

STRATEGIC TALENT MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF UiTM LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the innovative talent pool management practices at UiTM Library aimed at enhancing staff skills and competencies. Recognizing the critical value of collective expertise, the library has fostered a culture of continuous learning and information exchange. The Talent Pool program covers ten key subject areas, detailing initial phases, talent selection processes, monitoring mechanisms, and best practices for developing Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). By highlighting these areas, the paper showcases how the UiTM Library effectively develops and nurtures experts who contribute significantly to both the library and the broader academic community. Significant achievements include increasing speed reading instructors from 17 to 52, certifying staff as Microsoft Office Specialists, and promoting active participation in academic writing and conference presentations. Notably, the formation of a 20-member Systematic Literature Review (SLR) team resulted in the development of a microcredential module for the university. These outcomes underscore the importance of strategic talent management in academic libraries, demonstrating the transformation of traditional roles into a dynamic, skilled workforce capable of meeting evolving demands. This paper provides valuable insights for other institutions seeking to implement similar talent management and development strategies.

Keywords: *Talent pool management; continuous learning; Subject Matter Experts; strategic talent management; UiTM Library*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As libraries continue to evolve, so too must the strategies employed for talent management among library staff. The transition towards dynamic practices that prioritize shared knowledge, continuous learning, and collaborative efforts ensures that library staff's skills and expertise are optimally utilized, contributing to the vitality and adaptability of modern libraries (Bradshaw, 2015). This evolution is essential for libraries to remain relevant and effective in the ever-growing landscape of information and scholarship.

Historically, talent management strategies for library staff were characterized by traditional methodologies (Pankl, 2004). These involved periodic training opportunities designed to meet individual needs, with knowledge often perceived as personal assets for individual advancement. Occasionally, staff members would share their newly acquired knowledge with colleagues, fostering a collaborative spirit within the library community (Hermans & Castiaux, 2016).

However, this approach was not sufficient to meet the demands of a rapidly changing academic environment.

In response, the UiTM Library initiated an innovative Talent Pool Development strategy in 2022, aligned with the university's strategic vision to become a globally competitive institution by 2023. This initiative aimed to enhance the overall competitiveness of UiTM by cultivating and harnessing the diverse talents within the library staff, aligning their growth with the broader goals of the university.

This groundbreaking effort focused on creating a thorough strategy for Talent Pool Development, meticulously crafted to align seamlessly with the UiTM Library Talent Development Roadmap. The intent was to not only enhance the overall competitiveness of UiTM but also to strategically cultivate and harness the diverse talents within the library staff, aligning their growth with the broader goals of the university. In this initiative, considerable effort was invested in crafting a comprehensive strategy for talent development,

carefully tailored to align with the UiTM Library Talent Development Roadmap (as illustrated in Figure 1). This roadmap served as a guiding framework, directing the library's trajectory and playing a pivotal role in steering towards its overarching goal of actively contributing to UiTM's vision of becoming a Globally Renowned University (GRU) by 2025. Acknowledging the pivotal role of talent development in attaining institutional excellence, the library leadership exhibited a forward-thinking stance, recognizing that the capabilities and skills of staff members are instrumental for the success of libraries and the retention of high-potential individuals (Saadat & Eskandari, 2016). They seamlessly integrated the library's strategic direction with UiTM's broader vision, emphasizing a commitment to aligning individual goals with the university's overarching mission. This integration signifies a proactive stance towards fostering talent and aligning it with the institution's long-term objectives (Shravanthi & Sumanth, 2008).

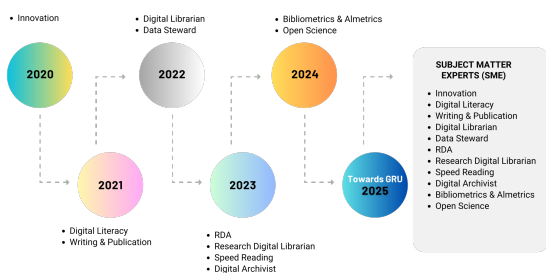


Figure 1. UiTM Library Talent Development Roadmap

The Talent Pool development approach attempted to recognise, foster, and harness the library staff's latent potential, moulding them into a group of highly talented professionals. This pooled knowledge aspires to move the library forward and position it as an important contributor to the worldwide academic environment (Omotunde & Alegbeleye, 2021). The UiTM Library introduces the Talent Pool initiative, which is designed to improve the knowledge and skills of library workers in ten critical subject areas. As per Caudron (1999) the actions of delineating crucial competencies, assessing internal talent, and offering developmental opportunities are recognized as key components of successfully implementing succession planning within an organization. These topic areas serve as essential pillars, driving concentrated efforts to improve the capacities of library workers, allowing them to emerge as experts in their respective

professions. This effort includes a variety of activities such as specialized training programs, career development opportunities, and knowledge-sharing platforms. Each program is precisely tailored to amplify the talents and expertise of library professionals, assuring a well-rounded enhancement of their professional capacities.

