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A Review of Secondary Literature on Evidence Based Library Management

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Abstract: A fundemantal problem of practical sciences such as librarianship is that theory and practice overlap. Library professionals often find themselves in situations where they need answers to questions that emerge from their professional practice. Librarians need to have evidence on which to base their informed decisions. Evidence based library management (EBLM) is a relatively new concept for librarians. This paper will present a study that explores the way in a review secondary literature on EBLM. In that review will include historical process, important, problems of EBLM and frequently made mistakes about that. Creating an environment in library where an evidence based management is valued and encouraged will be a major factor in improving the quality of the contribution of librarians to their library and to their profession in the long term.
Keywords: library, librarians, library management, decision making, evidence based library management

Introduction

Evidence based library management is one of the most significant contemporary developments in professional library practice. Decision maker librarians need to consider and plan for practical steps that could be taken to introduce the concept of evidence based library management. This process will provide librarians with the information for implementing the crucial first step (Brice, Booth and Bexon, 2005).

EBLM is a new concept in the management literature. Essentially it is a simple idea. It entails finding the best evidence that you can, facing those facts and acting on those facts – rather than doing what everyone else does, what you have always done, or what you thought was true (Lakos, 2007).

If we consider all the studies carried out in the world, from the end of the 1990s, but in particular from the beginning of the 2000s, it can be seen that librarians and information science practitioners endeavored to create awareness of the subject of evidence based library management. Studies published by experts

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such as Amos Lakos, Andrew Booth and Jonathan Eldredge and planning set up by organisations such as IFLA have such a purpose.

Evidence-based library management provides a context within which to formulate questions which require the gathering of evidence in order to successfully answer the question posed. It is praxis-orientated and provides a practical application of the librarian's knowledge of the decision making process to facilitate and drive service development.(Derven and Valerie, 2011).

It is generally accepted that the concept of evidence based practice was first developed at McMaster University in Canada in the early 1990s, broadening out in the mid-1990s to "evidence-based healthcare" (Brophy, 2009).

The late 1990s saw evidence based healthcare spread to contiguous fields such as education, social work, human resources management and criminology. An even broader term evidence based practice captures the commonality of approaches accross a broad spectrum of professional endeavour (Booth, 2003).

The EBLM idea and the appeal which it from the beginning will have had to many reflective practitioners, can best be seen in the context of a growing crisis of legitimation in their enviroment. EBLM conceptualization, discourse and program as initially introduced to the library profession were directly and deliberately transferred, with a minimum of necessary adaptation, from the health care sector. The compelling idea seems to have been: if such an enlightened innovation can catch on in medicine, why not in library management?(Hunsucker, 2007).

1- What Is Evıdence?

For an institution, evidence consists of statistics and results which are obtained from important service-provision sources systematically, using verifiable methods, which have also been processed using standard procedures and converted into information. The institution then examines this information using its own resources and expertise, synthesisses it and interpretes the existing situation, procedures and service results.

For evidence based library management, the search of the literature in order to obtain evidence in a proper manner is especially important. Therefore, the more detailed the search carried out at this stage, the more successful the process of correctly formulating the question will be.

One problem is that those who wouldn't do something, will have many different and even conflicting reasons for not doing so, and will in some cases fundamentally disagree with each other on essential points. There are many takes on what evidence is and does, how to get it and to use it, how you classify it into types, how to judge its relevance or its force and how you should accept or ignore it (Hunsucker, 2007).

Apart from the question of what evidence consists of, how it is obtained and how it is used, how it is classified according to types or wider categories and how evidence is accepted or not accepted as evidence are stil problematic issues. For this reason, in the evidence based library system the accurate defination of the word "evidence" appears to be a priority factor for succesful management.

Another problem is that there is not a clear answer to the question of exactly how the results of evidence based research are going to help librarians in their

library appplications. For this purpose, Cohen and Crabtree have created a method of evaluation and have stated that the criteria which make up this system generally can also be used in other evaluation studies (Cohen and Crabtree, 2008) :

- Having an ethical research policy
- Evaluating the degree of importance of the research
- Having a comprehensive and consistant study proposal
- Using suitable and reliable methods
- Having a well-integrated idea structure
- Judging whether the proposed research study subject contains bias or not
- Judging whether the proposed research study subject is viable or not

2- Evidence Based Management

It would be wrong to think that if management decisions are based on the most solid evidence, that the managers will systematically learn from experience and the company applications will reflect principles based on solid ideas and analyses. The reason for this is that decisions about business tend to be based on hope and fear, trying to do as others do, what the upper-level managers did in the past and believed to be effective and their favoured ideologes- in short, based on a lot of unrealistic factors. Although evidence –based practices started in the medical field and later, with some difficulties, entered the field of business management, it has in fact changed the management style of many businesses very little (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2009).

