Theme

Cooperation for mutual benefit

Presenter

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Topic

Knowledge Sharing among Public Library Users

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Knowledge Sharing among Public Library Users

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Knowledge sharing is becoming important this day as people start to value knowledge due to its vast availability. In the context of public library as a centre of knowledge for one community, knowledge sharing among librarians, users, or between librarians and users, may help in improving library services. Librarian may share their knowledge in managing the library with the help of library management system.Librarian can create their Community of Practice and collaborate with librarian from another public library. As for the patron, Community of Interest do exist based on their book preference. Sharing on their reading experience can help other patron with the similar interest to identify books of their needs easily.But, are patron willing to share?What can they share?Is there any platform for them to share in our public library?

This project studied the patrons acceptance towards the knowledge sharing initiatives among patrons in a public library and developed a knowledge sharing portal for KL City Library.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) comprises a range of practice used by organizations to identify, create, represent and distribute knowledge. KM may be simply defined as doing what is needed to get the most out of knowledge resources. Although KM can be applied to individuals, it has recently attracted the attention of organizations (Irma, Avelino and Rajiv, 2004). Nowadays, it has emerged to become critical tools of business. KM concept has been used extensively in many private sectors leading companies, but for library, there are still areas than can be explored especially in Malaysia. This project will focus more on Community of Interest (CoI) sharing their knowledge by using virtual community portals as platforms to communicate among each other. CoI is defined as community of people who shares a common interest or passion. These people exchange ideas and thoughts about the given passion, but may know little about each other outside of this area. The main focus for this project is to study the usage of knowledge CoI portal in public library.

Library is a place set apart to contain books, periodicals, and other material for reading, viewing, listening, study, or reference, as a rooms, or building where books may be read or borrowed. The routine that used to be practice when going to library is, user come to the library, find the books and then check-out the books. There is very little communication among patron, librarian and among patron. It is hard to have the CoI to sit together just to share the knowledge about the books that they have read. A patron might

end up spending lots of time searching for book that might match their needs without any review from other experienced user or librarian. By having a knowledge CoI portal, it can help in grouping CoI, and with added communication functionalities, it will benefit the CoI by becoming a platform to share their knowledge.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the current situation in public libraries, whether exist knowledge sharing in the libraries or not and to propose ways to improve the current knowledge sharing condition in public library.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge had been defined by Oxford English Dictionary variously as expertise, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject, it also can be recognize by what is known in a particular field or in total; facts and information or the awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation. Philosophical debates in general start with Plato's formulation of knowledge as "justified true belief". The term knowledge is also used to mean the confident understanding of a subject with the ability to use it for a specific purpose if appropriate. There is however no single agreed definition of knowledge presently, or any prospect of one, and there remain numerous competing theories.

KM is viewed as an increasingly important discipline that promotes the creation, sharing, and leveraging of the organization's knowledge. (Irma, Avelino and Rajiv, 2004), while Ron Young

(2005) defined KM as the new discipline of enabling individuals, terms and entire organizations to collectively and systematically create, share and apply knowledge, to better achieve their objectives. Information Communication Technology give an important contribution to knowledge sharing in communities consists of the realization of a shared information base (communality) and facilitating communication independent of time and place (connectivity) (Bart van den Hooff, 2003).

The are four kind of KM processes: discovery, capture, sharing and application. As being cited in Irma, Avelino and Rajiv (2004):

Knowledge sharing is the process through which explicit or tacit knowledge is communicated to other individuals. Three important clarifications are in order as below:

First, knowledge sharing means effective transfer, so that the recipient of knowledge can understand it well enough to act on it (Jensen and Meckling, 1996).

Second, what is shared is knowledge instead of recommendations based on the knowledge; the former involves the recipient acquiring the hard knowledge as well as having the ability to take action based on it, whereas the latter simply involves utilization of knowledge without the recipient internalizing the shared knowledge.

