

A Study of Information Literacy Development of Public Libraries

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ABSTRACT

India has experienced growing population of literate and educated citizens due to various efforts in universalisation of elementary education through programmes like, SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), and National Literacy Mission and so on. On the other hand, for the facilitating educated citizens with the adequate documentary and knowledge resources, government and other agencies have established public libraries. The community information centres and village knowledge centres are the recent additions to this effort that would transform India into an information society, where information and knowledge resources are considered as critical ingredient for development. But problem is with the effective and efficient use, consumption and evaluation of information resources, so that informed citizen can take right decisions. Here information literacy can play a vital role in educating the users of libraries on various information and documentary resources, where to start searching of information, and compare retrieved information, how to communicate their information or findings to the general masses and experts, and so on. In addition to borrow books for entertainment and leisure, public libraries can also disseminate information on community development, best practices, literature, culture, trade, education, etc. which may be further elaborated when needs arise. Information seekers may want consolidated or exhaustive information. To provide right information to the users, public librarians need to be trained to develop information literacy competency and should able to educate the user that will make user information literate.

1. Introduction

Public libraries arose worldwide along with growth in education, literacy, and publications. Every country has its own public library history with influential leaders. Monarchs, wealthy people, and philanthropists have all made a contribution to society in the form of public library development. India is no exception. Libraries were established in ancient India mainly by the patronage extended by emperors, major capitalists, and scholars. Indian emperors and kings were supported scholars and scholarship. There is evidence of well-developed libraries even in the sixth century A.D. The famous Nalanda University in Bihar had its own magnificent library with a massive collection of manuscripts covering the universe of knowledge. Admission to library was restricted to scholars. Other ancient universities, such as Taxila and Vikramashila, also had valuable libraries. Muslim influence in India during the 13th century A.D. marked the dawn of another era of learning and scholarship. The Mughal period gave a further stimulus to the growth of libraries. Mughal rulers attached considerable importance to libraries and appointed scholars as librarians. The Mughal emperors were patrons of art and literature. In the period of Emperor Babur, Humayun, and Akbar many new libraries were established and existing ones further developed. Mughal libraries featured magnificent buildings, rare manuscripts, and scholar librarians. The names of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh of Jaipur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab will be remembered with appreciation in the history of library services in India. The Maharaja of Tanjuar started the famous Saraswati Mahal Library in 17th century A.D. It

remains a unique institution in its nature of collection and services. Libraries established by the kings and capitalists functioned like private institutions and the admission was limited. Service to the general public had to wait for the British. Unfortunately, the arrival of the British and resulting political disorder also brought chaos to the Indian way of life. This was a severe blow to the cultural heritage of India, which had arisen from the Indus valley civilization. When libraries began developing in India during the early nineteenth century, they were a western product. In 1808, the Government of Bombay proposed to register libraries, which were to be given copies of books published from the "funds for the encouragement of literature". According to the "Sinha Committee", this was the beginning of the first phase of public library development in India. During the first half of the 19th century, the three presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras had public libraries. These libraries were mostly financed by Europeans residing in these towns. Of these, the establishment of the public library at Calcutta in 1835 was the most significant. This was the library which later developed into the National Library of India. Almost simultaneous, subscription libraries were started in many Indian cities. These were, of course, not public libraries in the true sense of the term, and did not provide free books for all. Founded in imitation of their western counterparts, the use of these libraries was confined to small, affluent portion of society.

2. advisory committee for libraries

The Government of India appointed a committee in 1957 to report on the status of public library development in the country. It is also called the Sinha Committee, after its chair, the late Dr. A.P. Sinha, who was at that time Director of Public Instruction in Bihar. The Sinha Committee's charge included:

- Determining present reading needs, how they are met, and what part existing library systems play in meeting the needs;
- Determining reading tastes, what agencies provide suitable literature, and how reading taste can be improved;
- Recommending future library structure in India;
- Recommending areas of cooperation between libraries and education systems;
- Considering the training of librarians and the conditions of their service;
- Recommending the administrative and financial measures necessary to support public libraries in India (Ministry of Education, India, 1961).

3. National policy on library & information system (NAPLIS)

In 1985, a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyay to formulate a National Policy on Library & Information System (NAPLIS). The Committee submitted its report in May 1986. Following that, another committee looked at implications of the report and created an action plan for its implementation. The Empowerment Committee submitted its report in April 1988 and an Implementation Cell was formed to implement its recommendations within a period of six months. Yet another Working Group, under the Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Culture, was constituted to examine its recommendations for implementation. The Working Group submitted its report in July 1993 and suggested implementing only 29 of 60 recommendations made by the NAPLIS.

