REVIEW ARTICLE

CURRENT STATUS OF LIBRARIES IN INDIA

Current Status of Libraries in India

Rajesh Chandra Richhariya

Research Scholar, Bhagwant University, Rajasthan, India

-------------------------♦----------------------------

INTRODUCTION

Some 10,000 year ago the early ancestor of mankind, subsisted by hunting and gathering, started to building agrarian societies. The old agrarian societies began their transitions to industrial societies in mid-18th centuries (3). Expansion of intellectual activities in industrial societies, such as industrial production, international trade and transactions, and technological advancement, stimulated mass distribution of education and creation of libraries.

Industrial societies continued their enormous material development throughout the 20th century. The information society has passed through four transformational stages of development, the most radical stage starting at the tail end of the 20th century. This stage has brought a never-ending revolution, particularly with the introduction of information and communication technologies (4).

During this period, there have been unprecedented developments, profoundly affecting the social structure – the decline of manufacturing sector as compared to the prospering information-rich service sector is one example of such developments In the modern knowledge society libraries have a new role and there are various types of library models. In the modern society, where the use of electronic services and Web-based information sources constantly increases, libraries are managed in a more democratic way, have more flexible communication system and work organization, and their service development is based on the quality

and user-orientation of services. In the modern knowledge society libraries have a new role and there are various types of library models. These are as follows:

♦ Traditional library as a memory institution

♦ Library as a learning and research centre

♦ Library as a cultural and communication centre

♦ Electronic library

♦ Digital library

♦ Virtual library as library without walls

Libraries had been performed many important roles in the past agrarian and industrial societies. But those roles were limited in scope. In the 21st century, libraries have to perform pivotal roles in

Disseminating and sharing the culture of knowledge. In this age of knowledge libraries should be repositories of all of the knowledge and information accumulated by human kind. They will have to store all kinds and forms of material and information and disseminate beyond the geographical boundaries. Today's advanced information technology is enabling libraries to accomplish this immense task.

Exchange of knowledge has always been the most important objectives of libraries. Various systems have been developed to share and exchange the records of human knowledge. Universal Bibliographic Control and Universal Availability of Publications are two major programs of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) to exchange knowledge world over. OCLC is the world leading library network in USA for sharing intellectual knowledge among academic community in all over the world. But libraries in the 21st century should fulfill more dynamic role. They should exchange knowledge and information with users inside and outside their country, thus going beyond their traditional reference and lending services. This would possible when libraries agreed to expand their roles beyond the geographical boundaries by using sate of art technologies.

The modern libraries certainly cannot be passive repository for books and other printed materials.

The opposite requirements of storing increasing collection in various forms and of maintaining easy access to most part of it can only be balanced by deploying information and communication technologies. Libraries should upgrade their services by digitizing their resources for online use.

These services should be accessible to anyone, regardless of time or location, through digital communication devices. Libraries can play significant role in providing a good education and knowledge of high quality. Individuals around the world, no matter

how poor they may be, can access whatever knowledge and information they need by visiting libraries via the internet, such as the library of congress.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA

Education aims to impart knowledge and makes good citizens. Libraries are the repositories of knowledge and form an integral part of education. Libraries have a long history, starting with the chained and closed-access libraries of earlier times to the present-day hybrid, digital, and virtual libraries that use the latest technology for provision of information through various services. Accordingly, librarians have also changed from storekeepers who were concerned with protection of books against theft, mutilation, and pilferage, to that of information officers, navigators, and cybrarians who find themselves in the vast ocean of reading material and are busy in satisfying their clients who want anytime and anywhere information.

With the advent of computers, the nature of libraries has changed dramatically. Computers are being used in libraries to process, store, retrieve and disseminate information. As a result, the traditional concept of library is being redefined from a place to access books to one which houses the most advanced media including CD-ROM, Internet, and remote access to a wide range of resources. Libraries have now metamorphosed into digital institutions. Gone are the days when a library was judged by its quantitative resources. Today, libraries are surrounded by networked data that is connected to vast ocean of Internet-based services. Moreover, electronic resources relevant to the professions are developing at an unprecedented pace. Academic libraries are considered to be the nerve centres of academic institutions, and must support teaching, research, and other academic programmes. The situation in academic libraries of India is the same as that of academic libraries the world over; however, Indian libraries must provide maximum information with limited resources.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF INDIA

India has a large higher education system. The growth rate of educational institutions in India was very slow before independence in 1947. Today there are a total of 237 universities, including 116 general universities, 12 science and technology universities, 7 open universities, 33 agricultural universities, 5 women's universities, 1 language universities and 11 medical universities along with 12,600 colleges that provide education in all disciplines. The number of teachers is 3.1 million, and 7.8 million students are enrolled in higher education.