Third, knowledge sharing may take place across individuals as well as across groups, departments, or organizations (Alavi and Leidner, 2001)

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN LIBRARY

In this large, global consulting organization, the KM effort was initially developed and launched independently of the organization's libraries. KM focused on internal knowledge capital, and the libraries continued to focus on knowledge content external to the organization (Ryske and Sebastian, 1999). Shanhong (2000) give an understanding about KM in libraries should be focused on research and development of knowledge bases creation, knowledge sharing between library staff and its users, library staff training and speeding up explicit processing of the implicit knowledge and realizing of its sharing. He also further added, knowledge management in libraries should have the following characteristics:

1. Human resource is the important part of KM in libraries. Library staffs quality should be improve and make it as library's asset.

2. Library should focused on promoting knowledge innovation, act as a bridge to turn specific knowledge to productive act. Knowledge management in libraries is to promote relationship in and between libraries, between library and user, to strengthen knowledge internetworking and to quicken knowledge flow.

3. Use information technology to enlarge knowledge acquisition by having computer networks and knowledge warehouse which provide knowledge

storage for retrieval, sorting and security of knowledge.

Hwa-Wei Lee (2005) said that public libraries should also develop means to capture all tacit knowledge that is importance to their users, organizations and to the internal operation of libraries. He also further added that the most important is to provide users with a variety of quality services in order to improve the communication, use and creation of knowledge. This is where the information technology comes into the picture.

KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY IN LIBRARY

Robertson, S. and Reese, K. (1999) agreed that, the establishment of a knowledge community is commonly linked to the concept of knowledge sharing. The term CoI and community of practice (CoP) are examples of knowledge community. Libraries can be a platform for the establishment of a knowledge community as library members with common interest can interact with each other. Libraries are the center for social and intellectual interactions in communities. While Lee, H. (2005), said that, some form of knowledge management has always been a practice in the library either formally or informally. Librarians and information professionals are trained to be experts in information searching, selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, repackaging, disseminating, and serving. However, most literatures are focusing on knowledge management and the operation of libraries not on how to link from one user to another and let them share their knowledge.

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METHODOLOGY

For this project, the throwaway prototyping based methodology was chosen as several prototypes need to be developed to meet the user needs. The first phase is planning and analysis where a library was identified as a case study. The chosen public library is Kuala Lumpur Library, which is located at Jalan Raja, Kuala Lumpur. Several appointments were conducted with KL Library management and librarian to collect input for this project. In analyze, design and implement phase, a design prototype was developed to be tested by the user. A design prototype is not a working system; it is a product that represents a part of the system that needs additional refinement, and it only contains enough details to enable users to understand consideration (Denis, Wixom and Tegarden , 2005). It was launched for the internal user to get the feedback from them in improving the portal. The portal can be accessed at www.kllibrary-portal.com.

RESULTS AND FINDING

Survey for KL Library user and administrator

The objective of this survey is to get information for the implementation of knowledge sharing portal among public library patron, librarian and other patron. For the preliminary study, the survey was answered by 22 library patrons and 8 librarians of KL Library.

Based on the survey, 54% of the users share the information about books that they had read to others, while 46% users did not share the knowledge. This could probably due to lack of medium of sharing the knowledge. User cannot find medium that can be used

to frequently share the information and maybe some of them were not exposed to the technology of the internet, where user can also shared, by using many medium, such as blog or webpage.

On the frequency of interaction of one user with another user, 77% of them will interact with other user in KL Library, depends on the situation that need them to interact. It is similar with the frequency of the interaction between library user and librarian. 23% of them never communicate with the librarian while 9 % will only communicate with the librarian when they need to find or borrow books.

