Information Management as a tool for organizational learning in academic libraries
Summarized Research Proposal

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Abstract

In this paper, I briefly present my doctoral thesis research proposal. Recognizing that information has long been an important asset for any organization, I wish to explore in depth the management and use of information in contemporary information-intensive organizations such as academic libraries. Additionally, this research proposal emerges out of recognition that the academic library is a dynamic, living information and knowledge creation organization. Fulfillment of this potential requires that information processes are integrated in the academic library's daily work life in order to contribute to organizational learning. However, the literature confirms that while academic library managers manage and use information as a commodity, they do not manage and use it as an asset for their organization which could lead to organizational learning. Through a systems thinking approach and drawing on the theories of information management, organizational knowledge creation and organizational learning, this interpretive ethnographic research study wishes to explore the perceptions of academic library managers regarding the management and use of information for the better operation and development of their organization. This research proposal serves as a starting point for an exploratory research study on Information Management that can contribute to organizational learning in academic library organizations.

Key words: information management, information, organizational knowledge creation, organizational learning, academic libraries.

Introduction, Research Setting, Problem Statement

Information has long been an important asset for any organization. However, nowadays the work environment in organizations is more complicated due to the information overload that employees experience on a daily basis (Savolainen, 2007). In addition, organizations are more interconnected, human resources are more distributed, and technological advances are disruptive and ubiquitous. These conditions offer opportunities to be connected 24/7 and, thereby, increase the pace of information flow and workflow of information practices. The information overwhelm requires employees' swift attention, analysis, and action within a limited time.

Likewise, in information-intensive organizations, such as academic libraries, the library becomes a dynamic living information and knowledge creation organization. The evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and specifically the technological advances within academia such as online courses, virtual classrooms, and distance learning have changed the traditional role of the academic library and, therefore, the traditional role of academic librarians and academic library managers (Bernsmann and Croll, 2013). At the same time, the digital age and the new information economy have brought radical changes to library organizations. The new roles require that the library is an information and knowledge creation center for both its library users and its library employees (Ron, 2001).

Amidst these changing circumstances, academic library managers oftentimes face complex situations. In order to address and overcome these challenges, the academic library managers can use the available information, manage it and learn from it. In other words, an information provision organization, such as a library, can leverage its information both internally in the organization and externally to their users and stakeholders. Information Management (IM) can be used in a library to value the organization's intangible assets in order to best leverage knowledge inwards and outwards (Choo, 2002). The internal information can be integrated in the daily library work life in order to contribute to organizational learning. It can be used in order to expand learning throughout facilitation of information sharing and knowledge creation through an integrated approach to Information Management (Mirijamdotter and Somerville, 2014b).

In response, Information Management can help information-intensive organizations, such as academic libraries, manage their information and realize its potential in a way that the intended end-users know it exists, can understand it, as well as access and apply it. When information is managed effectively, it facilitates collaboration among employees, and advances organization learning and decision making based on that information (Mirijamdotter and Somerville, 2014a). IM can also lead to improvements in the way employees use the captured information, when facilitated by enabling organizational systems, to engage in knowledge ac-

tivities (Somerville and Chatzipanagiotou, 2015; Elsevier, 2015; Mirijamdotter and Somerville, 2014b).

Information Management integrates people, processes, technology and content. It starts with the collection and management of both physical and electronic information of organizations, and the dissemination of this information to the interested parties by using digital technologies and information systems. And, it includes all systems and processes within an organization that are used or can be used for the creation and use of corporate information with the aim of developing or operating the organization more efficiently (Chatzipanagiotou, 2016; Business Dictionary, 2015; Gartner, 2013).

What I want to study/Identifying the gap

A thorough search of the literature confirms that while academic library managers manage and use information as a commodity, they do not manage and use it as an asset for their organization which could lead to organizational learning (Saunders, 2015; American Library Association, 2014; Fenner, 2002; Townley, 2001; Bollinger and Smith, 2001). There is little awareness and engagement in the profession of academic librarians and academic library managers with the idea of using information, and therefore IM, for themselves and for their organization. Academic librarians and academic library managers have been taught to treat information mainly as a commodity, meaning a product or a service of value. That is, the information that comes out of the library's collection, and which the librarians offer to the users. But, information is not only a commodity. Information is also an asset which value can be recognized and managed within the library organization itself (Bollinger and Smith, 2001). It's the information that comes out of the librarians' professional knowledge, and which can be used for the benefit of the organization. (The aforementioned statement is still under study).

