Knowledge Production by Librarians In Malaysia For Evidence-Based Librarianship

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Abstract: Information professional such as librarians do contribute towards knowledge production as an evidence-based librarianship. This paper describes how this notion is implemented. A study was carried out with the purpose of analyzing the amount of scholarly communication produced by librarians in a number of selected Research Universities in Malaysia. The data was collected using e-survey distributed to the librarians. This study calculates the amount of knowledge production produced by librarians in particular subject area. It also reviews the interest pattern of librarians in information and knowledge sharing. This study focuses on growth patterns, knowledge accumulation, documentary scatter and knowledge production. Analysis was based on statistical analysis, review and general classification of subjects using questionnaires as an instrument of analysis. Generally in Malaysia, knowledge production is still far behind. Number of factors contributes to this issue such as awareness and nature of work. Total of articles indicated from the results shows that only few librarians interested to actively participate in creating knowledge production to support the evidence-based librarianship.

1. Introduction

Knowledge production is not a new term in any profession. Some experts use the term scholarly communication to indicate about knowledge production. In general, scholarly communication is the creation, transformation, dissemination and preservation of knowledge related to teaching, research and scholarly endeavors (Kumar, S., Singh, S., & Karisiddappa, C. 2011). Knowledge production is a platform to share research, ideas, and latest issues related to specific fields of interest. In terms of librarianship, the shift from traditional library to the digital one marks the expansion of librarians' role. The present

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librarians have to be engaged not only in managing knowledge but also in producing information. This statement is especially true when talking about sustaining the relevancy of library and librarians. Gordon (2004) stated that librarians need to realize that one of the ways to maintain the integrity of their profession is through the creation of a robust body of professional literature.

Accordingly, knowledge production is one of the best solutions to maintain librarian profession in digital ages. The massive amount of both current and existed librarianship knowledge also needs to be documented to ascertain continuous knowledge sharing among librarians. Haddow (1997) as cited by Koufogiannakis and Crumley (2006), it is difficult to develop librarian profession if librarians fail to build a body of knowledge for example evidence base. Shafiqu, F. &Mahmood, K (2010) added librarians should actively seek to address these criticisms by adding their research to the growing body of evidence. This responsibility also falls to other information professionals at large. It is essential for librarians and other information professionals to be aware that they are now dealing with more competitions and therefore, the demand for these professionals to actively produce is definitely expected.Nevertheless, researchers and practitioners may not be in parallel direction. Previous studies by A.R. Blick (1984), McClure (1989), Turner (2002), Powell et al. (2002), Haddow and Harvey (2003)and, Haddow and Klobas (2004) on research activities by librarians as cited by Kim (2005) are strongly in agreement that there is still a gap that exists between research and practice.

2. Background of Research University In Malaysia

In Malaysia, public universities or government supported universities are categorized into three groups: Research Universities, Focused Universities (which focus more on technical, education, management or defense) and Comprehensive Universities (which offer a variety of courses and fields of study). There are five universities that have been designated as Research Universities namely university Malaya (University of Malaya), Universiti Sains Malaysia (University Science of Malaysia), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia), Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. These universities are actively engaged in the research field to further discover and expand the frontiers of knowledge concerning their expertise. Accordingly, as presented by the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in the parliament last year, the Malaysian Government has allocated RM600mil from the Budget 2013 for this Research Universities (RU). This budget will help researchers to conduct high-impact research especially in strategic fields such as nano technology, automotive, biotechnology and aerospace (The Star, 2012). Thus, it will be a catalyst for the universities to move forward in research, innovation and commercialization. The roles of information professionals in RU, hence, magnified considerably.

3. Objective
How big is the impact of scholarly communication or knowledge production in our life as a librarian and information professional Hessels& Van-Lente (2008) described knowledge production as an important lesson for our review is that in investigating changes in contemporary science systems, one should take into account the diversity of science. The objective of this study is to analyze the amount of scholarly communication produced by librarians in RU in Malaysia. Apart from that, the study will also type of knowledge production contributes by librarian in RU. This study also study librarians' perception towards knowledge production.

4. Methodology
The data was collected using e-survey which was distributed among the librarians. E-survey is an easier method to gather information whereby all questionnaires can be distributed using online survey method. E-survey helps researcher to save time and monitor the cost involved. Researcher can either email the targeted sample size or just put the link of the survey in any social media application. A lot of e-survey applications are available nowadays. In this study, the SurveyMonkey application was employed to collect data from the librarians by taking into account the amount of knowledge production produced by them in their particular subject area. The investigation specifically focuses on the patterns of knowledge accumulation and production. The analysis is based on statistical analysis, review and general classification of subjects for information behavior study, library as well as general issues related to library sciences. There are several scopes and limitation in this study. Basically, the findings of this study are very limited in its fields and do not represent all librarians in Research Universities in Malaysia. In short, the e-survey was distributed through an open poll in SembangPustakawan page in Facebook, trough emails, and web link from SurveyMonkey.

