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Knowledge Management Frameworks for Digitizing and Preserving Ichthyological Taxonomic Data

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Abstract: Ichthyological taxonomic data form a critical foundation for biodiversity research, fisheries management, conservation planning, and ecological assessment. However, such data are traditionally dispersed across physical specimens, legacy literature, museum archives, and heterogeneous digital repositories, making long-term preservation, accessibility, and reuse increasingly challenging. While digitization initiatives have significantly expanded the availability of fish taxonomic records, the absence of structured knowledge management (KM) frameworks often results in fragmented datasets, semantic inconsistencies, and loss of contextual taxonomic expertise. This paper examines the role of knowledge management frameworks in the systematic digitization, organization, and preservation of ichthyological taxonomic data. Drawing upon principles from biodiversity informatics, information science, and KM theory, the study analyzes existing digitization practices, data standards, and semantic technologies used in ichthyological taxonomy. It highlights key challenges related to taxonomic revisions, synonymy, provenance tracking, expert knowledge capture, and long-term digital preservation. Based on this analysis, the paper emphasizes the need for integrated KM frameworks that combine standardized metadata, ontology-driven knowledge representation, version control, and governance mechanisms to ensure data integrity and sustainability. By framing ichthyological taxonomy as a dynamic knowledge system rather than static data, this work contributes a conceptual foundation for designing robust, interoperable, and future-ready digital infrastructures capable of preserving taxonomic knowledge across generations.

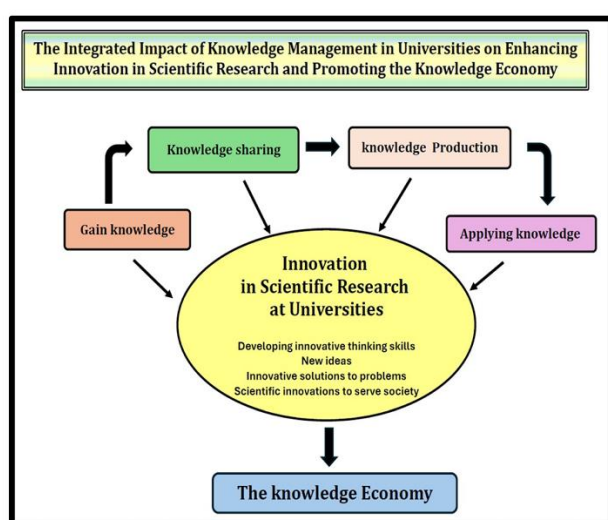
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INTRODUCTION

Ichthyological taxonomic data represent a cornerstone of biodiversity science, providing essential knowledge for species identification, evolutionary studies, fisheries management, conservation planning, and ecological monitoring. Accurate taxonomic information on fishes supports decision-making in areas such as sustainable exploitation of aquatic resources, assessment of climate change impacts on marine and freshwater ecosystems, and formulation of biodiversity conservation policies. However, much of this taxonomic knowledge has historically been recorded in fragmented and heterogeneous forms, including museum specimen labels, handwritten field notes, taxonomic monographs, catalogues, and dispersed institutional databases, limiting its accessibility and long-term usability [1].

With the rapid expansion of digital technologies, large-scale initiatives have emerged to digitize biological collections and taxonomic literature, enabling broader access to ichthyological data through online repositories and global biodiversity platforms. Digitization efforts have transformed physical specimens and analog records into digital assets such as high-resolution images, structured occurrence records, and standardized taxonomic datasets [2]. While these initiatives have significantly improved data availability, digitization alone does not ensure effective knowledge preservation. Without appropriate organizational structures, semantic consistency, and governance mechanisms, digitized taxonomic data may become isolated, inconsistent, or vulnerable to technological obsolescence [3].

Knowledge Management (KM) provides a systematic approach for addressing these challenges by integrating processes, technologies, and policies that support the capture, organization, storage, sharing, and preservation of domain-specific knowledge. In scientific domains characterized by complexity and continuous evolution, such as ichthyological taxonomy, KM frameworks are particularly valuable for managing both explicit knowledge (e.g., taxonomic descriptions and classification schemes) and tacit knowledge (e.g., expert judgment in species delimitation and identification) [4]. Effective KM frameworks facilitate not only data integration but also the preservation of contextual information, provenance, and interpretive rationale that are essential for understanding taxonomic decisions over time.



