and be less promotable and difficult to train. They also believe that library professionals can offer better return on investment. But they are also concerned about library professional's reliability, loyalty, commitment and willingness to stay in the job and better people skills, have higher level of stress and be productive and fit in the corporate sector knowledge management activity most of them strongly disagree.

So it can be said that if the reliability, loyalty, commitment and willingness to stay in the job and to become good example to others, have higher level of stress and be productive and fit in the corporate sector knowledge management activity can be improved by the library professionals. So they can contribute more effectively to KM in the Indian corporate sector.

4.3 Training required for KM competencies of Library professionals and promotions

Training is an ongoing process in any developing organization. Corporate views were taken about the Library professionals training to work efficiently in KM units of their organization. The responses received from all the corporate presented in the Table 3a below:

Table-3 :

| Do you offer Library professionals training to work efficiently in KM units	Responses	%age
Yes	5	50
No	5	35

Table-3a :
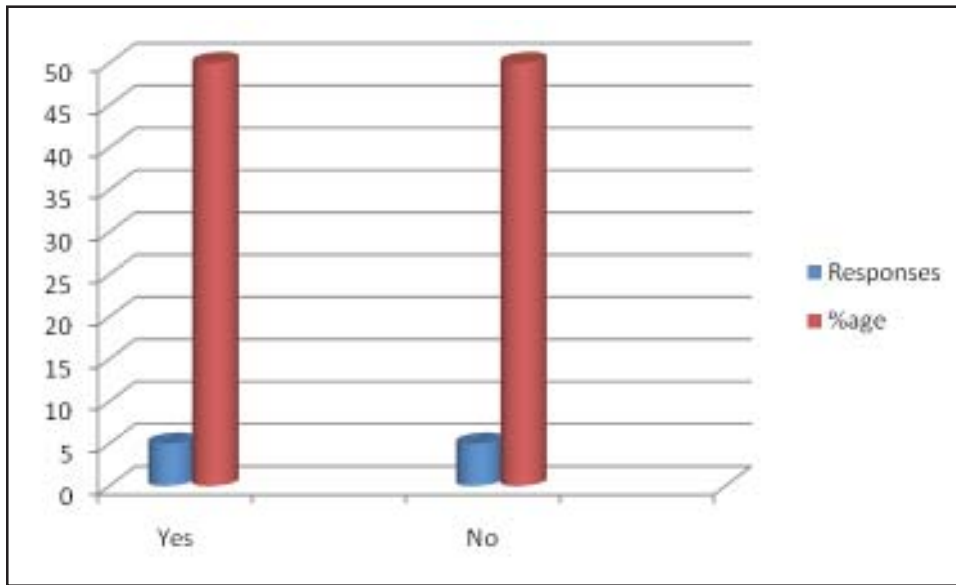
The table 3a shows that 5 (50%) corporate offer training to library professionals to work efficiently in KM work but 5(50%) corporate do not offer training to library professionals.

Promotions and other incentives keep the employee motivated to their work and perform better. Corporate views taken about whether they do offer promotion to library professionals or not. The responses received from all the corporate presented in the Table 3b below:

Do you offer promotions to Library professionals	Responses	%age
Yes	4	40
No	6	60

Table-3b :
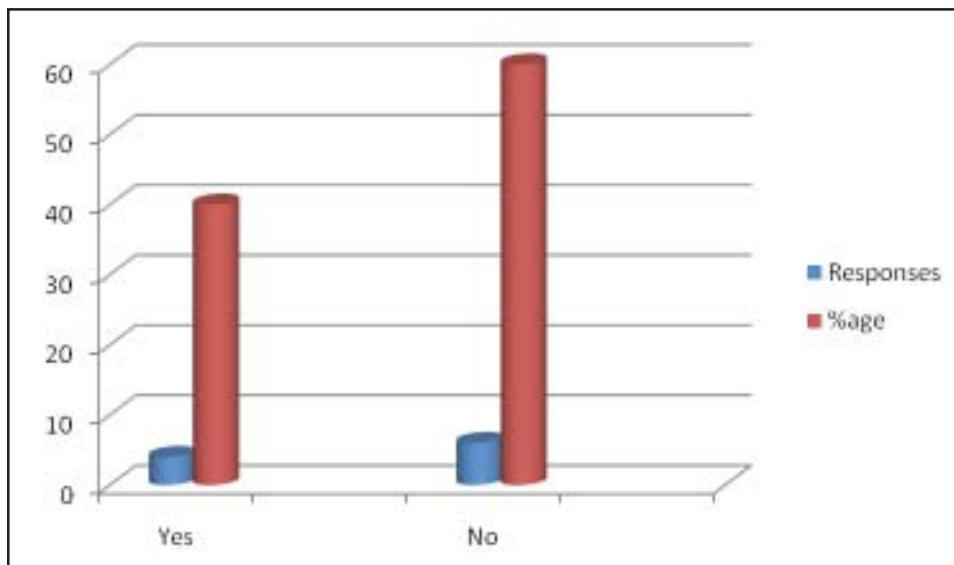
Regarding promotion and other incentives Table 3b shows that 4 (40%) corporate give promotion and other incentives to library professionals whereas 6(60%) corporate do not give promotion and other benefits to library professionals.