The latest research shows that only 15 percent of the decisions made by doctors were evidence based. It was observed that doctors generally preferred the old information that they had learned at medical school or trusted traditions and practices which have never been proved (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

Managers trying to cure the ailments of their own institutions tend to behave in the same way as these doctors. Managers who are looking for the best solution to a problem also encounter more difficult problems than doctors do: because institutions, in contrast to people, differ from each other from the aspect of size, age and structure, in business life it is much more risky to assume that a “cure” which was developed and tested somewhere else could be applicable in this case also (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

Many managers damage their institutions by importing performance measurements and practices based on their own past experiences, without thinking. For example, a manager who knows that another institution with a different internal structure has a pay structure which works well may make a serious error by expecting that it will have the same effect in a different institiution with a different internal structure because, even if they produce the same goods, their target customer group and market and therefore their methods of distribution are completely different. For this reason the company needs to develop its own system of management(Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

Frequently Made Mistakes

One of the most frequently made mistakes is random comparision. Both doctors and managers look at people who they judge to have a high performance and try to copy other people or institutions, the result can only be an imperfect copy. In this case, the logical thinking behind the actions of the most successful performers, the reason why these actions are effective and how they will be effective in another situation are almost impossible to understand (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

For example, the secret of the Toyota Company's success is not, in fact the technology that they use but, on one hand, the integrated high quality management and the philosophy of always trying to improve and, on the other hand, tha managers being in communication with the production workers. Thanks to this policy, the Toyota Company can make use of the combined knowledge of the management team and the workforce. Secondly, different companies have different strategies, worforces and rivals. The system at Toyota assumes that their employees are team players and that their egos take second place to the interests of the company. In contrast to most American and European managers and workers, they possess the more cooperative approach to working life of Asian managers and workers (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

One of the strongest and most widespread obstacles to the use of evidence based managenet is ideology. People's opinions based on past experiences and practices tend to prevent them from adopting new and different methods of working and cause them to ignore new ways of working. Academics and other leaders of thought tend to be so faithful to their own theories that this prevents them from learning from new evidence. This effect is partly due to people only seekingh what they themselves believe (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2009).

Like other leaders, many upper level managers in the field of human resources hold wrong or incomplete opinions. They fall into the trap of second-rate ideas, logic and recommendations and this tendancy gives rise to unreliable applications and, as a result, damages both performance and individuals (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2009).

When Peter Druker was asked why managers tend to follow bad recommendations and not to make use of sound evidence, he replied that "thinking is a diffucult task and, rather than think for themselves, following managerial fashions seems like an attractive choice". In order to apply evidence based managenet, if you are prepared to think hard enough and you want to gain the advantages which are offered by this method, it is necessary first to pinpoint your blind spots, prejudices and the problem which exist in your company and, discovering the most sound logic and data, to take full responsibility for these things (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2009).

Beck and Manuel list some of the most common errors in research assessment that frameworks help identify. Some of those errors include (Suarez, 2010):

- Not asking the right question or not asking the question in the right way.
- Gathering data at the wrong time or place.

- Using unrepresantative samples, or failing to recognize possible rsponse bias among those members of the sample who do respond.
- Failing to control for or consider possible experimenter expectancy effects that arise when researchers' measurements are shaped to match their own hypotheses or expectations.
- Not allowing for research biases
- Over-generalizing to cocnclusions not directly supported by the research data.

3- Evidence Based Library Management

Historical Process of EBLM

The term evidence based librarianship (EBL) was first introduced into the library and information profession's vocabulary by Jonathan Eldredge (1997). Two years after introducing the term Eldredge challanged the library profession to establish " a shared definition and vision" for the concept. The first attempt to define evidence based library management emerged one year later when Andrew Booth (2000) adapted a pre-existing definition af evidence based practice. Booth notes that the definition has the "advantage of being coined by a librarian, Anne McKibbon from McMaster University" (Patridge, 2007).

In 2002 Eldredge put forward his definition again. At the same year Crumley and Koufogiannakis, stated that the current definitions of EBL were overly therotical, offered a "practical definition for everyday referral". The last definition places a greater emphasis on "the improvement of professional practice together with the addition of the librarian as practitioner-researcher" (Patridge, 2007).

For six years the term evidence based librarianship was the accepted term to refer to the application of edvidence based practice within the library profession. However, in 2003 Booth and Brice proposed an alternative label "evidence based information practice" (Booth, 2003).

Booth indicates that the library and information professional of the future will be a reflective practitioner "with the ability to critically analyse and make informed judgements" by drawing on a range of catalysts, with research evidence representing opprotunity (Patridge, 2007).

