



Why Special Libraries Are the Right Places to Host a Knowledge Management Center

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management as a business concept has been applied to organizations, enterprises and institutions. The term *knowledge management* is the modern expression of what special libraries have been doing in the course of their history: they gather and distribute information and knowledge created in the parent organization and they connect people together. Generally, they execute traditional tasks differently with a shift to less strict hierarchical structures.

There are characteristics and services which distinguish special libraries from other types of libraries. The competencies of special librarians as defined by the Special Libraries Association are increasingly demanding. Knowledge management gives them a unique opportunity to prove that they provide value-added services to the parent organization.

By becoming the knowledge management center, the special library expands its capabilities. Special libraries are the pertinent places to host and operate it for the following reasons:

1. *Putting knowledge to work*, the motto of the SLA in 1915, is the strongest argument to advocate our statement.
2. From their mission, special libraries endorse innovative activities in order to thrive and align with the objectives and business strategy of the parent institution which chases novel projects to stay competitive in the marketplace.
3. Special libraries encourage the attitude of team work. The KM center is a collective activity as it involves several business units.
4. Codification and organization are basic attributes of the KM system.

Organizing the plethora of data and information in an understandable manner is a core activity of special libraries.

5. Special librarians are experts to capture, store, maintain, preserve, distribute, and retrieve data from internal resources. They combine the internally-created knowledge and intellectual capital with external resources.
6. For years, computers and technologies are indispensable tools for libraries. The KM center is built on a capable and searchable computer system which facilitates knowledge exchange and sharing.
7. Information professionals provide informal training to use the library's resources. The KM system requires trainers to instruct the stakeholders how to contribute with their knowledge and re-use it.
8. The fundamental point of the library profession is information sharing. The main characteristic of KM is knowledge sharing.
9. The driving force of the KM center is people. Special libraries, such as the ancient Athenian Agora, act as mediators and bridges which connect people with information and contribute to the knowledge exchange.
10. Libraries have a long tradition in networking with peers. The KM center underpins cooperation and networking enterprise-wide.
11. Information and knowledge have always been the province of librarians. Special libraries have historically been associated with knowledge-based enterprises.

The success of the KM initiative predominantly depends on the support by the upper management and it is based on the devotion and enthusiastic contribution of all staff, including the library personnel, within a supportive environment.