

## Guest Editorial

Knowledge sharing (KS) is of vital importance to organisations, enabling them to develop skills and competences, increase value and sustain their competitive advantage. Knowledge is a firm's most valuable resource because it embodies intangible assets, routines, and creative processes that are difficult to imitate. The knowledge management (KM) literature offers two key insights into how information is shared. The first view, called formalised KS, considers knowledge as a collectable, storable and retrievable end product. Thus, organisational knowledge can be packaged and transferred through structured and formal KS routines. The second view, called informal KS, suggests knowledge is tacit, socially constructed and collectively held by the individuals throughout the organisation. Sharing tacit knowledge requires unstructured, face-to-face, and personalised exchange practices. These complementary practices are important.

The terms knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer are often used interchangeably. Recent research on knowledge transfer "has adopted a 'source and recipient' generic model", in contrast with research on KS that has emphasised the collective character of knowledge emerging from interaction and dialogue among individuals. Drawing on existing research, KS is considered as a reciprocal process of knowledge exchange. It is a fragile process. It seems unreasonable that individuals contribute their knowledge, effort and time, when they can easily free-ride on what others have contributed. There are two dimensions of knowledge crucial for distinguishing knowledge characteristics: degree of articulation and degree of aggregation. KS is important for developing aggregated collective forms of knowledge. The distinction between internal and external KS emphasises the relationship between the individuals involved in the KS process.

Knowledge that can be articulated and codified can be documented more easily than non-codifiable knowledge. Documentation of knowledge is important when considering transferability of knowledge. In terms

of the degree of aggregation, individual and collective forms of knowledge can be identified. That is, knowledge may be held by one person or embedded in groups of people. It has been shown that collective knowledge emerges out of interaction and dialogue between group members. Collective knowledge at the group level seems to be highly relevant to organisations to achieve sustainable advantages. Firms have been introducing interdisciplinary work groups in which people share their knowledge and expertise in order to cope with complex tasks in the workplace. Hence, KS is a prerequisite for developing valuable collective forms of knowledge. There are differences between KS within and between teams on internal and external KS.

Many studies have suggested that KS is a prerequisite for developing new technologies and products. The ability of an organisation's members to combine and exchange knowledge determines the rate at which new products and services are introduced. Moreover, it has been highlighted that the ability to share knowledge between units contributes significantly to the organisational performance of firms. Performance can be enhanced, when people communicate information, best practices, lessons learned, experiences, insights, as well as common and uncommon sense. Individuals share knowledge through more or less intense interaction. Trust in management results in higher levels of cooperation and thus, individuals are more willing to share knowledge and consequently performance increases. Trusting relationships lead to greater knowledge exchange. Empirical research suggests that individual cooperation is crucial to KS. Interpersonal KS and learning are more likely to occur in trusting relationships, since individuals are more willing to provide useful knowledge.

This Special Issue of *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology* on Knowledge Sharing attempts to present some of the places where it is used and method of accessibility to KS activities. The issue contains five papers contributed by experienced LIS professionals. In the paper by Natarajan the different

types of KS like professional knowledge, coordinating knowledge, object-based knowledge and know-how are discussed. A modular approach for Intranet has been explained with the perspectives of managing Intranet through cyclical activity. Kumaresan has elaborated the importance of web-based KS and management opportunities in large organisations and institutions and the concept of electronic learning (e-learning) in developing countries. Ramesh Babu and Gopalakrishnan have emphasised that the KS research has moved to an organisational learning perspective. Indeed, experience and research suggest that successful KS involves extended learning processes rather than simple communication processes, as ideas related to development and innovation need. Arun enunciated that the e-governance is based on knowledge management system, which is built on KM cycle of knowledge capturing, KS, knowledge enhancing, and knowledge preserving. He further states that few popular models of e-governance use a concept of "knowledge centres" to share knowledge. The digital library requires searching, sorting, and knowledge management strategies for maintaining/updating the resources. Anuradha Ravi in her paper has emphasised the importance of documentation and KM-based services to a variety of users, especially the scientists

working in R&D organisations, and how the technical communicators can utilise their inherent skills for communication to the development of KM systems in R&D organisations.

In the KM era, it is important and essential to understand the concept of KS in the e-environment as the information communication technology applications are encapsulating every activity in all the fields. KS in e-environment stresses the need for standards and interoperability of the data being stored to the requirement of the information society in the country. The papers contributed by the learned authors clearly indicate that there is an immediate need for the revolutionary changes that are taking place in the field of KM. Even the report of the National Knowledge Commission has recommended the sharing of information resources in India. It is hoped that the future is in the hands of the people who aspires to share knowledge with everyone.

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