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20 From Collections to Connections: Transforming Libraries to Knowledge Centres

Abstract: The environment in which libraries operate has changed radically. Many empirical studies have confirmed that libraries all over the world are losing their crown as premier information service providers. Libraries have responded to threats by espousing diverse information services and products. Many responses have concentrated on how to improve the content of, and access to, collections. This chapter argues that libraries will thrive by transforming themselves into knowledge centres anchored on conversations facilitated by multifaceted connections. The topics discussed include the nature and trends of changes faced by libraries; the role and place of library collections in the emerging information universe; and how can libraries be transformed into knowledge centres through multidimensional connections and conversations. New models that libraries may consider using to become centres of knowledge-laden conversations are presented. Arguments for a new order are developed using evidence and facts from the literature to make the case for libraries to shift their focus from static collections to dynamic and conversation-enabling connections.

Keywords: Instructional materials centres; Digital libraries; Libraries – Automation; Librarians – Effect of technology on; Apomediation

Introduction

Conversations about the future of libraries are ongoing. Many facets of the library as an institution and service provider are under scrutiny. One dominant theme in the discussions is the fading image of the library as the centre of the information universe. In the words of Chad and Miller, the "library's information provider crown is slipping" (2005, 4). Although the symbolical fall of the library from grace to grass has been misunderstood and exaggerated (Chad and Miller 2005), there are many competitors seeking to inherit its crown. Many people hold the view that techno-based information platforms exemplified by Google, have angled to dislodge the library from its coveted position. However, MacColl (2006) has argued that the perceived competition between libraries and search engines like Google, is misplaced because both facilities serve different purposes. He contends that Google is a universal search facility providing information which people ordinarily do not

seek from libraries. Robinson (2008) echoed this view and explained that libraries need not get into competition with Google. Conversely, they should rethink their service models and value propositions.

According to Watstein and Mitchell (2006), there has been evident change in the interests, behaviours, habits and expectations of modern library users. Vårheim, Steinmo, and Ide (2008) noted that many library users in the new millennium appreciate libraries as places where people meet and find help. In this view, the collection of a library is of secondary interest to the users. Lankes, Silverstein, and Nicholson (2007) explained that unfortunately libraries have been evaluated through numeric counts of collection size and how effectively collections have circulated. In the emerging information landscape, this focus is unlikely to yield appropriate benefit to the users. According to Maness (2006), libraries are facilities of community service which should not change with the community but allow communities to change them. Anderson (2011) stated that libraries ought to focus on improving their services rather than trying to change their users. Critically, libraries should not just deal with individual needs, but enable communities to seek, find and use knowledge. Noh (2015) envisioned the library of the future as having infinite creative spaces anchored on social informatics. Users of such libraries interact with each other and the librarians to create services and products which add value to the whole community (Maness 2006).

Libraries could do better by focusing on activities which bring members of its user community to interact socially and collaboratively to confront personal and organisational challenges (Aabø and Audunson 2012). The library can be the third place, after home and work, where people meet regularly to socialise and share. Users meeting in physical and virtual library spaces participate in diverse conversations and activities depending on their needs and interests, oscillate between high and low intensity activities, and float between diverse profiles of student, family member, friend, neighbour, and citizen, all at the same time (Aabø and Audunson 2012). Massis (2011) proposed the adoption of joint-use library models as a means of maximising the benefits of libraries to communities. Libraries should facilitate the creation of real-life knowledge such as how to survive a natural disaster in specific communities (Hagar 2015), or respond to crises (Stenstrom, Cole, and Hanson 2019). Libraries can create social trust in communities (Ebrahimi and Najmi 2013). Mose and Mose (2021) underscore the variability in the profiles of library users. Focusing on the needs of retirees, they explain that libraries should strive to offer something for everyone, not everything for just a few. Neglected potential users of libraries are people who are new in a community (Kumaran 2009), as well as vulnerable populations, like the homeless (Dennis, Abbott, and Sell 2020; Stenstrom, Cole, and Hanson 2019).