Ichthyological taxonomy presents distinctive challenges for knowledge management due to its dynamic and interpretive nature. Advances in molecular phylogenetics, integrative taxonomy, and biogeographic analysis have led to frequent taxonomic revisions, synonymization of species names, and the recognition of cryptic diversity. These ongoing changes require digital systems capable of representing multiple taxonomic viewpoints, tracking nomenclatural history, and maintaining links between historical and contemporary classifications [5]. Moreover, ichthyological taxonomic data are inherently multidisciplinary, connecting morphological traits, genetic sequences, ecological characteristics, and geographic distributions, which further complicates data integration and semantic interoperability [6].

Existing biodiversity databases and digitization platforms often emphasize data aggregation and retrieval but provide limited support for comprehensive knowledge management, particularly in terms of expert knowledge capture, semantic representation, and long-term digital preservation. As a result, valuable taxonomic insights may be lost, misinterpreted, or rendered obsolete as classification systems evolve [7]. Addressing these

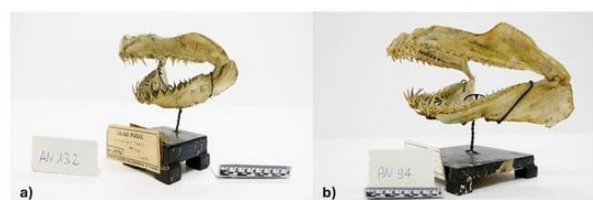
limitations requires a shift from viewing digitization as a purely technical process toward adopting integrated KM frameworks that treat ichthyological taxonomy as a dynamic knowledge system.

This paper argues that robust knowledge management frameworks are essential for the sustainable digitization and preservation of ichthyological taxonomic data. By synthesizing concepts from knowledge management theory, biodiversity informatics, and digital preservation, this study seeks to examine existing approaches, identify critical challenges, and outline key requirements for designing effective KM frameworks in ichthyology. The overarching goal is to support the long-term integrity, accessibility, and reusability of ichthyological taxonomic knowledge in an increasingly digital and data-driven scientific landscape.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The digitization and preservation of taxonomic data have gained increasing scholarly attention with the growth of biodiversity informatics and digital curation initiatives. Early research in biological digitization primarily focused on converting physical specimen records and printed catalogues into electronic databases, with the primary objective of improving data accessibility rather than comprehensive knowledge preservation [8]. These early systems emphasized record-level digitization but often lacked mechanisms to capture the broader contextual and conceptual knowledge embedded in taxonomic practice.

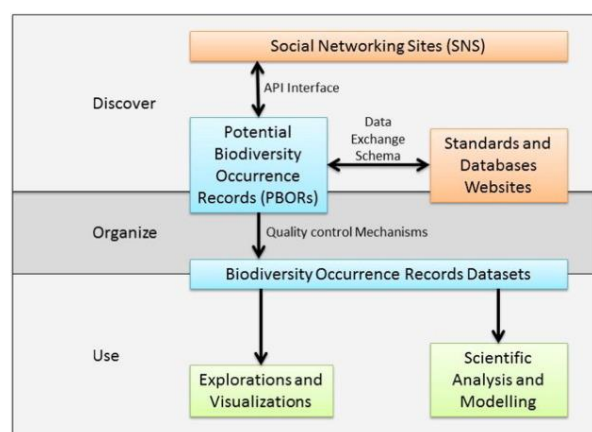
A significant body of literature highlights the role of natural history museums and research institutions as custodians of taxonomic knowledge. Museum collections house type specimens, historical annotations, and expert interpretations that collectively form the backbone of ichthyological taxonomy. Studies have emphasized that digitization of these collections must go beyond simple data transcription to include metadata, provenance information, and curatorial knowledge to ensure scientific validity over time [9], [10]. Without such context, digitized records risk losing interpretive meaning, especially as taxonomic concepts evolve.