In finding books in the library, 72% of the user uses the OPAC catalog system (refer to Figure 1). It shows that most of library patrons, know on how to use OPAC and rely to it to find book. By having a way to communicate their knowledge on one book, the user can find a book plus share the suitability of a book with one's search.
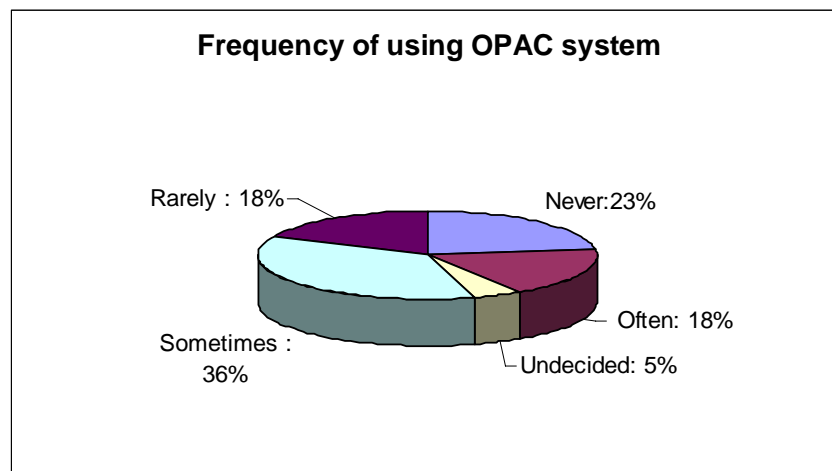
Figure 1 : Frequency of using OPAC catalog system

From the administrator survey, most of them know the concept of KM and knowledge sharing (refer to Figure 2). Therefore, it is possible to built knowledge sharing in this library because, all librarians have basic understanding on the concept and they can applied it to the portal later.
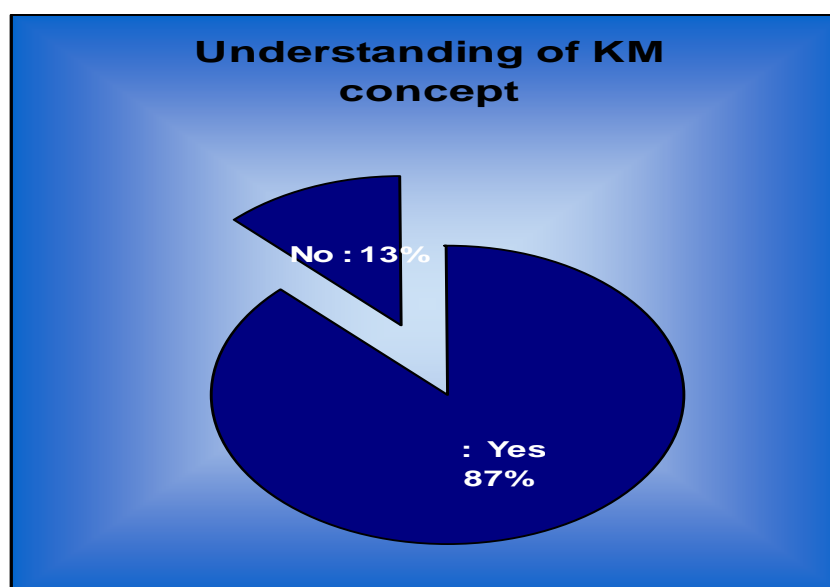
Figure 2: Understanding of KM concept among librarians

When it comes to knowledge sharing between librarian and patron, based on their observation, 74 % of the librarian agreed that the interaction between patron and librarian only happen sometimes. Patrons are more contented to communicate with librarian for borrowing and returning book purposes only. It is rare to find patron and librarian chatting about one book and share their knowledge on it.

Positive responses were received when survey question asked about the need of having a platform or a system that enables

patrons to interact with other patrons and also librarian. 62% of the librarian agreed that it is very useful to have the system, 25 % think it is useful to have it while only 13 % cannot decide whether it is important or not to have such system. So, it is possible to have the portal in KL Library community, and it will be useful to patron and librarian, for them to share knowledge and information.