The foregoing arguments provide evidence that for the library to reinvent and assert itself in the new information universe, it must shift its focus from collections. This view is informed by the understanding that information collections are available from alternative sources, including online services like Google. It is the thesis of this chapter that libraries must transform themselves into knowledge centres to be relevant for modern and future user communities. Since knowledge is created and shared through conversations, libraries in the knowledge age must facilitate conversations which may span millennia or be short-lived (Lankes, Silverstein, and Nicholson 2007). Librarians must not only facilitate conversations, but collect, manage and disseminate conversations through programmes such as reference interviews or speaker series.

What is a conversation? A conversation is an exchange of thoughts and ideas between people. Conversations happen when people interact and collaborate with each other to share experiences on specific issues of mutual interest. Conversations are one of the most natural and universal means of exchanging knowledge. Conversations occur between two or more people but can also occur within an individual (Lankes, Silverstein, and Nicholson 2007). Conversation parties can be individuals, companies, groups, or states. Librarians do not have to arbitrate the conversations. As apomediaries, librarians step in only when needed to enhance the conversations (Kwanya, Stilwell, and Underwood 2013). Libraries, both physical and virtual, should be environments which are conducive to conversations among their communities of users. The environments should be safe, comfortable, and transparent (Kwanya, Stilwell, and Underwood 2015; Lankes, Silverstein, and Nicholson 2007). Such environments stimulate the creation of participatory networks of users which harness the powers of wisdom of the crowd, folksonomies, mashups, permanent betas, and open catalogues, enabling tagging and annotations and ultimately giving birth to participatory librarianship characterised by conversation-based programming (Johnston 2016; Johnston 2018). Librarians can participate through social media with users through listening, participation, transparency, policy, and strategy, and libraries can become places where conversations are happening (Schrier 2011).

Library Collections

Lee (2000) describes a library collection as the accumulation of information resources created by an information professional to meet the information needs of a user community. It is the sum total of all information holdings of a library. According to Okolo et al. (2019), a facility is named a library because it holds a collection

of information resources which are useful to specific users. Levine-Clark (2014) states that the definition of the term library carries with it the connotation of a collection of books. The term library emerged from the Latin word *liber* which means book. To many people, libraries are about collecting, organising and disseminating books. Okolo et al. (2019) argue that librarianship, developed as a profession from the need for people with specialised skills to manage library collections. Nwosu and Udo-Anyanwu (2015) assert that regardless of the beauty of its buildings, expertise of its staff, and quality of services it offers, a facility cannot be called a library without any collections. All library services, products and spaces are considered subservient to collections in the minds of many librarians and library users. To them, the library is fundamentally about information collections regardless of their format. Okolo et al. (2019) assert that collections are the heartbeat of the library.

According to Buckland (1989), library collections serve four major roles: preservation of information materials for current and future use; providing convenient access to and dispensing of information resources; identifying and locating documents through appropriate bibliographic descriptions, systems and tools; and enhancing the symbolic status and prestige of the parent institution as a citadel of scholarship. Libraries have boasted about the size of their collections: the bigger the collection the greater the prestige (Jones 2007). Institutions, especially academic ones, invested considerable resources in building their library collections as a means of attracting funding, students and staff. Tucker and Torrence (2004) state that collection development is one of the key performance or competency areas in librarianship and involves identifying the information needs of library users; selecting information materials which in the opinion of the librarian are able to satisfy the information needs of the users; and acquiring the selected materials. Lee (2005) points out that, traditionally, collection development has not meaningfully involved library users. Librarians created and controlled collections with minimal input from users. Even when users made suggestions, the final decision for purchase was with the librarian and based on many considerations key among which was the available budget.

Over the years, the formats of information resources have changed drastically. But the collection development process has remained the same (Gregory 2019). Lee (2005) argues that in the traditional sense, a library's collection ought to be stable and freely-accessible but dynamic and ephemeral information sources on the Internet are considered unsuitable for collection by libraries. One of the significant elements of collection development involves preservation of the collection as a means of making it permanent. Traditionally only materials selected and processed by the librarians were considered part of the collection. However, Levine-Clark (2014) argues that libraries need to be information-rich, just like Google or Amazon, and able to give their users prompt access to anything they need. "If Amazon.com can

supply the unusual book they want, why can't the local public library?" (Gregory 2019, 5). "[I]t seems highly likely that the very idea of the 'collection' will be overhauled if not obviated over the next ten years, in favour of more dynamic access to a virtually unlimited flow of information products" (Anderson 2011, 215), Regardless of the collection approach applied, Lee (2005) argues that modern library users need user-centred and flexible collections rather than library-centred and fixed collections. Modern collections must include dynamic content such as streaming media and online videos (Gregory 2019).

