

Chapter 11

Scientific Fields Transfer Heritage Knowledge: Knowledge Management of Heritage Communication

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ABSTRACT

Almost all the scientific fields transfer heritage knowledge on their own way because science itself is a mean of heritage. Knowledge management gives some models and methods for understanding how intangible elements of our culture and heritage can be transferred, including that knowledge which let us understand, respect, and appreciate the tangible and intangible heritage elements. The framework this chapter offers the reader the attributes of knowledge communities, as well as the explanation of the challenges heritage communication have to face: how to keep alive the communication channels and processes. Disappearance of languages, forgotten code and symbol systems, low capacity, and motivation for acceptance of new knowledge, the natural process of forgetting, as well as the authentication of the knowledge owner and the knowledge to be shared are just a few to be discussed to make the readers understood how heritage communication can be effective and efficient.

INTRODUCTION

Science is a significant contributor to heritage knowledge across various fields. Knowledge management offers models and methods to understand how intangible cultural elements and heritage can be transferred. The goal of this study is to present the general concept and methodologies of knowledge management which can be applied in all areas and levels of heritage knowledge transfer and heritage communication. It highlights some significant challenges following the logic and process steps of a general communication model. These issues should be addressed to ensure effective and efficient heritage communication.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6217-1.ch011

Before discussing them, it is worth to overview some fundamental attributes of the term ‘knowledge’ itself and its relation to heritage.

Throughout the last 2500 years of history, there have been plenty of authors presenting definitions of knowledge. Confucius (Tsai, 214), Plato (Copleston, 1993; Ch. XIX), Dewey and Bentley (1949), Polanyi (1966), Drucker (1959), Zeleny (1987), Ackoff (1989), Nonaka (1991), Wiig (1993), Davenport and Prusack (1998), Zins (2007), Wallace (2007) and Rowley (2007) are just some among the ones presenting significant points of view about this term. Although there are many aspects of knowledge, and numerous commonly linked terms, such as understanding, intelligence, experience, information and wisdom could have been discussed, this study does not intend to introduce deeper the map of connected terminology, which is many times overlapping. (Wallace, 2007, Rowley, 2007; Psuf10, 2014; Z. Karvalics, 2015)

However, the one most applicable of definitions for heritage point of view was given by Sveiby (1997:37) interpreting knowledge as the ability to act, solve problems, impact processes, recall and present something or create something new. Polanyi recognized two categories of knowledge: explicit and tacit. (Polanyi, 1966) The main difference between them is the ease by which they can be expressed and transferred. Explicit, or codified or formal knowledge can be described, expressed, and transferred using language, symbols, drawings, music, etc. This type of knowledge can be taught through formal learning processes and is often transferable even without the presence of a teacher, as long as the learner understands the necessary elements of the social and technical context. However, tacit knowledge is intangible and can only be transferred through a learning-by-doing process, where the master and the student work together for an extended period of time, typically through informal education. Thus, tacit knowledge can only be stored in human minds, making the preservation and the transfer challenging.

Knowledge is Heritage

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defined the intangible cultural heritage in Art. 2 as follows: it means “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.” (UNESCO, 2022:6)

This document identifies some significant domains in which the intangible cultural heritage manifests. Among others, it mentions knowledge in the following context: “knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe”. This definition is a broad coverage of this topic including both knowledge categories of Polanyi (explicit and tacit) and it is necessary: in many cases we need both to have a complex knowledge about a topic. For example, for demonstration of a traditional folk dance, the performers need to know the concept, the tradition, the “story” behind, as well as proper skills and experience are needed for an appropriate adaptation to the given situation, space and other conditions and the high quality presentation of the dance itself.

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