Standardization has been identified as a critical enabler of interoperability in biodiversity data management. The introduction of widely adopted standards such as Darwin Core and ABCD provided structured schemas for representing taxonomic names, collection events, and geographic occurrences [11]. Research demonstrates that these standards have significantly improved data sharing across institutions and global platforms. However,

multiple studies argue that such standards are primarily data-centric and insufficient for managing complex taxonomic knowledge, including synonymy, concept circumscription, and taxonomic revisions [12], [13]. This limitation is particularly relevant in ichthyology, where taxonomic changes are frequent due to advances in molecular systematics.

Knowledge management theory provides a broader conceptual framework for addressing these challenges. KM literature distinguishes between explicit knowledge, which can be readily documented, and tacit knowledge, which resides in expert experience and judgment [14]. Taxonomy relies heavily on tacit knowledge, such as morphological interpretation, species delimitation decisions, and contextual understanding of historical classifications. Several studies argue that conventional biodiversity databases inadequately capture this tacit dimension, leading to loss of expert rationale and reduced interpretability of digitized taxonomic data [15].



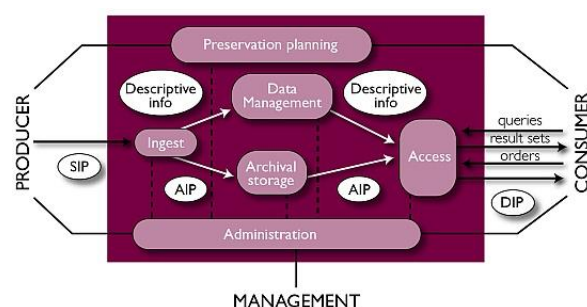
The application of KM frameworks in scientific domains has been explored in fields such as medicine, engineering, and environmental science, where complex and evolving knowledge structures must be preserved and shared. These studies emphasize lifecycle-oriented KM models encompassing knowledge acquisition, codification, storage, dissemination, and reuse [16]. When applied to ichthyological taxonomy, such models suggest the need for systems that can manage continuous knowledge evolution, support versioning of taxonomic concepts, and document decision-making processes underlying classification changes.

Semantic technologies have emerged as a promising approach for enhancing knowledge representation in taxonomic data management. Ontology-based systems allow explicit modeling of taxonomic hierarchies, relationships among taxa, and links between names and taxonomic concepts. Research in biodiversity informatics demonstrates that ontologies and knowledge graphs can support semantic interoperability, automated reasoning, and integration of heterogeneous data sources [17], [18]. In ichthyology, semantic frameworks have been proposed to link morphological traits, genetic data,

and ecological attributes, enabling more holistic representation of species knowledge [19]. However, the literature also notes practical challenges, including high development costs, steep learning curves, and the need for sustained expert involvement.

Another recurring theme in the literature is the management of taxonomic change and uncertainty. Taxonomic knowledge is inherently dynamic, with species concepts subject to revision as new evidence emerges. Studies highlight the importance of provenance tracking, version control, and concept-based taxonomy to manage conflicting or evolving classifications [20]. In ichthyology, where cryptic species and regional variation are common, failure to manage taxonomic change can lead to data inconsistency and misinterpretation in downstream applications such as conservation assessment and fisheries policy [21].

Long-term digital preservation is also a major concern addressed in the literature. Digital taxonomic data face risks related to technological obsolescence, software dependency, data degradation, and institutional instability. Preservation frameworks such as the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) emphasize the importance of persistent identifiers, standardized formats, and governance policies to ensure long-term accessibility [22]. Scholars argue that taxonomic data preservation must include not only datasets but also associated documentation, annotations, and historical records to maintain continuity of scientific knowledge [23].



Recent studies increasingly advocate for integrated knowledge management frameworks that combine digitization, semantic modeling, expert knowledge capture, and preservation strategies. Such frameworks are viewed as essential for transitioning from isolated digital records to sustainable taxonomic knowledge infrastructures [24]. In the context of ichthyology, integrated KM approaches have been shown to improve data quality, support taxonomic reconciliation, and enhance the reusability of digital collections across research domains [25].