The following are some of the recommendations of NAPLIS related to public libraries:

- Proposals for maintenance and development of public libraries should preferably come from State Legislative Enactment. The Central Government may revise the Model Public Library Bill. Funds for library development should come from each state, either from general revenue or from local taxation. Central Government agencies may provide funds under Plan Expenditure.
- Efforts should emphasize rural public libraries. A village or a cluster of villages with an adequate population should have a community library/rural community centre, which will also serve as an information centre. Resources from various agencies engaged in the public health, adult education, State and central government, etc., should be used to build up and maintain this centre.
- The central government increase its assistance to state governments in the development of public libraries. The RRRLF, as the national agency for coordinating and assisting the development of public

libraries, should be suitably strengthened in order to do this.

- Standards and guidelines for library service should be created.
- There should be a system of national libraries consisting of National Library, Calcutta (Now Kolkatta) as the National Library of India, National Depository libraries in Delhi, Bombay (Now Mumbai), Madras (now Chennai), National Subject Libraries, and others. These national libraries should form part of one integrated system.
- A National Commission on Libraries and Information System or National Commission on Informatics and Documentation may be constituted by an Act of Parliament to serve under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Commission will have representation from appropriate central and state agencies and could provide guidance and coordinate library development programmes in all sectors. This body will have the primary responsibility for the implementation of NAPLIS programmes.
- National Depository libraries; Connemara Public library, Chennai; Central Library (Asiatic Society), Bombay; and Delhi Public Library, Delhi should concentrate on development of collections and preservation of Indian culture produced in the languages of their regions, supplementing and complementing the efforts of the Indian National Library.
- The Indian National Bibliography should have a comprehensive coverage of the national output of documents and should be updated regularly. This responsibility should be vested in the National Library.
- Government should create a national awareness of the need to preserve the nation's cultural heritage. National libraries should be responsible, with preservation facilities created there. Links between libraries, archives, and museums should be established for the purpose of national preservation.
- The Ministry of Rural Development has a plan for one community centre in every Panchayat Centre. The Department of Culture and the Ministry of Rural Development have agreed to provide library services at each of these Rural Community Centres.
- An important link should be established between community centre library and primary schools. If the schools do not have libraries of their own, the community centre library should provide children with adequate services.
- A community centre library should have an important role in adult education programmes.
- A district library should provide facilities and recreation for the disabled and low-income people, e.g., literature in Braille.
- Libraries should be built in areas of tribal concentration and in minority communities to help in developing and sustaining their distinctive cultures.
- Libraries should be equipped with relevant resources, such as publications covering Open University and vocational educational courses, for their role in support of distance education.

- All public libraries within a state should form a part of a network extending from village library through community centre library, district library, and state network, and should be linked to the national information grid.

4. Public Library Legislations In India

India attained freedom in 1947 and became a Republic in 1950. To facilitate administrations, it now has a National Capital Region of Delhi, 28 States and 6 Union Territories after Independence. Even before Independence, Kolhapur Princely State, in the Western India passed Public Libraries Act in 1945. 1948 Tamilnadu 9. 1993 Mizoram 10. 1993 Goa 2. 1960 Andhra Pradesh 11. 2001 Odisha 12. 2000 Gujarat 3. 1965 Karnataka 13. 2005 Uttarakhand 4. 1967 Maharashtra 14. 2006 Rajasthan 5. 1979 West Bengal 15. 2006 Uttar Pradesh 6. 1988 Manipur Lakshadweep 2007 16. 2008 Bihar 7. 1989 Haryana 17. 2009 Chattisgarh 8. 1989 Kerala 18. 2009 Arunachal Pradesh. So far, only half of the States of the Indian Union have successfully passed the library legislation, However, in the coming few years, there is greater possibility for a library law being enacted in the remaining States. Out of these the enactment of Public Library Law at Puducherry State is in the forefront.