It did not take long before Booth's prediction came into fruition. In 2006 the launch of an open access, peer reviewed journal on EBL introduced a new phase to the professional discourse "Evidence Based Library and Information Practice". In the following year the fourth offering of the biennial EBL Conference series was scheduled to take place in the US in May – the event is significant for many reasons but most notably the move away from the existing EBL title to the new title of EBLIP (Patridge, 2007).

Evidence based practice is now accepted in medicine and healthcare world-wide. In a number of countries, it forms a mandatory basis for practice. It is backed up by a wide range of services, like the Cocharane Collaboration (http://www.cocharene.org/) which provides access to systematic reviews of the

medical literature. Healthcare practitioners world-wide use these reviews to ensure thar they are up to date with latest best practice (Brophy, 2009).

Parallels with the Cochrane and Campbell Collaborations, international networks of researchers systematically identifying, analysing and synthesising the evidence, have been drawn on several occasions but remain tantalisingly elusive (Booth, 2003).

EBLM have recently been the subject of wide-ranging discussions, conferences and publications, as well as the focus of continuing professional development opportunities and an EBLM website (http://www.eblib.net).

Whether it is called *evidence based librarianship, evidence based information practice, evidence based library and information practice or evidence based library management* the ongoing dialogue in the profession has clearly established that "research can and does play a vital role in professional practice" (Patridge, 2007).

The seeds of EBLM already exist in the knowledge and skills of practitioners and researchers in the field; however, we have yet to reap the benefits of the sum of parts. Much needs to be done to improve and strenghten the quality of research in the field and our ability to apply it in a meaningful way. We also need to see the knowledge and skills of practicing librarians as resources for evidence –based practice and learn to how to translate this tacit knowledge into best practices scenarios that can be shared for the good of all (Putting Our Knowledge to Work, 2009).

The Gap Between Theory and Practice

A fundemantal problem of practical sciences such as librarianship is that theory and practice overlap. Therefore librarians, in particular recent graduates, become aware of a serious gap between theory and practice.

Therefore, while experienced librarians are following an evidence based path, new graduates, or those who prefer book-learning, attempt to fill in the gaps between theory and practice.

A study carried out by Turner shows that very often people doing practical applications complain that the results are in conflict with the theories in the books they have studied. The only good aspect of this problem is that these people, thanks to the problems that they have come accross, will be able to contribute to the design of future studies (Turner, 2002).

Straddling this divide, with an uncertain foot in both camps, are the practitioner-researchers. Practitioner-researchers tend to use such designs as survey research, action research and secondary data analysis which are more likely to struggle for acceptance by bona fide academic researchers (Booth, 2003).

Over the years proposed solutions to bridge the research-practice gap have included mentors, secondments and collaborative research Networks. Such measures seek to address the organisational and structural barriers while doing little to challange the prevailing culture of librarianship. Achieving a real difference requires a paradigm shift. Over recent years many have claimed that pardigm is "evidence based practice" (Booth, 2003).

As information professionals, it seems logical that we should recognize the need to create, share and use our own knowledge base in information and library

science; however, this has not ncessarily been the case in the past. Like other professional groups, librarians tend to be action-oriented, relying on our own experience and professional judgment to make decisions (Putting Our Knowledge to Work, 2009).

Both the need to make decisions quickly and the lack of a clear connection between much library and information science research and the day-to-day problems faced by librarians make seeking and applying our own knowledge base a challenge. The increasing diversity of library and information science research also makes the development of a critical mass of applied action-oriented research problematic (Putting Our Knowledge to Work, 2009).

Practising Process of Evidence Based Lıbrary Management

It is important to recognise that EBLM is not just about the evidence itself, but also encompases the process by which the evidence is gathered and applied (Brophy, 2009). Proponents of EBLM have contributed to all stages of the process, taking the techniques of the wider paradigm and replicating or modifying them before applying them to their own practice. EBLM emphasises five requisite process (Booth, 2003).

Step 1- Define the problem / question: The first stage of EBLM is to focus or formulate your question, which involves converting a precise, yet possibly vaguely expressed, information need from practice into an answerable, focused, structured question (Brice, 2005).

Eldredge comments that questions drive the entire EBLM process. EBLM assigns highest priority to posed questions with greatest relevance to library practice. The wording and content of the questions will determine what kinds of research designs are needed to secure access (Eldredge, 2000).

Step 2- Searching the Literature: : The second stage in the EBLM process requires a comprehensive and thorough search of the literature, to identify evidence relevant to the topic in question. Finding evidence to answer questions in the domain of library science is a complicated task, due to the fact that the evidence base is contained in multiple and varied information sources. This means that information might appear in the literature base of many other disciplines, as well as in the main library and information science databases. This may require searching the management and marketing literature, or the education or computing literature. Also, in terms of research quality, LIS research typically utilises designs of limited applicability, such as the user survey. The most appropriate study design will vary according to the topic under investigation (Brice, Booth and Bexon, 2005).