So the views of the corporate equally divided about training of library professionals and most of the corporate are not in favor of promotion and incentives to library professionals. So regular training required for library professional to improve competencies and promotions and incentives should be given them to motivate them for proactive role in KM.

4.4 Problems and challenges of corporate KM tools

Major problems faced by the KM staff in using KM tools for knowledge management. The responses received from all the corporate on this aspect shown in Table 4 below:

Table-4 :

Problems in using KM tools	Responses	%age
Lack of training	1	10
System too much complicated	1	10
Lack of identification of the proper KM tools	3	30
Lack of user uptake due to insufficient communication	0	0.00
Every day use did not integrate in to normal working practice	2	20
unsuccessful due to technical problems	1	10
If any other please specify	2	20
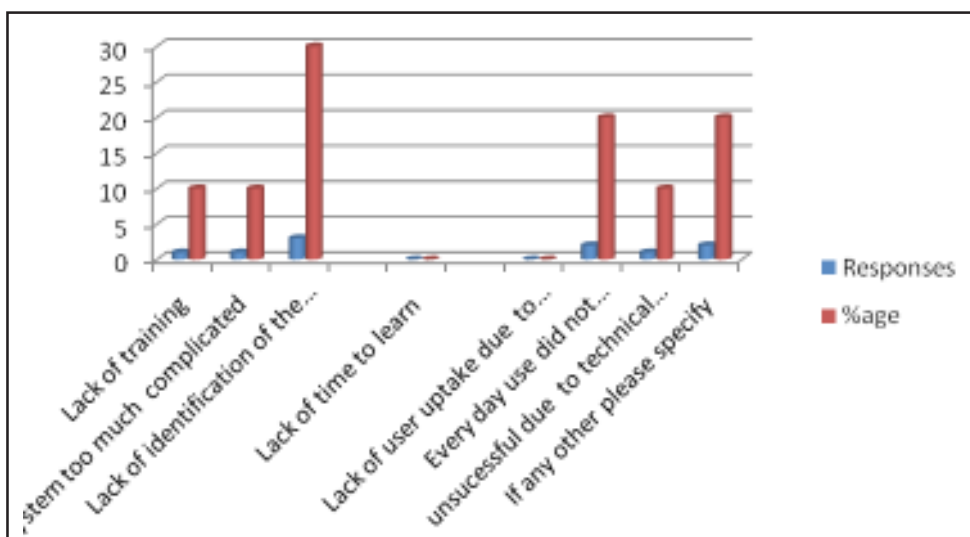
Fig. 1

As for as problems faced by the KM staff in using KM tools for Knowledge Management lack of identification of the proper KM tools is major problem faced by 3 (30%) corporate followed by everyday use did not integrate in to normal working practice by 2(20%) and other specific reason by 2 (20%) like nature of knowledge is versatile & complex, followed by 1 (10%) each lack of training, 1(10%) system too much complicated and 1(10%) unsuccessful due to technical problems. It is evident that lack of identification of the proper tools is major problem faced by the KM staff in Indian corporate sector followed by everyday use did not integrate in to normal working practice and followed by other specific reason like nature of knowledge is versatile & complex.

So identifying these key elements may be the Library & information profession's response to the

challenges and problems of corporate knowledge management, and in particular the type of support that might be required in order for the profession to realise its perceived role and potential within the knowledge economy arena.