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Knowledge Sharing Portal

Based on the observation, interviews and survey, the portal was developed with features below:

1.   Librarian or Library patron may access the portal via www.kllibrary-portal.com. (refer to Figure 3).Every user (librarian or library patron) will need to register before they may log-in.
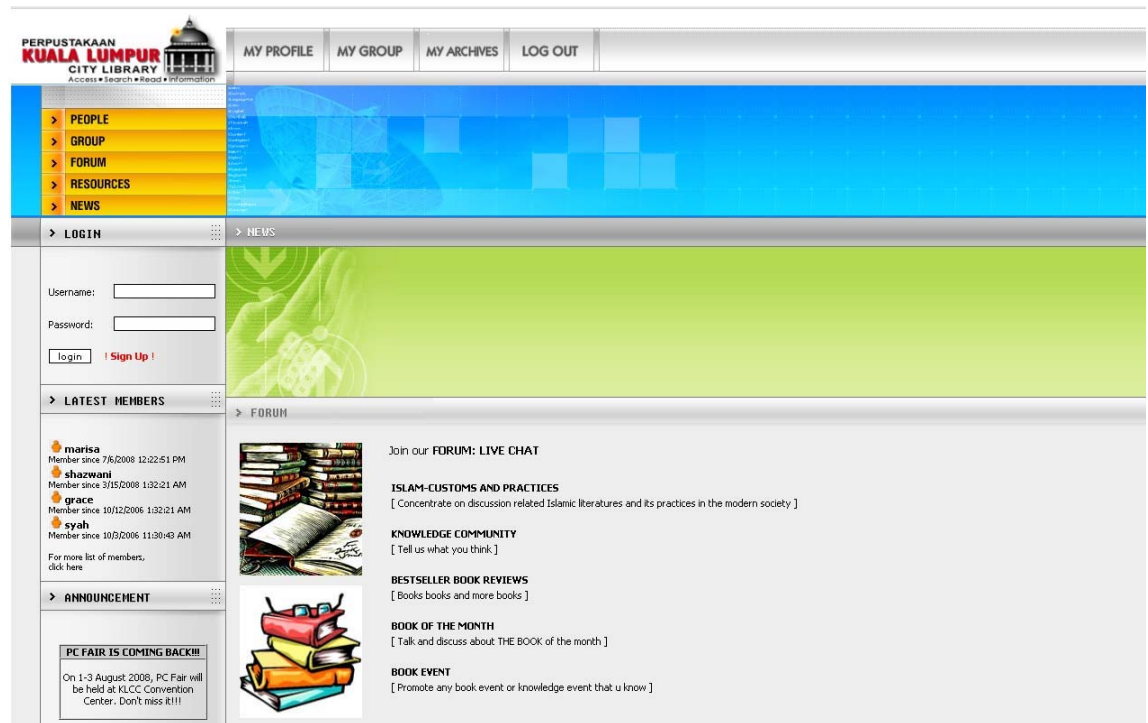
Figure 3. Homepage of Knowledge Sharing Portal

2.   My Profile Page will allow the user to edit their profile (refer to Figure 4). It is important for the user to update their profile as it allows them to get connected with the CoI based on the Group of Interest. Besides that, they can also be contacted by the other user via e-mail, therefore having an email address will help to create a better connection.

Figure 4. My profile page

3.   A member of this portal may communicates with each other by sending message (refer to Figure 5). It can be done by accessing a member's profile and use the send message function.

Figure 5.Member's profile page with 'send message' capabilities

4.   Another alternative to share their knowledge is via forum (refer to Figure 6). Forum allows user to share knowledge on books that they have read and other topics related to the library. In using forum, user needs to wait for other user to respond and it may take minute, hour, day or even month for a user to see the user's respond. However, thread of discussion will be viewed. Therefore, it may help the see the flow of knowledge and who contribute it. If not via forum, user can share their interest via live chat (refer to