This paper examines the Talent Pool program at UiTM Library, detailing its ten key subject areas. It outlines the program's initial phases, talent selection processes, monitoring mechanisms, and best practices for cultivating Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). By showcasing these elements, the paper demonstrates how UiTM Library effectively develops and nurtures experts, contributing significantly to both the library and the broader academic community. The findings highlight the diverse skills of library staff, from front-desk hospitality to behind-the-scenes roles in collection curation and program design. This study underscores the extraordinary talents within libraries and their critical role in advancing the institution's mission.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept Of Talent Management

Talent management is a strategic approach to attracting, developing, retaining, and utilizing individuals with the requisite skills and aptitude to meet current and future organizational needs. Lewis and Heckman (2006) describe talent management as encompassing a range of practices including workforce planning, talent acquisition, employee development, succession planning, and performance management. The aim is to create a high-performance workplace, encourage a learning culture, and ensure that an organization remains competitive by having the right people in the right jobs at the right time. This is particularly critical in dynamic and knowledge-intensive environments where the value of human capital is paramount.

Strategic Talent Management

Collings and Mellahi (2009) argue that strategic talent management involves identifying key positions that contribute to an organization's sustainable competitive advantage and developing a talent pool to fill these roles. This approach emphasizes the importance of aligning talent management practices with organizational

goals and long-term strategic objectives. However, many organizations face challenges in implementing strategic talent management due to a lack of clear frameworks and methodologies.

Talent Management In Academic Libraries

In the past twenty years, there has been a notable surge in the prominence of talent management (TM) and talent development (TD), recognizing the significance of human resources as crucial strategic partners essential for organizational success (Kaliannan et al., 2023). Academic libraries, in particular, have undergone transformations driven by advancements in information technology and communication, as well as the evolving needs of library users. These transformations necessitate adaptation and innovation to effectively cater to the diverse needs of the academic community (Tanloet & Tuamsuk, 2011).

Evolving Roles And Competencies

The evolving landscape of university libraries and the information profession calls for continuous learning and adaptation to embrace technological advancements and integrate them seamlessly into library operations. Over the past two decades, there has been a noticeable shift in the job roles and expectations of academic librarians, affecting all levels of library staff, from shelvers to head librarians. This shift necessitates corresponding adjustments in skills and competencies (Woo, 2007). To support this process, library management should prioritize allocating additional time for learning opportunities, enabling librarians to deepen their commitment and further enhance their professional skills and competencies (Nazrinda A. Samah et al., 2021). However, many libraries face challenges in providing adequate support and resources for continuous professional development (Irfan et al., 2015).

Best Practices And Outcomes

Bugg (2015) highlights that effective talent management in academic libraries involves identifying potential leaders, providing continuous professional development, and creating pathways for career advancement. Libraries must balance traditional roles with emerging functions, ensuring staff are both versatile and specialized. A study by Wong (2017) found that libraries that invest in talent management practices, such as

leadership development programs and cross-functional training, report higher levels of employee engagement and better service delivery. This underscores the need for tailored talent management strategies in academic libraries.

Identified Gaps

While there is extensive literature on talent management and its importance, there is a paucity of studies that specifically address the implementation and outcomes of talent management initiatives in academic libraries, particularly in the context of developing countries. The existing research often lacks detailed analysis of the specific strategies and methodologies that can be employed to effectively manage and develop library staff talent.

This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Talent Pool program at UiTM Library. It will examine the program's structure, implementation processes, and outcomes, offering insights into best practices and potential challenges. By doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on talent management in academic libraries and provides a framework that other institutions can adopt or adapt to enhance their talent management practices.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology section details the selection of ten subject areas within the Talent Pool and describes the processes for talent selection, training, and monitoring. It emphasizes the strategic alignment with UiTM's broader goals.

Selection Of Subject Areas

The selection of the ten subject areas (as illustrated in Figure 2) in the UiTM Library Talent Pool was a deliberate process aimed at integrating disciplines intricately connected to the library domain. These chosen areas are designed to impart valuable skills beneficial to both the library and the wider university community. By incorporating subject areas that extend beyond traditional library functions, this approach acknowledges the varied skills possessed by library staff and their potential contributions to broader academic objectives (Armstrong, 2006).

