

# **The Human-AI Nexus: Optimizing Human Capital and Knowledge Management Practices in the Age of AI**

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It is important to begin this conversation by acknowledging that our professional practice is embedded in an institutional framework, within which higher learning institutions operate. In this sense, the main purpose of places of learning like Nazarbayev University, a research-one institution, is to create, share, and apply knowledge. This entails a commitment to knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination, and then the application of knowledge for techno-scientific purposes. This formula drives the current creation of products and services worldwide. Interestingly, all this happens in a time-space compression and a consumer intensification which has resulted in the fact that every product becomes 5% obsolete every month. Yes: every product becomes 5% obsolete every month! So, in less than two years any given product has to be discarded and something new has to replace it. Therefore, the amount of innovation that has to take place in order for this logic to exist is simply mindboggling. With this as an operational framework, we need to ask ourselves whether libraries, in intensive research institutions, are applying and fomenting knowledge management practices that support the levels of innovation necessary for the industry to succeed with this pace of productivity or not.

Taking a closer look at how innovation is driven in the business world, we understand that only about 1% of innovative ideas that lead to real products and services are produced in formal meetings; the other 99% is produced in informal settings where people connect, share, and collaborate in the open. Therefore, having people meet in a formal room to innovate just doesn't work. So then, this being the case, why do we continue seeing libraries providing almost exclusively the same setting where having people mingle and share ideas, talk, discuss, collaborate, is strictly prohibited? More broadly, we have now the obligation to ask ourselves how can our libraries, within our universities, foster innovation not as a random or an isolated occurrence, but as a product of design?

Designing a context within which library users can freely exchange and discuss ideas is essential to drive innovation in today's world. It is said that over 90% of knowledge creation takes place in informal knowledge sharing contexts. So, what kind of informal contexts are we providing in our library systems? Are we actually providing any? At what cost are we defending the obsolete system of quiet rooms and compartmentalized cubicles; where not knowledge can be shared and no informal practices of knowledge creation can be articulated? In the Age of AI, where so much has already been transformed by deep learning and large language models, how can we not innovate the very space where our students and faculty gather to study and produce ideas; a place that because of its democratic nature, at least within the institution, can effectively allow different processes of cross-fertilization of ideas and possibilities.

Transforming an institution (the library system) that is in itself resistant to change is undoubtedly a tremendous challenge. However, I see in writing-center-pedagogy an interesting model which could be used to potentially introduce some important changes as to how libraries should allow people to be. Embedded in this framework is the methodology of tutoring and peer-mentoring, hosting writing circles and open forum discussions, and embracing inclusive education, all of which are collaboratively in nature—just as education should be. Education doesn't happen in a vacuum, neither does community-making. One of the main ideas I take from this collaborative pedagogy is allowing for a context of horizontal knowledge creation. Figures of authority telling others what to do (vertical knowledge creation) is simply unthinkable; instead, you must uphold the idea of knowledge as a common quest.

If productivity is driven by culture, process, and infrastructure, then we need to ask ourselves what is the culture of our institution(s)? What type of processes we have in place? Are they vertical or horizontal? Do they foster collaboration? How do we organize our infrastructure? Does it look to isolate and include participants? In the end, the question is the same: do we have institutions that foster informal sharing processes in a horizontal and collaborative way or do we continue to have spaces where you get a book and have to sit quietly without disturbing others? Libraries must shift paradigms; they must become spaces where a horizontal exchange of ideas is possible.

There is also a generational imperative that we must take into account. While older generations were educated in traditional classrooms where bodies were disciplined to endure 8-hour days of passive learning; younger generations thrive with movement and human connection. Both Millennials and Gen-Z students cannot keep their attention on one single task for very long, yet traditional library settings ask them to sit quietly without conversing with others, nor moving—which for them is rather ludicrous. “If the Mountain won't go to Mohammed, then Mohammed must come to the Mountain”. It is about time that we, as educators and librarians, finally adapt our professional practices to the people we are providing our service for. We must adapt to their needs, to their personalities, to the way in which they learn, and excel, and thrive; failure to do so will continue to work as an active process of disenfranchising students from the very services that justify our professional careers.