For the purpose of this study a search of Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) was conducted using free text words such as social sciences. Our search was limited to major databeses due to access issues and other databases that may also have been useful for our question are the educational sources such as ERIC, ASSIA, INSPEC and Social Science Citation Index (Brice, Booth and Bexon, 2005).

Step 3- Filtering Search Results: Growing interest in EBLM, encouraging practitioners to base decisions on sound research evidence, has stimulated the development of so-called “methodological filters”. Such methodological search

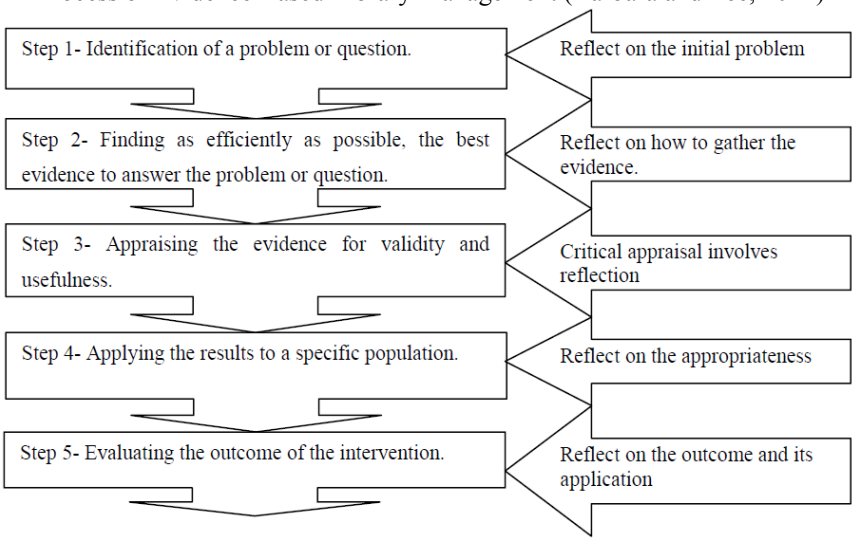
filters initially arose out of researchers' concerns in locating "Randomized Controlled Trials" to avoid publication bias, associated with flawed results and invalid conclusions (Booth, 2003).

Step 4- Appraising the Literature: Appraising the literature means critical appraisal actually. Critical appraisal uses intrinsic (design) rather than extrinsic (author, journal, institution) factors to help the practitioner decide whether an article is worth reading. The more rigorous intrinsic factors that relate to research design and aspects of methodolgy are the focus of critical appraisal (Brice, Booth and Bexon, 2005).

In other words we put aside our prejudices regarding the source or nature of a research study and judge it entirely on its own merits. To do this we need to take into account the three important factors of validity, reliability and applicability (Brice, Booth and Bexon, 2005).

Step 5- Applying the results in practice: It is important that the final stages of the EBLM process, applying the results and evaluating your performance are followed through. A range of behavioural and educational interventions exist to facilitate a culture of change, which although observed in the health environment, are transferable to other settings, such as audit, accreditation, benchmarking and ongoing evaluation alongside innovation (Brice, Booth and Bexon, 2005).

Process of Evidence Based Library Management (Barbara and Lee, 2011)



Thus this figure is the framing of the question and the search for relevant, valid, reliable and applicable evidence to illuminate it which are critical, as is the review of the performance of the application to practice once it has been completed (Brophy, 2009). Therefore it would not be wrong to conclude that evidence based applications in fact consist of a series of processes which replicate and re-enforce each other; those carrying out the applications reflect their own experiences onto the processes and at the same time gain experience.

Conclusion

These external environmental forces necessitate renewed examination of the library's future as a viable information framework. Jerry Campbell examined a number of possible future roles for the academic library. He stated: Because of the fundemental role that academic libraries have played in the past century, it is tremendously difficult to imagine a college or university without a library. Considering the extraordinary pace with which knowledge is moving to the web, it is equally diffucult to imagine what an academic library will be and do in another decade (Lakos, 2007).

The existing standards for measuring management science are very faulty and mostly unuseable. The only way to avoid this faulty information is to, as well as researching successful companies, to study unsuccessful companies and to pinpoint the factors which make them unsuccessful. Also, it would be a useful exercise to regularly do small experiments and make observations and to consider and constantly evaluate the data obtained from these experiments (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2009).

To become a leader of the age, to re-organise, to adopt 6 Sigma or to become an organisation focussed on strategy may be useful for some organisations but there is no single correct path to take for every company. We must accept that there is no magic formula for success. Similarly, there is no need to follow the small number of guurus who disapprove of an excessively simple approach. Prahalad, who heads the list of many lists of gurus, a few years ago closed his address to a large crowd with these words: "If someone tells you that they have the answer, it must mean that they did not understand the question" (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2009).

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