Despite these advances, the literature identifies several gaps. Many existing systems remain fragmented, focusing either on data aggregation or on isolated semantic modeling efforts without holistic KM

integration. There is limited empirical evaluation of KM frameworks specifically tailored to ichthyological taxonomy, and governance issues related to data stewardship, authorship, and institutional responsibility remain underexplored [26]. Furthermore, the integration of traditional taxonomic expertise with emerging digital tools continues to pose socio-technical challenges.

Overall, the literature suggests a growing consensus that

effective digitization and preservation of ichthyological taxonomic data require more than technical solutions. Knowledge management frameworks that integrate standards, semantics, expert knowledge, and preservation policies are increasingly recognized as essential for ensuring the long-term integrity, accessibility, and scientific value of taxonomic knowledge.

Table I

Key Themes in Literature on Digitization and Knowledge Management of Taxonomic Data

Theme	Focus Area	Relevance to Ichthyology
Digitization initiatives	Specimen and literature digitization	Increased accessibility of fish taxonomy
Data standards	Darwin Core, ABCD	Interoperability across databases
Knowledge management	Explicit and tacit knowledge capture	Preservation of expert taxonomic judgment
Semantic technologies	Ontologies, knowledge graphs	Managing synonymy and taxonomic change
Digital preservation	OAIS, provenance tracking	Long-term sustainability of taxonomic data

Table II Limitations of Existing Approaches Identified in Literature

Limitation	Description	Implication
Data-centric focus	Emphasis on records over knowledge	Loss of taxonomic context
Limited handling of change	Poor support for taxonomic revisions	Data inconsistency
Weak tacit knowledge capture	Expert rationale not documented	Reduced interpretability
Fragmented systems	Lack of integrated KM frameworks	Inefficient data reuse
Preservation gaps	Inadequate long-term strategies	Risk of knowledge loss

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a **conceptual and design-oriented research methodology** aimed at developing and analyzing knowledge management (KM) frameworks suitable for the digitization and long-term preservation of ichthyological taxonomic data. Given the interpretive and evolving nature of taxonomic knowledge, the methodology emphasizes **systematic literature synthesis, framework analysis, and conceptual modeling** rather than empirical experimentation. The first methodological step involves a **structured review and classification** of existing approaches in biodiversity informatics, museum informatics, and knowledge management. Prior studies on taxonomic digitization, data standards, semantic technologies, and digital preservation are examined to identify recurring design patterns, limitations, and best practices relevant to ichthyological data management [27]. This synthesis enables the identification of core functional requirements for KM frameworks, including knowledge capture, semantic consistency, provenance tracking, and long-term preservation.

The second step consists of **knowledge domain analysis**, in which ichthyological taxonomic data are analyzed as a composite knowledge system encompassing explicit data (species descriptions, nomenclature, specimen records) and tacit knowledge (expert judgment, interpretive decisions, and historical context). This analysis draws on KM theory to distinguish knowledge types and determine appropriate mechanisms for their representation and management in digital systems [28]. Particular attention is given to taxonomic dynamics such as synonymy, concept revision, and multiple classification viewpoints.

The third methodological component involves **framework decomposition and mapping**. Existing KM models such as knowledge lifecycle models and digital preservation frameworks are mapped onto the ichthyological taxonomy domain to evaluate their applicability. This mapping identifies key framework layers, including data acquisition, semantic modeling, knowledge storage, access and dissemination, and preservation governance [29]. Gaps between general KM models and domain-specific taxonomic requirements are systematically analyzed.

Based on these insights, the methodology proceeds with **conceptual framework construction**, proposing an integrated KM framework tailored to ichthyological taxonomic data. The framework design emphasizes interoperability with biodiversity data standards, incorporation of ontology-based semantic representation, support for versioning and provenance, and alignment with long-term digital preservation principles [30]. The framework is evaluated qualitatively by assessing its ability to address challenges identified in the literature, such as taxonomic change management, expert knowledge retention, and sustainability. Finally, the methodological scope and limitations are explicitly defined. The study assumes institutional cooperation, availability of digital infrastructure, and expert participation, while recognizing that socio-technical and governance factors may influence real-world implementation. This methodological approach provides

a rigorous and transferable foundation for designing knowledge management frameworks that support the sustainable digitization and preservation of ichthyological taxonomic knowledge.