5. Limitation Towards Knowledge Production
There is always a reason why librarian and information professional do not aggressively contribute to producing scholarly communication. The changes in scholarly communication force librarians to shift their mental models and alter their services (Malenfant, K. J., n.d). This requires substantial personal and organizational commitment to change. The similar situation will also be faced by other information professionals who deal with information in their daily task. Certain information professionals might not be prepared to assimilate with these changes.

Kim (2005) asserted that librarians do not use research as often as they could even though they recognize research as an essential basis for librarianship and the development of their practice. It is argued that this situation is based on gaps between research and practice (Haddowa G. &Kloba J. E., 2004). Research has the potential to provide practitioners with appropriate knowledge needed to improve their practice, but this potential is underutilized because researchers

and practitioners do not communicate effectively. Based on their observation, motivation gap is also one of the gaps between research and practice. As cited by Koufogiannakis and Crumley (2006), Plutchak (2005) further highlighted the problem with librarianship research literature by noting that most librarians' research is not rooted in the existing literature. Overall, it neither builds upon nor refers to previously conducted research. Conducting research in isolation in fact contributes very little to evidence-based librarianship.

Blick (1984) as cited by Powell, Baker & Mika, (2002) advanced some possible reasons why LIS practitioners are not involved in research; (1) there is poor communication between active researchers and practitioners, (2) Practitioners feel overwhelmed by the professional literature, (3) the great amount of research jargon discourages practitioners from reading the research literature, (4) practitioners have already had all that they can handle keeping up with emerging information technology and service responsibilities and finally (5),there is inadequate education in research methods.

According to Field K. (1997), enormous advances in information technology over the past three decades present new ways of communication independent of paper-based systems. He also added that the established practices of peer review, publication in prestigious journals, and the surrender of copyright come under close scrutiny as scholars explore the uncharted waters of scholarly communication in an electronic environment. The potential for vastly enhancing scholarly communication is very great, but there are also costs involved in shifting from a firmly established system to one still in embryo. Chodorow (2000) uncovered that the economy does no longer provide adequate support for the scholarly monograph and thus made the market for journals chaotic. Technological change is undermining the traditional functions and business of publishing. The choice is on the individual scholar him or herself– whether to publish in traditional print or in electronic journals.

6. Findings

From the four RU in Malaysia, the number of respondents contributed to this study is 72. Thus, the findings do not exclusively cover nor represent all RU librarians in total. The aim of this study is to provide the general idea of knowledge production involving librarians in RU. Graph 1 show the total of librarians participated in this study with female as the majority of the respondents.
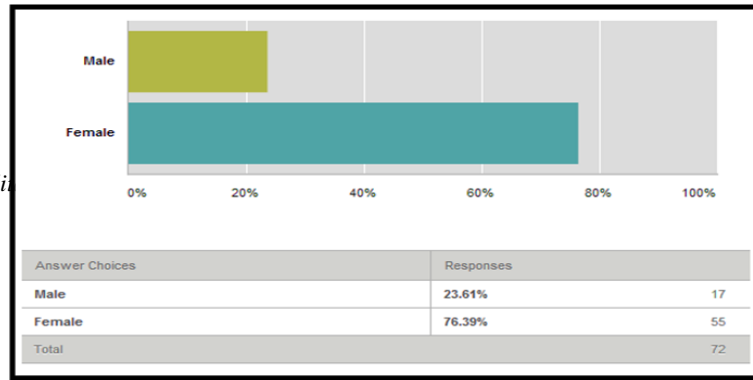
Graph 1: Total librarians participated in the study.
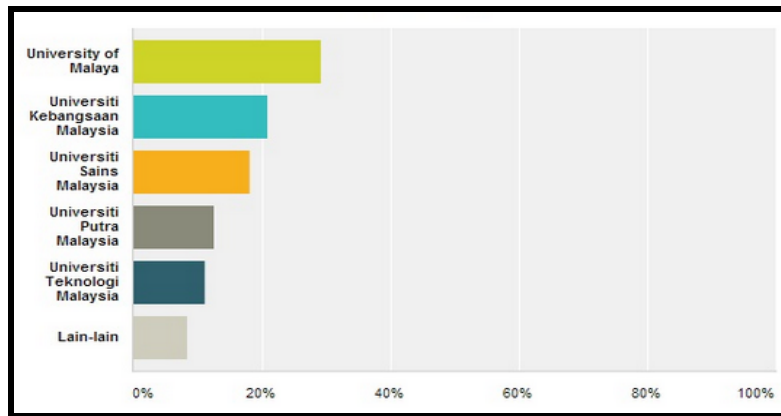
Graph 2: Total RU contribute in this study

Most of the respondent in this study are from University of Malaya, whereby 29.17% which is 21 librarians answer the questionnaire. Total librarians contribute in this study are 72 librarians; 15 librarians (20.83%) from University National Malaysia, University of Science Malaysia 18.06% (13 librarians), University Putra Malaysia 12.50% (9 librarians), University of Technology Malaysia 11.11% (8 Librarians) and others university 8.33% (6 librarians). Refer graph 2 shows the details of respondent by institutional.