Problems facing of Public Libraries in India

- Lack of resources.
- Infrastructural issues such as lack of proper buildings, reading room, storage facility, stock of reading material, etc.
- A dearth of suitable reading material in regional languages.
- Low literacy levels,
- Limited access to technology and management of public libraries.
- Lack of manpower and Qualified Library Professionals

Promotion of District Youth Resource Centres (DYRCs)

The development of DYRCs is being made commensurate with the decision of the inter-Ministerial Steering Committee constitutes for the purpose with the representative from Ministry of Sports & Youth Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Raja Rammohun Roy Library foundation and Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sanghatana. The DYRCs are assisted for the following purpose:

- Towards building up adequate stock of books.
- Towards acquiring storage materials and library furniture.
- Towards construction of library building.
- Towards acquisition of computers with accessories. (RRRLF/Activities)

Community information centres and libraries (CIC)

Community information services has been gaining in importance within the field of library and information studies (LIS) and has been suggested as an important area for library service models in developing countries. Community information has been defined as survival information, a type of information necessary for participation as a full and equal member of society. Additionally, community information services aim to assist individuals and groups with participation

in the democratic process and daily problem solving with issues such as housing, employment, education, welfare rights and civil rights. Community information services have been linked with information and referral services for marginalized populations. Public libraries, mainly in the United States, began networking with government, community, and social services agencies in the 1970s to create information and referral services to inform citizens about resources and programs for individual and community empowerment.

PublicLibraries2020.eu Building stronger EU community:

with all the information on how Europe's 65,000 public libraries build stronger communities every day. Public libraries are about empowering citizens of all ages to develop and create the skills, knowledge and ideas they need to participate fully and independently in society. All European countries have public libraries. The 65,000 public libraries within communities invite people to read books and to use computers and the Internet, but also offer courses on a wide range of topics. Trained staff provides personal assistance and are a resource customized to the members of their local communities. We believe that the initiatives we are championing will leverage the power and opportunities offered by Europe's public libraries and can bring a change in the delivery of lifelong learning opportunities to a wide range of European citizens. Public libraries are a space – trusted and open to all – to learn, discover and share.

5. National Policy On Library And Information System In India

The Government of India set up a Committee under Chairmanship of Professor D. P. Chattopadhyay for formulation of National Policy on Library and Information System. The Committee held its first meeting on December 9, 1985, at Calcutta. It covers the Public Library System, Academic Library System, Special Libraries and Information Systems, National Library System & Bibliographical Service, Manpower Development and Professional Status, Modernization of Library and Information System, General Professional Issues & Implementing Agencies and Financial Support to Library.

The following recommendations of the empowered committee are:

- Constitution of a National Commission on Libraries to play a major role in implementing the library policy and in the progress of Library development;
- Creation of an All India Library Service;
- Active involvement of the Central Government in Public Library development;
- Public Library development has also be supported by agencies involved in social , education, rural development, etc;
- University and College libraries are to be considered academic units and seniors library staff members should be regarded as members of the academic community;
- The National Library of India, Calcutta, should be strengthened;
- Development of system of national libraries.

6. National Commissions On Libraries In India

The Empowered Committee (March 1988) and the Working Group on Libraries (WGL), constituted by the National Knowledge Commission, comprising senior library professionals, technical experts and bureaucrats recommended as one of the recommendation that the Constitution of National Commission on Libraries. The WGL was to review the existing Library and Information services and recommend the changes which make LIS more relevant and need based. The WGL was expected to highlight the necessary changes as well as recommend the activities which will ensure that Libraries and library professionals of the future will act as the major driving force in bringing about a knowledge economy.

Partnership with NGO's: The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) sector in India is growing at a fast pace, addressing a number of problems i.e, poverty, literacy, health, environment and self-government, etc. The sector has been successful in reaching the most remote areas in the country. Many NGOs, especially at the village level, are running libraries. The following case describes how an organization has developed partnerships with various NGOs to establish school libraries.

'Room to Read' India was launched in 2003 with focus on establishing libraries and building the capacity of teachers and volunteers to encourage the habit and joy of reading. They also publish high-quality, illustrated reading materials for young readers to respond to the dearth of appropriate children's literature, especially in rural India. They work in partnership with the state governments as well as local NGOs to implement and monitor the work and promote long-term sustainability. Presently running their organization following regions such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand. Around 4970 school libraries have been established and 113 local language titles have been published so far.