Another pertinent issue about library collections is the concept of ownership. In the past, libraries purchased and owned their collections (Levine-Clark 2014). This view echoes Lee (2000) who argued that in the traditional sense, a library collection was tangible, owned and stored in a specific location or space. Remotely accessed resources not stored directly in library systems were not perceived as being part of its collection. The ownership model has changed as libraries opt for licences to access and lease materials, and purchase relevant materials anchored on a demand driven access model (Albitz, Avery, and Zabel 2014). Library consortia have emerged to facilitate federated collection development approaches based on sharing of resources. Besides cost considerations, Connell (2010) has argued that libraries should also be concerned about environmental issues associated with maintaining physical resources and work to reduce their carbon footprint. One obvious way of achieving this is by reducing the volume of print collections. In the digital era, the librarian selects sources and does not necessarily have to house them physically onsite, which is an excellent way of addressing environmental concerns exemplified by climate change and global warming (Gregory 2019).

Dempsey, Malpas, and Lavoie (2014) argue that dominant collection development approaches used by libraries focus on obtaining information resources from outside the library into the library community with minimal efforts to take content from the library community to the outside world. Libraries are able to enhance the image and prestige of their institutions, especially in academic settings, by increasing the volume, variety and visibility of content their users contribute to the outside world. Libraries can facilitate user-generated content creation and sharing through social networking. Gregory (2019) asserts that librarians ought to become more active in the creation, maintenance, and promotion of locally-created content. As social institutions, libraries should find it natural to become involved in the social networking movement as a means of enhancing content generation by their user communities.

Although the library will continue to be associated with collections in the digital age, the understanding of the concept of what constitutes a library collection will take on a radically different meaning (Levine-Clark 2014). The collection will comprise anything and everything that the library identifies as able to meet the needs

of its community. Such collections will be built to facilitate discovery of knowledge and will be as broad as possible (Finch and Flenner 2017). Anderson (2011) predicted that by 2021, most libraries would still have traditional collections, but their value would be minimal because libraries would be unable to meet the changing information needs of library patrons with static preselected information sources. Future users would require a constant flow of real-time information impossible to anticipate by either librarians or users.

Many scholars and practitioners (Blume 2019; Crawford et al. 2020; Hallam, Reel, and Heisserer-Miller 2021; Levenson and Hess 2020; Morris and Presnell 2019; Mwilongo, Luambano, and Lwehabura 2020) recommend "just in time" instead of "just in case" approaches to collection development. While the former is flexible, user-centred and cost-effective, the latter is rigid, costly and controlled by librarians. By applying the just in time collection development approach, libraries have a higher chance of providing access to the widest yet most relevant range of information resources covering diverse perspectives on the interests of their communities.

Various concerns about library collections emerge from the foregoing perspectives. One is the understanding of what constitutes a library collection. It is evident from the literature reviewed that library collections traditionally were expected to be stable or static information resources. Such a rigid view is untenable in the digital era where dynamic information can be generated and shared in real time. There must be a shift to information sources which can sustainably meet the ever-changing information needs of users. Another concern relates to the collection development process. While some changes are occurring, collection development remains controlled by librarians. User input remains in most circumstances limited to mere suggestions which are weighed against other considerations. User involvement continues to be peripheral in the collection development process however progressive the approach is. Significantly, collection development has focused on external acquisition with little emphasis on creating and exposing internally-created content. The impact of libraries and their parent institutions is limited; they consume more content than they produce. This chapter argues that libraries should shift their focus from building collections to building connections which can transform them into knowledge centres and subsequently overcome the limitations.