Graph 3 shows total knowledge production by RU librarians. Collectively, 44.44% which is 32 librarians over 72 librarians have contributed at least 1 paper in a year. 40 librarians, which is more than a half of the respondents (55.56%), are not involved in contributing to knowledge production. The maximum scale of knowledge production by librarian is 5 papers, and there is no respondent that contributed more than 6 papers. From here, it can be seen that the awareness of creating knowledge production is already in the librarian committee, but the culture is stagnant.
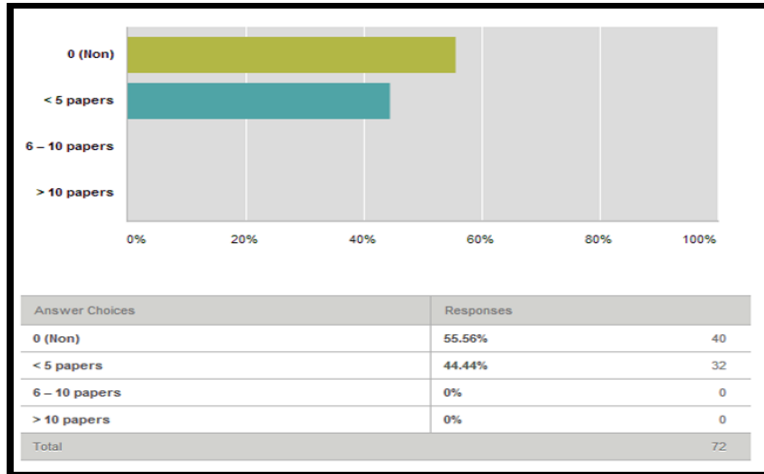
Graph 3: Total knowledge production by librarian in RU in Malaysia

Actually, there are a number of channels available that librarians can contribute to knowledge production as a part of evidence-based librarianship. Gordon (2004) in his book the Librarian's Guide to Writing for Publication maintained that librarians have to always bear in mind that they are qualified to write for professionals merely by being part of their profession. He stated that many librarians "start small" by publishing short articles in online newsletter, writing letters to editor, creating book reviews and making contributions to local papers. In this study, the librarians did participate in a number of different medium. Table 1 shows the type of knowledge production done by librarians in this study. From the finding, 48.89% librarian joins conferences to channel their awareness of knowledge production.

TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION	RESPONSES (%)
Conferences paper	48.89
Journal article	26.67
Books	2.22
Review	8.89
Report	44.44
Article in magazine	31.11

Table 1: Type of knowledge production contribute by librarian in RU

Table 2 shows librarians' perception towards several issues related to knowledge production. 5 general questions related to awareness and general perception were asked. One of the most important things to be highlighted is the interest of writing among librarians. Involvement of librarian towards knowledge production is lower based from the finding, 13 librarians actively involved in writing (18.31%). 18 librarians (25.35%) chose natural and the rest of the respondent are disagree and strongly disagree. This finding shows that the cultural of knowledge production is still not a part of their work cultural.

Interest is one of the important elements to boost up the knowledge production cultural among librarians. Finding shows that most of the respondents agree that they write because of their interest. 3 librarians (4.23%) strongly agree with this statement, 27 librarians (38.03%) feel that they are contributing to knowledge production because of interest, 21 librarians (29.58%) neutral, and the rest disagree. This finding once again brings us back to the 'culture' of knowledge production; the stronger the culture of knowledge production is, the more encouraged librarians are to write.

This study also coved librarians' perception towards encouragement from the organization. Based from the finding most of the respondents are agree that their organization are encourage them to contribute in knowledge production. 30.56% which is 22 librarians are strongly agreed and 38 librarians (52.78%) agree on these statements.