Figure 7). They may chat in real time and get faster response from other patron or the librarian.
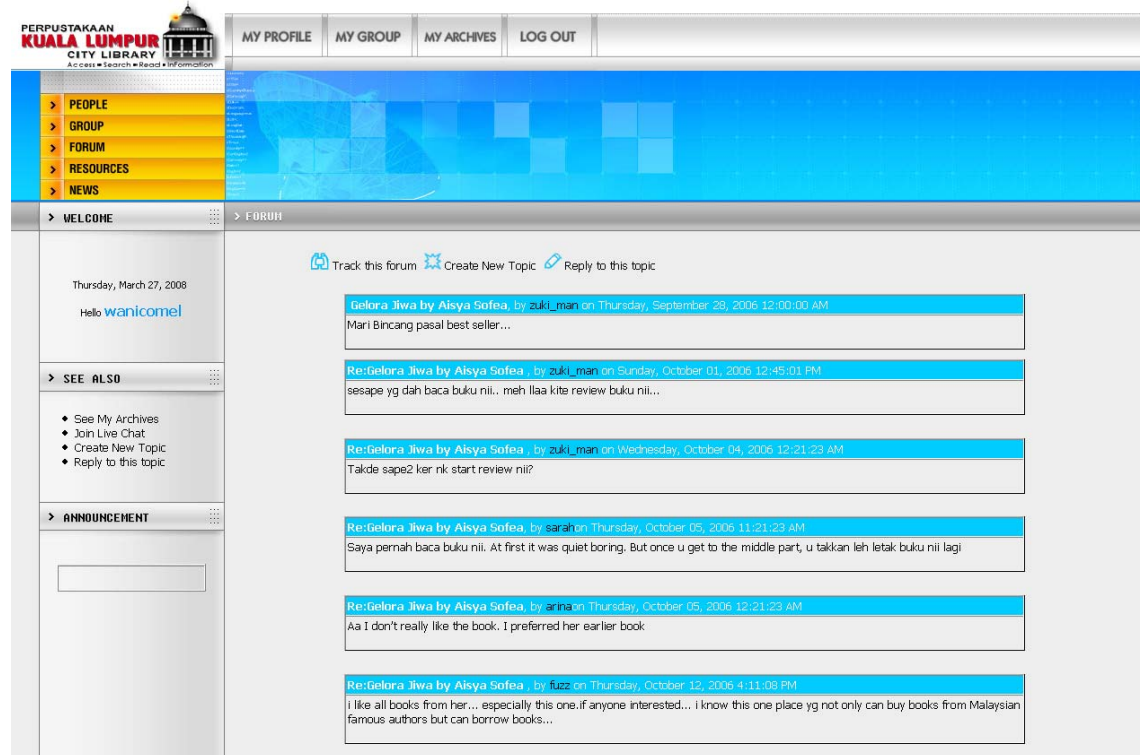
Figure 6. Forum page