Knowledge Centres

Knowledge centres are "the repositories of the intellect of ages stored in the form of recorded information for use of present and future generations to come" (Mansur 2012, 166). A knowledge centre is a knowledge integration system and corrobora-

tion engine designed to facilitate an evolving multi-disciplinary dialog leading to new insights and discoveries and to bring the benefits of collective wisdom to the organisation's decisions (Mohanavel and Ravindran 2010, 1) . The systems contain the collective wisdom of the organisation, community or society. Paulussen (2012) regards a knowledge centre as a specialised centre facilitating the creation, organisation, sharing, use and preservation of information on a specialised theme or a related set of themes. Guntuku et al. (2011) assert that a facility can only be considered a knowledge centre if it translates information into knowledge. Subramanian and Arivanandan (2009) argue that knowledge centres do not have to be anchored on technology. They explain that in rural communities, a knowledge centre can be used to share tacit knowledge such as indigenous farming techniques or skills on how to prepare indigenous cuisine.

There is considerable literature on knowledge centres aimed at preserving Indigenous knowledge with many of the centres located in remote rural areas all over the world. The culture and languages of many Indigenous communities around the world are threatened with extinction and indigenous knowledge centres have been created in many communities to help preserve unique indigenous knowledge (Stevens 2008). Ngulube (2002) highlighted the use of specialised resource centres to preserve Indigenous knowledge in eastern and southern Africa. Sillitoe and Marzano (2009) state that knowledge centres support research on diverse aspects of Indigenous knowledge, including its place in and contribution to socioeconomic development. Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) echo the view and urge Indigenous people to add their voices to global issues through Indigenous knowledge research.

In this chapter, a knowledge centre is defined as a physical or virtual space where people interact to share both tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is defined as the intangible but highly valuable knowledge resident in people's talents and experiences. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is defined as codified knowledge which is available in documents and artefacts. Tacit knowledge exchange requires the presence and interaction with the people who hold the knowledge. Explicit knowledge can be shared through information-bearing documents such as papers, books, and manuals. Knowledge centres can provide either general or specialised knowledge or both. Knowledge centres can be set up in specific geocultural contexts which influence their structure, services and products. The aim of a knowledge centre is to facilitate the creation or collection, organisation, sharing or diffusion, use and perpetuation of knowledge which is considered valuable in a given context. Characteristics of knowledge centres are summarised in Table 20.1.

Description	Characteristics
Place or location	Physico-virtual
Composition	Networked knowledge sources
Structure	Flexible, mashups
Products	Collective wisdom
Services	Connections
Activities	Conversations
Geocultural setting	Contextualised
Orientation	User-centred, user-driven
Role of intermediaries	Apomediation
Environment	Mutually safe, collaborative

Table 20.1: Characteristics of knowledge centres.

Libraries as Knowledge Centres

That there is a close relationship between libraries and knowledge centres is not in doubt. Lawrence (2007) describes a knowledge centre as a specialised facility in a library. Servin and De Brún ask and answer the question:

> What is a knowledge centre? In short, an enhanced version of a library. The "enhancement" lies in a wider focus on knowledge as well as on information: a knowledge centre typically provides a focus for collecting, organising and disseminating both knowledge and information. This does not necessarily mean that the knowledge centre will actually perform all of these activities itself. Rather, it will create a framework and provide leadership, co-ordination, guidance and expertise (Servin and De Brún 2005, 34).

India's National Knowledge Commission (2007) perceives knowledge centres as part of libraries which, in addition to other roles, facilitate learning. Nakata et al. (2007) and Pilot (2005) argue that knowledge centres are part of libraries, particularly in public library settings.

Libraries can serve as knowledge centres but there are differences between the two; transformation on several fronts must occur for libraries to become effective knowledge centres. Table 20.2 contrasts and compares libraries with knowledge centres.

Description	Knowledge centres	Libraries
Place or location	Physico-virtual	Physico-virtual
Composition	Networked knowledge sources	Information resources
Structure	Flexible, mash-ups	Clear boundaries
Products	Collective wisdom	Collected information
Services	Connections	Collections
Activities	Conversations	Reading
Geocultural setting	Contextualised	Generalised
Orientation	User-centred, user-driven	Librarian-driven
Role of intermediaries	Apomediation	Intermediation
Environment	Mutually safe, collaborative	Competitive

Table 20.2: Contrasting and comparing libraries and knowledge centres.