ANALYSIS

This section analyzes the effectiveness and implications of applying knowledge management (KM) frameworks to the digitization and preservation of ichthyological taxonomic data. The analysis is structured around four dimensions: (i) knowledge representation and organization, (ii) management of taxonomic change and uncertainty, (iii) interoperability and reuse, and (iv) long-term preservation and sustainability. Together, these dimensions reveal how KM frameworks address critical limitations identified in existing digitization efforts.

A. Knowledge Representation and Organization

A central analytical finding is that traditional digitization approaches emphasize **data capture** rather than **knowledge structuring**. Most biodiversity databases represent taxonomic information as static records, focusing on names, identifiers, and specimen attributes. While this approach improves accessibility, it inadequately represents the conceptual and interpretive nature of taxonomy. KM frameworks, by contrast, explicitly model knowledge structures, enabling the organization of ichthyological data as interconnected entities rather than isolated records [31].

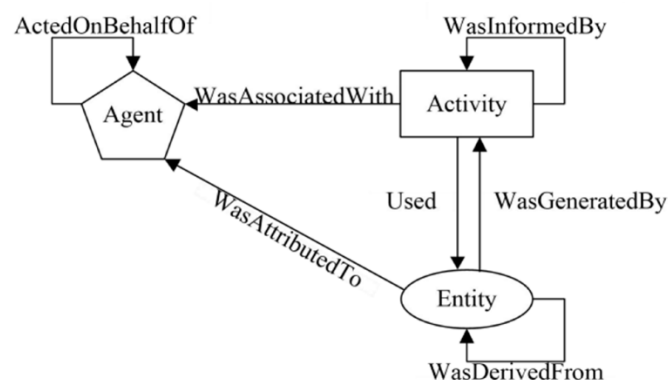


Ontology-based KM approaches demonstrate particular strength in representing hierarchical taxonomic relationships, synonymy, and contextual links between taxa and supporting evidence. By formalizing relationships among species, genera, and higher taxa, such frameworks enable semantic consistency and machine-interpretable reasoning. This is especially valuable in ichthyology, where species boundaries may be defined using combinations of morphological, molecular, and ecological evidence [32]. The analysis indicates that KM frameworks enhance cognitive clarity by making implicit expert reasoning explicit within digital systems.

However, increased representational richness also introduces complexity. Ontology-driven systems require careful design to avoid over-formalization, which can hinder usability and adoption. Thus, an effective KM framework must balance expressive power with practical maintainability.

B. Management of Taxonomic Change and Uncertainty

Taxonomic change is a defining characteristic of ichthyological knowledge. Species concepts evolve as new data emerge, leading to reclassification, synonymization, or splitting of taxa. Conventional databases often overwrite outdated information, resulting in loss of historical context and reduced traceability. The analysis shows that KM frameworks provide superior mechanisms for managing such change through **versioning, provenance tracking, and concept-based taxonomy** [33].



By treating taxonomic concepts as temporal knowledge objects rather than fixed labels, KM frameworks enable the coexistence of multiple classifications and historical viewpoints. This capability is critical for longitudinal studies, conservation assessments, and policy applications that rely on consistent interpretation of taxonomic data over time [34]. Furthermore, provenance metadata allows users to trace taxonomic assertions back to their sources, supporting transparency and scientific accountability.

Despite these advantages, the analysis highlights implementation challenges. Managing multiple taxonomic viewpoints requires governance policies and community consensus on representation standards. Without institutional coordination, the benefits of KM-based change management may be undermined by inconsistent practices across repositories.