Influence and encouragement among colleagues play a significant in promoting knowledge production among librarians. 31 librarian feel that they are greatly influenced by their colleagues to write; 4 librarians (5.63%) strongly agree, 27 librarians (38.03%). 21 librarians (29.58%) choose neutral and the rest are disagree on this statement.
This study also studies the librarians' perception on reward issues. Based form the finding, the organization should consider some token of appreciations to encourage their librarian to contribute to knowledge production. Most of the respondents choose neutral in answering these issues which is 25 librarians (35.21%). Its shows that, the organization are fully encourage librarians in writing but librarian feels that there is no direct benefit for them to contribute to knowledge production.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Average Rating
I actively involve in writing scholarly publications	15.49% 11	40.85% 29	25.35% 18	18.31% 13	0% 0	71	2.46
I write because of interest	4.23% 3	23.94% 17	29.58% 21	38.03% 27	4.23% 3	71	3.14
My organisation encourages librarians to write	0% 0	6.94% 5	9.72% 7	52.78% 38	30.56% 22	72	4.07
I greatly influenced by my colleagues to write	5.63% 4	21.13% 15	29.58% 21	38.03% 27	5.63% 4	71	3.17
I get rewarded when i write	14.08% 10	22.54% 16	35.21% 25	21.13% 15	7.04% 5	71	2.85

Table 2: Librarians perception towards knowledge production

7. The Need For Research Based Environment

The findings in this study convey that in general, the culture of knowledge production among our librarians particularly in RU is still not notably well rooted. This culture need to be promoted and uphold in order to sustain evidence-based librarianship. Sharing of knowledge by contributing to knowledge production can promote our profession and at the same time strengthen the integrity of our profession. It is thus essential to integrate research based environment in our culture. Librarians nowadays need to be prepared in their task and roles as they are not merely somebody who organizes information, but also someone who can produce information especially by contributing to any scholarly communication. According to Powell (1997) as cited by Powell R. R., Baker, L.M., Mika J.J. (2002), reading and conducting research can play a role in librarians' career advancement, especially academic librarians on tenure track. Research production, with its processes and results, can also improve an individual's ability to think critically and analytically, increase staff morale, and enhance the library's status within its community..

Research based environment and evidences are important in any organization in order to solve possible problems arisen in an organization. According to Carnine D. (1997) basic research is designed to add to an existing knowledge base by formulating, expanding, or evaluating a theory. He also added that basic research is valued because it is concerned with the development of knowledge, which in turn can have implications for altering practice. Having research based culture will encourage librarian and other information professionals to contribute to the professional literature. The benefit will directly impact the organization itself as these information professionals explore new things, evaluate previous entries and share them through knowledge production.

8. Local Publication

Local publication can be a platform to promote knowledge production in any institution especially the library itself. There are limitless initiatives such as bulletin, magazine and simple reading booklet that can serve a medium to inspire librarian to start writing. One of the worth sharing examples is Kekal Abadi, a publication initiated by the University of Malaya Library (UML). Kekal Abadi was first published in March 1982 (volume 1, number 1). It was published quarterly until volume 16 (1997) and was published as single issue volumes for its 1998 and 1999 publications (Volume 17 and Volume 18). The publication for the year 2000 until 2004 was then published twice yearly (Volume 19 until Volume 23. Kekal Abadi is one of the platforms to encourage UML librarian to start writing.

This is an excellent example for other universities, libraries, information centers to develop their own internal publications. UML has always encouraged its staff to write and contribute to the publication from their experiences though conferences, research as well as daily working environment. Perhaps, it helps to start with simple publication such as bulletin or newsletter to promote the writing culture in an organization. According to Gordon, R.S. (2004), many librarians can "start small" by publishing short articles in online newsletter, writing letters to editor, creating book review, and making contributions to local papers. He also added that understanding the integration of writing with professional practice is important and a step towards realizing the unique rewards of publication in the library fields.

10. Conclusion

The awareness of knowledge production among information professionals particularly librarians need to be promoted and instilled extensively. Various researches have to be conducted to identify the barriers and effective ways to help librarians and information professionals at large in contributing to scholarly communication. Knowledge production helps professionals to communicate and connect with each other as well as supports the integrity of their professions. There are yet only a small number of contributors to the creation of knowledge especially in the library and information sciences field. From this study, the culture of knowledge production among RU librarians is still on the initial and fragile stage. Librarians, especially those in an RU status university should grab all opportunities to contribute towards scholar communication to maintain the integrity of their profession as well as to the overall benefit to their institution. Encouragement, special grant, and maybe proper classes should be conducted by their respective organization to help librarians to live this culture. Even though this study does not represent the whole RU librarians, yet in general, the result shows there is a gap between knowledge productions by other professions and librarians.

It is suggested that perhaps, the job scope of librarians and other information professionals need to be reviewed in order to make sure that they actively

contribute to scholarly communication. There is also a need to highlight, promote and develop the issue of knowledge production by librarians. Further research has to be conducted to identify and analyze the patterns of subject interest of the information professionals, and to discover the methods to promote knowledge production among them. This study can be a guideline to other researchers who wish to study the importance of knowledge production or investigate the contribution of librarians' or other information professionals' knowledge production.

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