Libraries manage information resources. Library collections are composed of physical and digital information resources which patrons use to meet diverse information needs whilst knowledge centres hold a network of knowledge sources. It is important to note that original, tacit knowledge resides in people. If libraries focus solely on information resources which hold explicit knowledge, they miss the opportunity to facilitate the sharing, use and validation of the rare yet valuable tacit knowledge. If one accepts the estimate that tacit knowledge comprises over 70% of global human knowledge, a focus on explicit knowledge omits a significant portion of knowledge.

In terms of structure, libraries are clearly demarcated in terms of roles and processes and use various protocols to ensure order and minimise conflicts. In knowledge centres, it is not easy to point out clear roles and protocols because knowledge flows in multiple pathways where library patrons play both producer and consumer roles interchangeably. Each activity and its role cannot be predetermined but created instantly at the point of use. Libraries tend to be keen on maintaining order and control over what both patrons and librarians can do in the library or with library resources. Knowledge however thrives in flexible and less controlled ecosystems through unanticipated, serendipitous innovation and creativity.

While knowledge centres trade in collective wisdom, the currency in library engagements is information. In knowledge centres, the community of users collaboratively creates knowledge and transform information to knowledge by applying it to real life scenarios. Over time, knowledge is transformed into wisdom through extensive application to solve both practical and philosophical challenges in the environment. In libraries, individuals create knowledge, and most libraries are configured to support individual work. Even when group work is facilitated, the groups are often short-term and normally do not last long enough to generate

wisdom. In knowledge centres, however, knowledge is created collaboratively, continuously and sustainably, and translated into wisdom with continual use.

Libraries frequently prioritise collections. As already noted, many libraries boast about the volume and variety of their collections. Rich collections are indeed valuable but physical and documentary collections can be repositories of static and dated information. Knowledge centres, on the other hand, recognise that important knowledge resides in people and prioritise linking to people who make connections and hold conversations. While library patrons spend time reading the collection, knowledge centre users interact, learn and share.

Knowledge centres empower communities to support each other thereby enhancing capacity to serve members in the long tail. Libraries are interested in meeting the needs of the majority and are constrained by resource, time and human limitations to address patrons in the long tail. Libraries rely on librarians to drive the information agenda whereas knowledge centres are not only user-centred, but also user-driven. Librarians act as infomediaries linking users with the information they need; knowledge centres apply apomediation where members of the community are empowered to self-serve while also serving each other. Librarians working as apomediaries in knowledge centres play an indirect, subtle, supportive role at the point of need (Kwanya, Stilwell, and Underwood 2014; Nakitare et al. 2020).

Sources of Knowledge

There are several sources of tacit and explicit knowledge. Libraries can be true knowledge centres only if they can manage both. Major sources of knowledge are instinct, intuition, perception, reason, memory, testimony, introspection, observation, authority, and faith, dreams and visions.

Instinct

Instinct is a way of behaving, feeling or thinking which is not learned. It is a natural ability and something one knows without learning. It is inherited and unalterable; an inborn pattern of behaviour, a powerful motivation or impact (Lighthall 1930). Any behaviour is deemed instinctive if it is not based on prior experience. One example of instinctive behaviour is how a new-born child learns to suckle the mother's breasts (Birchley 2015). Instinct is a unique source of tacit knowledge.

Intuition

Knowledge can be obtained without the use of rational processes. Intuition enables people to obtain knowledge without reasoning or perception through the senses. Intuition is the power of understanding something without thinking and resembles a feeling. People might say something like "I have a feeling he is not telling the truth" without being sure of why. Intuition provides people with views, understandings, judgements, or beliefs that they cannot in every case verify empirically or justify rationally (Shapiro and Spence 1997). Intuition is a natural ability or power that makes it possible to know something without proof or evidence and a feeling that guides a person to act a certain way without fully understanding why. Intuition is an original, independent source of tacit knowledge, and is credited with unique kinds of knowledge that other sources do not provide (Hales 2012; Smith 2009).

Perception

Knowledge can be perceived through human sense organs of touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. Human beings are constantly using their senses to explore and perceive their environment. Some schools of thought opine that experience and perception are the primary sources of both tacit and explicit knowledge. People learn that candy is sweet, and so are sugar and jam, while lemons and onions are not. The sun is bright and blinding. Glowing coals in the fireplace are beautiful if you do not touch them. Sounds soothe, warn, or frighten. Through millions of single sense events people build a fabric of empirical information which helps them to interpret, survive in, and control the world about them (Cassam 2008; Pillow 1989).