7. Information Literacy And Reading Habits

Present urbanized society observes a changing face of new generation, where children have access to various modes of entertainment and amusement. Every middle-class household in India equips with at least one electronic gadgetry, like, television, music system, DVD-player, VCD-player, Internet, video games, etc. All these gadgets may be detrimental to our new generations as well as older generations, that is also one of the reasons for declining number of regular users of public libraries. We know public libraries build up collections of literature of local languages, national literature and world literature. A public library user can get higher satisfaction if they read classic literature, contemporary literature and know cultural heritage of India and the state he/she belongs. Other than books on literature, many informative books and magazines that enhance knowledge levels of the users are available in the public libraries. Other useful documents, such as career handbooks, encyclopedias, directories, dictionaries, etc. are also accessible in public libraries. Reading habits not only help a person becoming knowledgeable, socially responsible and socially productive person but also help in personality development. Information literacy competency development programmes may be

initiated to impart necessary information skills and reading skills to public library users in maximizing utilization of public library resources. A public library may be participating in a library resource-sharing network. The public library users should learn how to search union catalogues of the network, how to obtain documents from other participating libraries through inter-library loan service and document delivery service. This way the limitation of collection in one public library may overcome and users get satisfaction for this service. Public libraries also conduct various extension programmes, like, quiz competition, story, poetry and essay writing competition, etc. that also aims to enhance reading habits of the users, especially younger users of the public libraries.

8. Information Literacy Programmes For Public Librarians And Public Library Users

Information literacy (IL) competency development programmes for public librarians would be a kind of training course for the trainers. The public librarians would impart training to the end users of public libraries. Some of the skills required for the information literacy are already achieved by the public librarians through their formal degree or diploma courses; induction, orientation, and on-the job training programmes. Some librarians started their career before the introduction of information communication technologies (ICT) in library services and information handling. Such ICT skills, communication and teaching skills need to be obtained freshly through the refresher courses. The aims 1 of the information literacy competency development programmes for public librarians can be:

- The ability to apply the principles of scholarly communication to problems of information handling;
- The ability to locate, select and use appropriate information retrieval tools in order to obtain useful information in connection with studies or work of the end users, and when required;
- Confidence in using, and satisfaction in carrying out information searching;
- Confidence in communicating, instructing and educating the users.
- Some of the objectives 1 IL competency development programmes for public librarians are:
 - Public librarians would be able to develop a systematic method of searching for information related to areas of studies of the users;
 - They would be aware of wide range of sources (including open access sources) available for finding information and select the sources which will best meet users needs;
 - They would be aware of appropriate indexing and abstracting services and databases and understand the principles of their use;
 - They would develop database searching techniques for accessing both web-based and CD-ROM databases;
 - They would be able to use current awareness methods to keep up-to-date with the published literature;
 - They would be able to use international academic networks for getting information;

- They would be able to use and create list servers, discussion forums, Internet chat services and bloggers for obtaining and disseminating information;
- They would be able to use local library network for sharing in-house resources and obtaining documents through inter-library loan and document delivery services;
- They would be able to compare and critically evaluate information obtained from various sources;
- They would be able to cite bibliographic references in the papers, articles, reports or theses;
- They would be able to construct an institutional bibliographic system;
- They would be able to motivate library users in accessing library resources and availing user services;
- They would be able to communicate, instruct and educate library users;
- They would be able to prepare learning and assessment modules both printed as well as web-enabled for the learners;
- They would be able to make strategies for influencing stakeholders; and prepare action plans.

Some of the above-mentioned aims and objectives of the IL competency development programmes can be considered and adopted for public library users, as some of the components of the programmes are common. These aims and objectives of the IL competency development programmes are not exhaustive; and some elements may be altered whenever needs arise. Public library authorities in India, like Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Delhi Public Library, state central libraries and library associations need to introduce IL competency development programmes for public librarians with abovementioned objectives and aims. The changing

library scenario, present and future public library systems in India need consideration while designing such courses and programmes.

9. Conclusion

Information literacy competency ensures maximum utilization of the information resources as well as optimization of information handling capabilities. Many libraries and information systems introduce user orientation programmes to educate users on the salient features of information resources, search techniques, search strategies, scholarly communications and other aspects. In India a number of training programmes are conducted by the different agencies, who are also architects of modern information systems, to the end-users. For example, INFLIBNET conducts workshops on information resources in Infonetejournal consortium. NISCAIR conducts workshops on information resources in CSIR e-journal consortium. National Informatics Centre conducts training programmes on 'biomedical information retrieval' covering Indian Medlars Centre's resources like, IndMED, medIND, OpenMED and UNcat. All these training programmes are meant to develop information literacy competencies of the end users. Similarly, public library authorities and public librarians should impart information literacy competencies to the public library users. The importance of public libraries would be felt more strongly, if the public libraries attract common citizens and younger generations and such librarians meet the information needs of all walks of users. Public libraries can also play a pivotal role for national development programmes and bringing mass affectivity of such programmes. Hence, horizontal diffusion of information literacy can reap the optimum value of envisaged programmes.

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