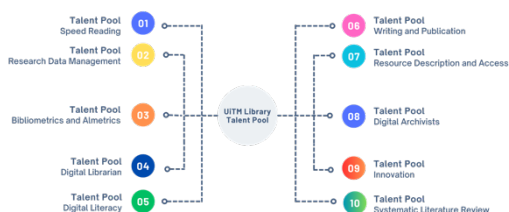


Figure 2. The 10 subjects of UiTM Library Talent Pool

Each subject area within the Talent Pool underwent a meticulous process of definition and description, outlining its specific purpose and the intended outcomes for library staff participating in it (as illustrated in Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of Talent Pool Subject Areas at UiTM Library

Subject Area	Purpose	Outcomes
Speed Reading	To cultivate a cohort of trainers well-versed in speed reading skills.	Equip staff members to become trainers, sharing skills within the university, enhancing individual expertise, and contributing to broader skill dissemination.
Research Data Management	To create an adept liaison team for the RDM initiative within the university.	Nurture staff to lead initiatives and acquire expertise in RDM activities, serving as liaisons for the library and advancing the RDM effort within the academic community.
Bibliometrics and Almetrics	To develop staff who will lead in acquiring bibliometric skills.	Gain proficiency in quantitative and statistical analysis of publications, actively support researchers,

		ensure successful publication of manuscripts, and enhance visibility of researchers' work.
Digital Librarian	To develop skilled staff members in delivering modules on library information skills.	Utilize educational technology to integrate teaching, learning, and research in a digital setting, establish stronger connections with faculties, and participate in formal instruction of critical information literacy.
Digital Literacy	To develop staff who lead in honing skills related to information retrieval, assessment, and delivery.	Acquire technical skills for technology usage, support the library and its users in digital literacy, and enhance digital proficiency using digital media and communication tools.
Writing and Publication	To develop staff skills related to writing and publishing research papers.	Assist researchers and the UiTM community in understanding publishing requirements, acquire necessary skills, guide and support researchers in scholarly writing and publication activities.

Resource Description and Access	To create a team capable of mastering newly established cataloging standards.	Engage in initiatives supporting the library, collaborate with other library communities to enhance proficiency in new cataloging standards, and contribute to broader literacy and mastery of these standards.
Digital Archivists	To assemble staff with expertise in managing and accessing digital materials within archival collections.	Lead in mastering methods, effective management, creation of metadata records, formulate policies for digital materials, and cultivate professionals well-versed in digital archiving processes and policies.
Innovation	To build staff skilled in employing methods to improve service delivery through innovative processes.	Support the library and university departments by sharing expertise in organizational innovation and creativity, offer innovative ideas, and elevate the efficiency and effectiveness of services.
Systematic Literature Review	To assemble staff proficient in	Support researchers and the UiTM community in

	techniques and methods for conducting SLR research.	producing systematic literature review journal articles, enhance staff capabilities in guiding and facilitating SLR production, and empower staff to independently produce papers.
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Talent Selection Process

The talent selection process commenced with a promotional strategy to inform and engage library staff (Kaliannan et al., 2023; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). This included the use of posters and other promotional materials to clarify the objectives of the Talent Pool and highlight the benefits of participation. Staff members provided feedback on their preferred talent areas through the UiTM library mobile app, allowing for efficient and systematic gathering of talent pool selections from 558 staff members across 39 library campuses (as illustrated in Figure 3). This method streamlined the administrative tasks associated with managing and analyzing feedback, ensuring comprehensive and meaningful input from the library staff.

The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Talent Pool - List of Staff". It includes a dropdown menu for "Campus" (set to "Please Select...") and another for "Talent Pool" (set to "Talent Pool 1: Speed Reading"). Below this, it displays "Total Staff: 57" and a table with columns for various UiTM campuses: SEMALANG, MELAKA, SELATAN, SELANGOR, PERLIS, PAHANG, SARAWAK, JOHOR, PULAU PINANG, KEDAH, NEGERI SEMBILAN, PERAK, SABAH, and TERENGGANU. The table contains numerical data for each campus, with SEMALANG having the highest count at 21. At the bottom, there are buttons for "Excel", "CSV", and "PDF".

Figure 3. Data Management Platform for UiTM Library Talent Pool

Training Programs

Following the talent selection, extensive training programs were meticulously designed and executed for the selected talents. Each subject area underwent a detailed process of definition and description, outlining its specific purpose and intended outcomes for participating staff members. The training programs included specialized sessions, career development opportunities, and knowledge-sharing platforms. However, financial constraints have limited the extent of training that could be offered initially.

The library is committed to consistently evaluating and adapting its training plans to include as many participants as possible within the available resources.

Monitoring Talent Activity

It is vital to closely monitor the activities within the talent pool to assess its efficacy and track the advancement of individual staff members (Makarius et al., 2024). The UiTM Library introduced a specialized sub-platform accessible via the profiling menu to enhance the monitoring process. This platform provides a holistic overview of training-related data, enabling talent pool managers to make informed decisions.