So, I would like to conduct an interpretive ethnographic research to explore the perceptions of information-intensive organizations' managers about information and Information Management, and how they use and manage information for better operating and developing their organization.

Research Questions

How do managers in information-intensive organizations, such as academic libraries, manage and use information for better operating and developing their organization?

The aforementioned main research question can be broken into the following sub-questions:

- How do academic library managers perceive the role of information within their organizations - do they perceive information both as a commodity and an asset -?
- How do academic library managers manage and use information?

- How do academic library managers perceive the role of Information Management (IM) within their organizations?
- How do academic library managers, through the management and use of information, improve their organizational learning?

Aims & Objectives

To explore and acquire knowledge about the existing situation regarding the management and use of information by academic library managers within their organization. More specifically:

- To explore and learn how academic library managers manage and use information in the academic library.
- To explore and learn whether academic library managers use information only as a commodity or both as a commodity and an asset?
- To explore and learn whether academic library managers use Information Management in the academic library.
- To explore and learn whether academic library managers have integrated Information Management in their everyday work life.
- To explore and learn if academic library managers believe that Information Management can contribute to co-creating organizational learning.
- To explore and learn if academic library managers improve their organizational learning by using Information Management.

Topic Justification

The significance of the topic derives from the fact that academic libraries have undoubtedly an important role in education and research (Saunders, 2015; Oakleaf, 2010; Virkus and Metsar, 2004; Commission of the European Communities, 2003). They serve as the core of universities and contribute actively in the support of teaching, learning, research and science appliance (American Library Association, 2016; Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010). Especially nowadays that the use of technological advances within academia such as online courses, virtual classrooms, and distance learning have increased. To continue their pivotal role in higher education, academic libraries must continue to use their available resources in the best possible way, engage themselves in knowledge activities in order to learn, and, therefore, change through learning for anticipating the changing needs and requirements.

Additionally, my background as an academic librarian added to my academic interests which are informed by my concern in improving local situations and generating organizational learning through application of innovative and inclusive methodologies. Organizational information and management is also of great interest to me, as I have seen the effect of poor information exchange and, hence, inadequate knowledge creation in contemporary higher education workplaces such as

academic libraries. Therefore, through my doctoral study, I will try to contribute to refine methodological processes for accelerating organizational responsiveness and catalyzing technological resiliency within evolving workplace and research environments.

Review of the Literature
The Guiding Framework of the literature will include a study on:
1. Systems Thinking approach
2. Organizations
3. Academic Libraries as a type of organization
4. Information
5. Knowledge - Knowledge Creation - Knowing
6. Learning
7. Information Management and its role in Academic Libraries Organizations
8. Information Management and ICTs
9. Information Management and Knowledge Management
10. Organizational Learning
11. Organizational Learning in Academic Libraries
12. Information - Information Management - Organizational Learning
13. Learning Organization

Methodology

This doctoral thesis adopts the interpretive philosophical paradigm which reflects my stance as a researcher. Interpretivism implies that reality is socially constituted and can be approached and understood through the meanings people give to the phenomena. So, the interpretive research tradition is chosen because it can contribute to my better understanding of the academic library managers' perceptions of the current management and use of information within their organization. This knowledge will provide a foundation for appreciating the co-creation of organizational learning through information management.

Additionally, I embrace the focused or short-term ethnographic research approach because I aim at exploring in depth the academic library managers' perspectives of the management and use of information within their organizations (Pink and Morgan, 2013; Randall, Harper and Rouncefield, 2007; Knoblaugh, 2005). I argue that short-term ethnography is inspired by traditional ethnography and it is an alternative way to apply ethnographic studies in order to understand people and the environment in which they live or work in. The chosen techniques for the collection of data in this doctoral research study are: participant observation, interviews, and documentation. I choose these techniques because I believe they are the most appropriate for providing me with rich and meaningful data.

For the analysis of the data I will apply the thematic analysis as described by Lichtman (2013) because I believe it provides a systematic way to analyze and interpret data which leads to better understanding the ethnographic research study.

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