Table I: Comparative Analysis of Taxonomic Change Management Approaches

Approach	Handling of Revisions	Provenance Support	Suitability for Ichthyology
Static databases	Overwrite records	Limited	Low
Standardized data schemas	Partial updates	Minimal	Moderate
KM frameworks (concept-based)	Versioned concepts	Strong	High
Ontology-driven KM systems	Multi-viewpoint support	Very strong	Very high

C. Interoperability and Knowledge Reuse

Interoperability is a major objective of biodiversity digitization, as ichthyological data are used across disciplines including ecology, fisheries science, and conservation biology. The analysis reveals that while data standards enable syntactic interoperability, they are insufficient for **semantic interoperability**, which is necessary for meaningful data integration and reuse [35].

KM frameworks enhance interoperability by providing shared conceptual models that align terminology, relationships, and meanings across datasets. Semantic alignment enables linking ichthyological taxonomic data with genetic repositories, ecological datasets, and conservation status assessments. This integration supports advanced queries, cross-domain analyses, and automated knowledge discovery [36].

From a reuse perspective, KM frameworks promote the transformation of digitized taxonomic data into reusable knowledge assets. By embedding metadata on context, assumptions, and limitations, KM systems reduce the risk of misinterpretation when data are repurposed. This is particularly important in applied contexts such as fisheries management, where taxonomic inaccuracies can have significant ecological and economic consequences.

Nevertheless, the analysis identifies barriers to interoperability, including heterogeneity in institutional practices and uneven adoption of semantic technologies. Addressing these barriers requires not only technical solutions but also policy alignment and capacity building.

D. Long-Term Preservation and Sustainability

Long-term preservation extends beyond data storage to include the sustainability of knowledge structures and interpretive context. The analysis demonstrates that KM frameworks aligned with digital preservation models, such as lifecycle and archival frameworks, provide a more resilient foundation for preserving ichthyological taxonomic knowledge [37].

Key preservation advantages include support for persistent identifiers, standardized metadata, and documentation of knowledge evolution. These features mitigate risks associated with technological obsolescence and institutional change. Moreover, KM frameworks emphasize governance and stewardship, clarifying responsibilities for maintaining and updating taxonomic knowledge over time [38].

However, sustainability depends on continuous institutional commitment and resource allocation. The analysis underscores that KM frameworks are socio-technical systems whose success relies on human expertise, organizational policies, and long-term funding. Without these supports, even well-designed frameworks may fail to deliver lasting benefits.

Table II

Analytical Evaluation of KM Framework Benefits and Challenges

Dimension	Benefits	Challenges
Knowledge representation	Rich semantic modeling	Increased complexity
Taxonomic change management	Versioning, provenance	Governance requirements
Interoperability	Semantic integration	Institutional heterogeneity
Preservation	Contextual longevity	Resource dependence

E. Synthesis of Analytical Insights

Synthesizing these findings, the analysis confirms that KM frameworks significantly enhance the digitization and preservation of ichthyological taxonomic data by addressing limitations inherent in data-centric approaches. KM-based systems support deeper knowledge representation, manage taxonomic dynamics, enable interoperability, and strengthen long-term preservation. At the same time, their effectiveness is contingent upon careful design, institutional coordination, and sustained governance. The analysis suggests that future digitization initiatives in ichthyology should prioritize KM integration from the outset rather than treating it as a secondary enhancement. Doing so will ensure that digitized taxonomic data function not merely as digital records but as enduring knowledge infrastructures capable of supporting scientific inquiry, conservation action, and policy development over time.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of knowledge management (KM) frameworks in transforming the digitization of ichthyological taxonomic data from a record-centric activity into a sustainable knowledge-centric process. The analysis demonstrates that conventional digitization approaches—while successful in improving accessibility—remain insufficient for preserving the conceptual, interpretive, and historical dimensions of taxonomic knowledge. This limitation is particularly pronounced in ichthyology, where taxonomic revisions, synonymy, and cryptic diversity are common and scientifically consequential.

A key discussion point concerns the **shift from static data representation to dynamic knowledge representation**. KM frameworks, especially those incorporating semantic and ontology-based structures, enable explicit modeling of taxonomic concepts, relationships, and provenance. This capability directly addresses long-standing challenges in taxonomic data reuse, where mismatches between species names and underlying concepts often lead to analytical errors in ecological and conservation studies [39]. By preserving

the reasoning behind taxonomic assertions, KM frameworks enhance transparency and reproducibility—two essential qualities in modern biodiversity science.