Reasoning

Knowledge can be obtained through reasoning by deducing facts from existing knowledge or discovering new truths. Reasoning enables people to collect facts, generalise about issues, unravel cause and effect relationships, and draw conclusions, propositions and proofs; reasoning is a source of explicit knowledge.

Memory

Knowledge can be obtained from memory, which is a means of knowing what happened in the past. History influences the future, and memory serves as a source of

knowledge which can be applied in the present and into the future (Tulving 1989). Some philosophers are of the view that memory stores previous knowledge but does not produce any new knowledge. Others consider that memory can produce new knowledge when historical data is applied in a new environment and assigned a new meaning. Memory is a source of explicit knowledge but when it is undocumented, it is a source of tacit knowledge.

Testimony

Knowledge can be obtained from the experiences and testimonies of others (Coady 1992). Asking a person the time, and receiving an answer, is an example of coming to know something on the basis of testimony. Learning about happenings in distant lands by reading a newspaper is an example of acquiring knowledge on the basis of testimony. The credibility of testimony as a source of knowledge is dependent on whether it comes from a reliable source. Testimony can be a source of both tacit and explicit knowledge.

Introspection

Introspection is knowledge of oneself obtained through personal self-evaluation. Introspection is the capacity to inspect, metaphorically speaking, the inside of one's mind. Introspection is closely related to self-reflection and is contrasted with external observation. Through introspection, one knows what mental state one is in: whether one is thirsty, tired, excited, or depressed (Spener 2015). Some philosophers consider that introspection is less prone to error. Other scholars have argued that introspection can be erroneous because human beings sometimes do not understand themselves fully (Smithies 2013). When appropriately applied, introspection is an invaluable source of tacit knowledge.

Observation

People can obtain knowledge by observing phenomena or how things are done. Observation provides both tacit and explicit knowledge without manipulation (Van Lent and Laird 2001). People can be passive or active observers of phenomena or events which influences the quality of knowledge they obtain.

Authority

Knowledge can be obtained from authorities or specialists in their respective domains. It is derived from written works, documentation and reports of others. Authoritative knowledge is used in all academic activities with reference made to authorities, writers and authors in specific fields. Both tacit and explicit knowledge may be obtained from authoritative experts.

Faith, Dreams and Visions

Both tacit and explicit knowledge can be obtained through revelation from supernatural sources or beings (Sloan 1994). This type of knowledge is commonly found in religion. People professing this knowledge must surrender themselves to the source of such revelations, that is, the supernatural being, who is eternally superior and cannot be said to lie or make a mistake (Fales 2020). In Christianity, for instance, dreams, visions and even the Bible have come to be accepted as forms of revealed knowledge. In the Islamic tradition, the Koran is held to be an authoritative and revealed source of knowledge. In African traditional religions, the status of self-revelation is given to deities, ancestors, divination of oracles and dreams.

This chapter argues that by focusing on collections, libraries manage only explicit knowledge from works of specialists and authorities. Collections may also hold explicit knowledge in the form of memory and testimonies. Libraries connect users to collections and enable them to acquire explicit knowledge. There is a need for people to connect to other people to obtain first-hand knowledge through observation. Library users can obtain valuable tacit knowledge by accessing people with unique experiences and memories directly. Libraries, as true knowledge centres, should endeavour to connect people to each other through diverse forms of social networking. Some knowledge can be obtained only from supernatural sources. Libraries should design environments in which patrons can connect with supernatural sources, for example, creating special rooms to be used for worship, prayer and meditation. The same facilities could be used by patrons to connect with themselves and obtain knowledge through introspection.

Libraries can serve as knowledge centres if they enable connections between patrons and collections; patrons and other patrons; patrons and supernatural deities; and patrons with themselves. Libraries can facilitate, organise, preserve, and promote conversations between members of the library community, becoming knowledge centres and serving as centres of conversations.

Transformation Strategies from Libraries to Knowledge Centres

Three suggestions for libraries to consider in their efforts to transform themselves into knowledge centres relate to the concepts of human libraries, communities of practice and knowledge cafes.