The platform tracks activities and training associated with the Talent Pool (as illustrated in Figure 4), detailing trainers and trainees for specific subjects. By monitoring these activities, the library can identify areas needing improvement or additional support, ensuring the continuous growth and development of its talent pool members.

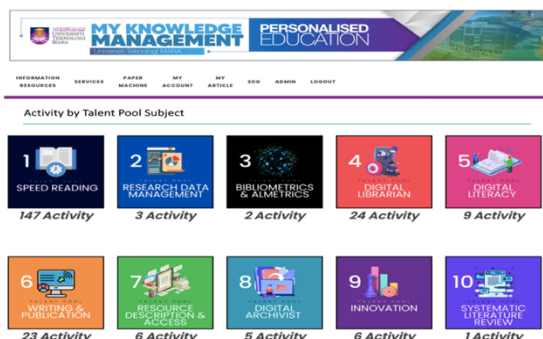


Figure 4. Monitoring Talent Activity Platform

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After its successful launch in September 2022, the UiTM Library is pleased to announce the formation of a cadre of subject-matter experts in specialized fields. Through dedicated efforts and focused training endeavors, the library has cultivated a group of individuals who demonstrate extensive expertise and competency in their respective areas of specialization.

Expansion Of Speed Reading Instructors

The number of speed reading instructors has increased from 17 in 2022 to 52 in 2023. This expansion enabled the library to cater to approximately 2,075 participants within the

university community, reflecting a substantial growth in the program's reach and impact. Speed reading has also been integrated as a performance indicator for the library in 2023, underscoring its strategic importance. The significant increase in speed reading instructors and participants highlights the successful implementation and growing importance of this program. It aligns with the findings of Wong (2017), who emphasized the positive impact of tailored talent management practices on employee engagement and service delivery. The integration of speed reading as a performance indicator further underscores its strategic importance.

Certification In Microsoft Office Specialist: Excel Associate

A team of staff members has achieved certification as Microsoft Office Specialists in Excel. This certification marks a significant advancement in promoting digital literacy within the library. The certified staff members are now equipped to offer expert guidance and support to a wide range of library users, enhancing their proficiency in data analysis and other Excel functionalities.

Academic Paper Writing And Presentations

The active involvement of staff in writing and publishing academic papers, along with their success in presenting at international and national conferences, highlights the objective of the writing and publication pool. This pool aims to cultivate a team of staff members who lead in developing skills related to research paper writing and publishing. By enhancing staff capabilities in scholarly writing and publishing, the library supports the academic mission of UiTM. The involvement of staff in academic writing and conferences demonstrates the success of the writing and publication pool. This aligns with the strategic talent management framework proposed by Collings and Mellahi (2009), which emphasizes the development of talent pools to fill key organizational roles. By enhancing staff capabilities in scholarly writing and publishing, the library supports the academic mission of UiTM.

Systematic Literature Review

The formation of a 20-member SLR writing team marks a significant achievement in this area. This

team has been trained to master the techniques and methods involved in conducting research through SLR, actively supporting researchers and the UiTM community in producing high-quality systematic literature review journal articles. This team has been trained to master the techniques and methods involved in conducting research through SLR, actively supporting researchers and the UiTM community in producing high-quality systematic literature review journal articles. A notable accomplishment of this team is the development of a microcredential module for the university. The establishment of a dedicated SLR writing team and their work on the microcredential module align with the principles of strategic talent management by ensuring that staff are equipped with specialized skills critical to the academic mission of the library.

Other Subject Areas

Each of the ten subject areas saw significant achievements, extending staff roles beyond traditional functions. This includes advancements in digital literacy, bibliometrics, research data management, digital archiving, and more, demonstrating the comprehensive development efforts of the Talent Pool initiative.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results of this study have significant implications for academic libraries aiming to enhance their talent management practices. The UiTM Library's Talent Pool initiative serves as a model for other institutions seeking to develop and harness the diverse talents of their staff. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of such initiatives on organizational performance and staff retention.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the efforts undertaken by UiTM Library to develop expertise among staff in ten subject areas underscore its unwavering dedication to meeting the diverse needs of the UiTM community. Through initiatives such as the expansion of speed reading programs and other notable achievements, the library demonstrates a commitment to empowering individuals with the skills and knowledge essential for success in today's increasingly digital landscape. Looking ahead, the UiTM Library remains resolute in its commitment to innovation and adaptability to

address the changing requirements of its users. By harnessing technology, expertise, and strategic collaborations, the library is well-positioned to enhance the educational journey and enable individuals to excel in both academic and professional spheres. As we peer into the future, it is evident that the UiTM Library will continue to serve as a beacon of excellence in nurturing subject matter experts, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and enriching the lives of the UiTM community.

7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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