Another important discussion outcome relates to **managing taxonomic change over time**. The results indicate that concept-based and versioned KM systems are substantially better equipped to handle evolving classifications than traditional databases. This is particularly relevant for long-term biodiversity monitoring, where historical consistency is required despite ongoing taxonomic updates. The ability to retain and reconcile multiple taxonomic viewpoints supports comparative studies and policy applications that depend on stable interpretive baselines [40].

The discussion also highlights **interoperability as a socio-technical challenge rather than a purely technical one**. While KM frameworks improve semantic interoperability, their effectiveness depends heavily on institutional coordination, shared governance models, and community adoption. Without consensus on representation standards and stewardship responsibilities, even well-designed frameworks risk fragmentation. This finding aligns with broader

observations in biodiversity informatics that technical infrastructure must be accompanied by organizational and policy alignment to achieve sustainability [41].

Finally, the discussion emphasizes that KM frameworks introduce **new responsibilities and complexities**, including higher design effort, need for expert involvement, and long-term resource commitments. However, these costs are justified by the substantial gains in data reliability, interpretability, and longevity. In this sense, KM frameworks should be viewed not as optional enhancements but as essential infrastructure for preserving ichthyological taxonomic knowledge in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

This study examined knowledge management frameworks as a foundational approach for digitizing and preserving ichthyological taxonomic data. Through a comprehensive review and analytical assessment, the paper demonstrated that traditional data-centric digitization practices are insufficient for managing the complexity, dynamism, and interpretive nature of taxonomic knowledge. In contrast, KM frameworks provide structured mechanisms for capturing explicit and tacit knowledge, managing taxonomic change, enabling semantic interoperability, and supporting long-term digital preservation.

By conceptualizing ichthyological taxonomy as a dynamic knowledge system rather than a static dataset, this work contributes a theoretically grounded perspective that bridges biodiversity informatics and knowledge management. The analysis shows that integrated KM frameworks enhance scientific transparency, reduce misinterpretation of taxonomic data, and improve the reusability of digital collections across research and policy domains. These benefits are particularly significant for ichthyology, where accurate taxonomic knowledge underpins fisheries management, conservation planning, and ecological research.

Overall, the study concludes that sustainable digitization of ichthyological taxonomic data requires a paradigm shift toward knowledge-centric design. Knowledge management frameworks are essential for ensuring that digitized taxonomic resources remain reliable, interpretable, and valuable for future generations of researchers and decision-makers.

FUTURE WORK

While this study establishes a conceptual and analytical foundation, several avenues for future research emerge. First, **empirical validation of KM frameworks** in operational ichthyological databases is needed. Case studies involving museum collections, regional fish inventories, or global platforms could provide practical insights into implementation challenges, user adoption, and performance outcomes [42]. Second, future work should explore **automated and semi-automated**

knowledge capture techniques, such as natural language processing and machine learning, to extract taxonomic knowledge from legacy literature and specimen annotations. Integrating these techniques with KM frameworks could significantly accelerate digitization while preserving expert context [43]. Third, **governance and policy dimensions** warrant deeper investigation. Questions related to authorship, intellectual credit, data stewardship, and institutional responsibility are central to the long-term success of KM-based taxonomic systems. Developing governance models tailored to biodiversity knowledge infrastructures remains an open research challenge [44]. Fourth, expanding KM frameworks to support **multilingual and indigenous knowledge systems** represents an important future direction, particularly in regions with high ichthyological diversity. Incorporating diverse knowledge sources can enhance inclusivity and improve conservation relevance [45]. Finally, future research should examine how KM frameworks can support **decision-oriented applications**, such as conservation prioritization, fisheries regulation, and environmental impact assessment. Linking taxonomic knowledge management directly to policy and management outcomes will further demonstrate the societal value of investing in robust digital knowledge infrastructures.

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