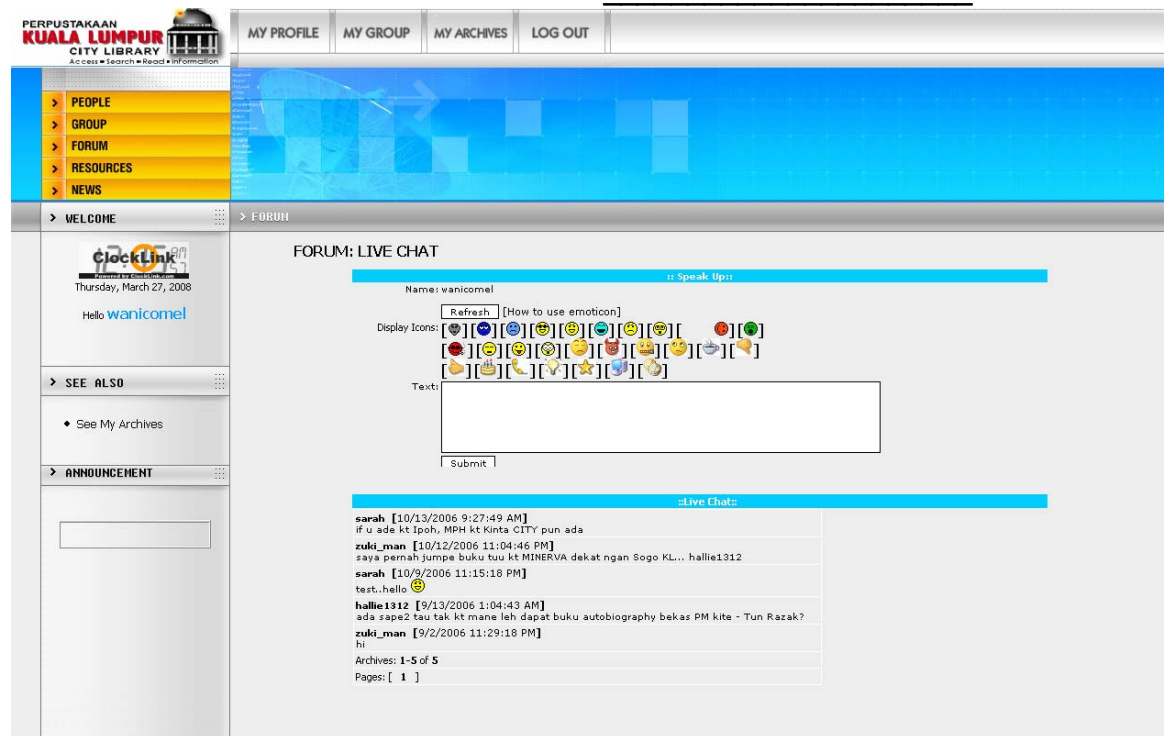Figure 7. Forum live chatting page

5. One user can look for the other user via the Group Profile page (refer to Figure 8). In this page, user may look for the CoI and share the knowledge with the respective person.
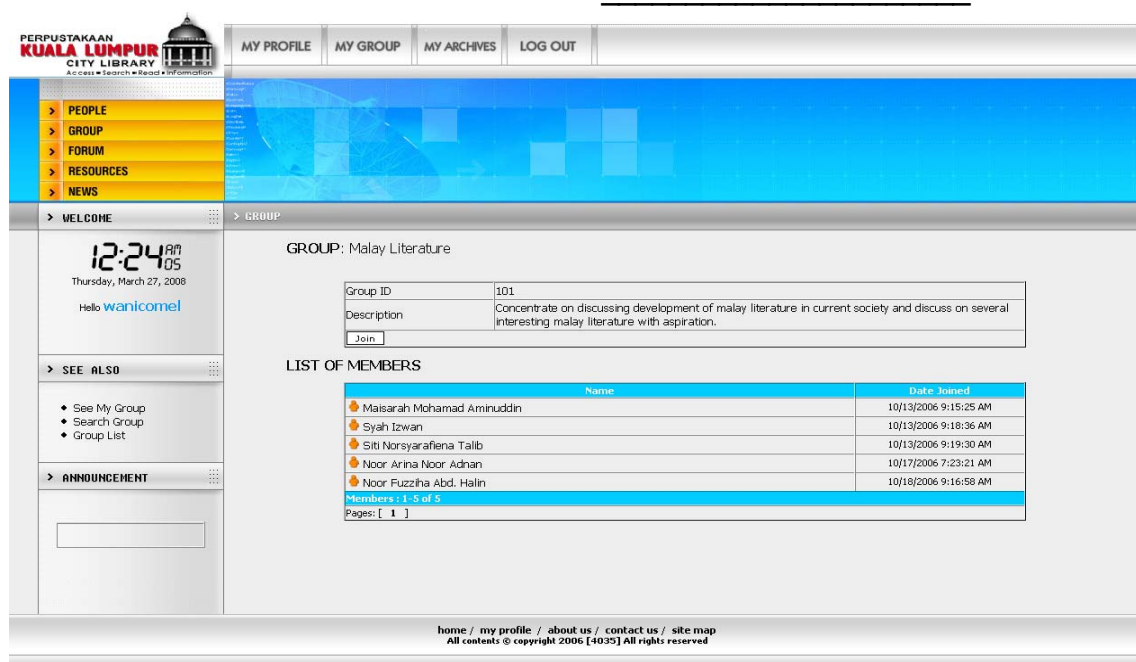
Figure 8. Group profile page

CONCLUSION

Based on the observation, survey and interviews, there is a need for the library to inculcate knowledge sharing among patron, librarian and other patrons. Knowledge sharing is not only a trend as it is being implemented with knowledge management but it allows user to share the power of knowledge. From this study, a portal was developed for the KL City Library community. Hopefully, it will be actively utilized by the user to share their knowledge in the library domain. Various communication tools were created to support the knowledge sharing activity. Further study can be conducted to check on how the user shares via this portal.

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