Human Libraries

According to Kudo et al. (2011), the concept of human libraries was developed as a Danish not for profit organisation in the year 2000. According to Johannsen (2015), a human library is an innovative method designed to promote dialogue, reduce prejudices, and encourage understanding. The concept was originally created to help in addressing stereotypes by hosting affected people to demystify unfounded beliefs. The stereotypes could be about people living with disabilities such as albinism, medical conditions, mental health concerns, or other forms of unfounded beliefs (Fonseca 2018; Kwan 2020). In this chapter, a human library is perceived as a space, virtual or physical, for dialogue and interaction between library patrons and people on loan. The library can lend a human book, for instance, a person living with albinism, to talk about the disability. Participants or readers register to attend the reading sessions which may be dialogues with one book and one reader, or lectures with one book and many readers. The model can be adapted to fit any library context and can take the form of expert lectures, counselling sessions, storytelling events, and call-in reference sessions with special guests, among others. Application of the model can develop social networks to support conversations that create, validate and diffuse knowledge. Kudo et al. (2011) applied the model in libraries in Japan and found that it enhanced knowledge and empathy of readers; increased self-reflexivity of books; and transcended self-other images of librarians. The model has been applied in many countries since its development in 2000 (Watson 2015). At the time of writing, there appears to be no human library in Africa. It is a concept which librarians in Africa and elsewhere could adopt and adapt to create and sustain knowledge-laden conversations.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice (CoP) is a common knowledge management technique of which many librarians are aware. "Communities of practice are groups of people

who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger 2011, 1). Eckert (2006) explains that CoPs emerge in response to common interests or positions, and influence members' participation in, and orientation to, the world around them. Three attributes characterise CoPs: domain or knowledge area of interest; community created by shared relationships; and close interactions and practice of the domain by the community. CoPs are groups of closely connected persons who have a common interest in a specific domain or interest area and who interact regularly to improve practice. Libraries are natural hosts of CoPs which they can use to create and promote conversations. Despite the potential, Koloniari and Fassoulis (2017) argue that librarians have not adopted CoPs, which could facilitate effective tacit knowledge and expertise sharing. Diverse forms of CoPs including knowledge ambassadors (Kibe and Kwanya 2015); book clubs and discussion groups (Stephenson et al. 2014); users of maker-spaces (Curry 2017); and study groups (Burns, Howard, and Kimmel 2016) would enhance the knowledge management capacity of libraries.

Knowledge Café

"A knowledge café may be defined as a way of bringing together a group of people who have some sort of common interest and who will be able to benefit from talking together and listening to each other on the subject of issues related to and surrounding that common interest" (Remenyi 2004, 4), In this chapter, a knowledge café is defined as a special event bringing together people to discuss, share or test new ideas. Each knowledge café focuses on a specific topical issue. Singh (2017) explains that a knowledge café encourages sharing of knowledge through conversations amongst the participants. Besides creating opportunities for people to learn new things, a knowledge café provides opportunities for networking and socialisation which can drive knowledge management processes. A knowledge café can enhance learning and networking through serendipity. A knowledge café is an appropriate learning model for adults (Baim 2016). Knowledge cafés are informal, facilitated events, or roundtables. Libraries can organise and host knowledge café events on strategic or topical issues and encourage conversations which librarians can collect, collate, refine and share. Librarians can serve as facilitators and/or allow experienced members of the community to facilitate.

Conclusion

This chapter has recognised the significant role collections play in the traditional definition of the library and acknowledged that the collections hold rich knowledge of immense benefit to library communities. Important as they may be collections alone do not promote knowledge creation and diffusion. Libraries exist in the knowledge age, and regardless of their typology, can make meaningful contributions to their communities and society by serving as knowledge centres which function as citadels of knowledge management. Libraries can best transform themselves into knowledge centres by facilitating multiple forms of connections which result in knowledge-laden conversations. Patrons can connect with self, other patrons, librarians and supernatural deities to generate and share knowledge through conversations. Human libraries, communities of practice and knowledge cafés can be used to model and nurture conversations in the library. The ultimate vision of modern libraries is the facilitation of conversations through operating as knowledge centres.

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