4.5 Major KM roles

Corporate designate various roles related to the different tasks of KM work to KM team. The responses received from all the corporate on this aspect shown in Table 5 below:

Table-5 :

Name	Role
Wipro	1)KM portal management 2) Organize and capture know how
Infosys	1) Applications, Portals, Content Management, Document Management, Enterprise Application Integration, Security and Workflow
TCS	Document management system, workflow applications, mail and messaging and portals, etc.
RIL	To capture & organize the company know- how in shareable and searchable way
ICICI	1) Office Automation 2) Wise Guy" Knowledge Management Portal
Bharati	Capturing, sharing and replicating and institutionalisation of best practices individual knowledge was converted into organisational knowledge, Managing 'K-Map', which reflected our repository structure
TERI	organizing knowledge resources at individual and organizational level with three level organizational taxonomy to classify resource in sectors, thematic areas, and keywords
Ranbaxy	delivering value to its stakeholders constantly inspires its people to innovate, achieve excellence and set new global benchmarks
Tata steel	To organize and transform the captured knowledge, and to facilitate its usage at right place and in right time.
Informatics	promoting e-information usage culture in the academic and corporate world

The table shows that the major KM roles are KM portal management, document management, content management, workflow applications, enterprise application integration, capture & organize know-how, repository management, managing KM resources at individual and organization level, delivering value to stake holders, consistently inspire people to innovate and set global benchmarks, organize and transform the captured knowledge and facilitate usage, promoting e-information culture, etc.

So library professionals need better expertise in KM portal Management, content management, workflow applications, enterprise application integration, capture & organize know-how, managing KM resources at individual and organization level, delivering value to stake holders, consistently inspire

people to innovate and set global benchmarks, organize and transform the captured knowledge and facilitate usage, promoting e-information culture, etc to become economic development partners.

● The role of Library professional in KM is favored by the majority of corporate in India. They like the qualities of library professional's motivation, no resistance to change, not having problems with technology, flexibility, willingness to get trained, promotable, not difficult to train, not having lower expectation, not less creative and offer better return on investment. But the majority of Library professionals reliability, loyalty, commitment and willingness to stay in the

job, to become good example to others, better people skills, have higher level of stress and be productive and fit in the corporate sector knowledge management activity is questionable which need immediate improvement.

- The major KM roles in Indian corporate sector are KM portal management, document management, content management, workflow applications, enterprise application integration, capture & organize know-how, repository management, managing KM resources at individual and organization level, delivering value to stake holders, consistently inspire people to innovate and set global benchmarks, organize and transform the captured knowledge and facilitate usage, promoting e-information culture, etc.

- It is evident that lack of identification of the proper tools is major problem faced by the KM staff in Indian corporate sector followed by everyday use did not integrate in to normal working practice.

5.   Conclusion & recommendations

So it can be said from the above discussion that Library & Information Professionals can play a major role in knowledge economy in India. This is a great opportunity for library professionals to use their skills in managing knowledge for growth as they are doing it in managing information and knowledge since a long time (Shahid, 2009). They only need to tone up their skills to contribute in knowledge economy and improve as well as learn some new skills to work efficiently in corporate sector in India.

The library professionals need to get themselves re-skilled in the KM portal management, content management, workflow applications, enterprise

application integration, capture & organize know-how, repository management, managing KM resources at individual and organization level, delivering value to stake holders, consistently inspire people to innovate and set global benchmarks, organize and transform the captured knowledge and facilitate usage, promoting e-information culture, etc. some of the skills like document management, repository management and content management is part of their day today work.

Library professionals reliability, loyalty, commitment and willingness to stay in the job, to become good example to others, better people skills, have higher level of stress and be productive and fit in the corporate sector knowledge management activity is questionable which need immediate improvement.

6.   Limitations of the study

Though this research presents strong evidence regarding the Knowledge Management in Indian corporate sector and role of library and Information professionals, the results should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations.

The study may suffer from potential response bias associated with the single informant and the single technique of data collection used. Data collection using survey technique may have included errors. Though great care was taken to ensure that the respondents understood the statements in the questionnaire exactly as the researcher desired them to be understood. However, error due to misunderstanding or simply data entry cannot be ruled out.

This study used responses of senior managers and other KM executives covering a variety of job functions, assuming that their judgments regarding KM Practices and role of Library professionals are objective. However, an over-reporting or under-reporting of certain phenomena may occur as a result of the respondent's job satisfaction or personal and role characteristics (Bagozzi, Philips & Yi 1991).

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