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)

UGC, established by an act of parliament in 1956, coordinates and monitors the higher education system in India and provides grants to the universities and colleges. Two hundred ninety four universities/institutions in the country are directly under the purview of UGC. It also advises the union and state governments on measures to university education. It frames rules and regulations for overall teaching and research at higher education. As a result, it also looks after the academic libraries, i.e., sets various standards for library education, library staff, library services, etc. A number of committees have been set up by the UGC for the support of higher education in general and the library services in academic libraries in particular. UGC has also set up three information centres covering different disciplines—the National Centre for Science Information (NCSI) at Indian Institute of Science Bangalore, SNDT Women's University Mumbai, and National Social Science Information Centre at M.S. University at Baroda, to provide the document delivery services to students, teachers, and researchers.

INFORMATION AND LIBRARY NETWORK (INFLIBNET)

The University Grants Commission has set up an autonomous Inter-University Centre in 1991 called INFLIBNET. It is involved in modernizing university libraries in India and connects them through a nation-wide high-speed data network. It promotes automation of libraries, develops standards, creates union catalogues of serials, theses, books, monographs and non-book materials; provides access to bibliographic information sources; creates database of projects, institutions, specialists; provides training, etc. Almost all academic libraries, especially university libraries, are members of INFLIBNET. It has also developed library automation software called SOUL (Software for University Libraries) and has distributed the same free of cost to its member libraries.

OTHER NETWORKS

Besides INFLIBNET, a number of other national networks and various library networks have also been developed including NICNET (National Informatic Center's network), INDONET, ERNET (Education and Research Network), CALIBNET (Calcutta Library Network), DELNET(Developing Library Network), etc. ADINET is associated with INFLIBNET, DELNET with NIC and MALIBNET with CFTRI. A number of educational institutions are members of such networks. These networks, especially DELNET (which has 752 member libraries including 742 from India and 10 from outside), are engaged in compiling union catalogs, creating various databases of experts, providing training to library staff , ILL, online facilities, reference service, assistance in retrospective conversion, etc.

LIBRARY CONSORTIA

Due to a financial crunch and the rising costs of journals, many Indian university and college libraries cannot subscribe to all the required journals and databases. To overcome this problem, libraries are forming consortia. Some special libraries and organizations like the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) Library, Inter-university Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) Library, National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) Library, Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) Library, Raman Research Institute (RRI) Library, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) Library, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Atomic Energy, etc., have established consortia to share electronic access to journal literature. NISCAIR (formed by the merger of INSDOC and NISCOM) is developing a consortium for CSIR labs for accessing e-journals.

Consortia in India are still a new concept that requires proper guidelines and methodologies. In a survey by UGC in 2001, it was noted that although 142 university libraries had computer and Internet facilities and were interlinked to INFLIBNET, they were subscribing to printed journals only. In order to solve this problem, UGC launched a major initiative called UGC-INFONET that provides high speed Internet connections so as to have electronic access to professional literature including research journals, abstracts, review publications, and databases from all areas in science and technology, as well as in social sciences and humanities. Today, a number of professional journals are available over UGC-INFONET to all universities. The e-subscription initiative under UGC-Infonet is an important portal for sharing print as well as electronic resources amongst university libraries. INFLIBNET functions as a resource center with an aim to cater to the needs of its members for resources not accessible to them in electronic media or are available in print media.

INDEST CONSORTIUM

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has set up the "Indian National Digital Library in Science and Technology (INDEST) Consortium". The ministry provides funds required for the subscription to electronic resources for 38 academic institutions, including the Indian Institute of Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Regional Engineering Colleges, Indian Institute of Managements, and about 60 centrally-funded/aided government institutions through the consortium. The INDEST consortium is the most ambitious initiative so far in the area of engineering and technology disciplines.

The primary objective of libraries is to organize and provide access to information, and it remains the same although the format and methods have changed drastically. Under the present scenario of declining budgets and higher subscription costs of journals in India, it is becoming very difficult to meet the demands of library/information users. The only solution to the problem is the pooling and sharing of resources—print as well as electronic—by way of consortia. New technology has provided great opportunities for delivery of services within consortia. More and more libraries must unite, which of course requires a change in the attitudes, practices, and policies to get the maximum benefit.

REFERENCES

- Biradar, S., & Kumar, Sampat B. T. (2003). Evaluation of information services and facilities offered by D.V.S. Polytechnic College Library: A case study. CLIS Observer, 20(3&4), 99-104.

- Crane, Dianna. (1971). Information needs and uses. Annual Review of Information Science and Technology, 6, 3-39.

- Crawford, Susan. (1978). Information needs and user. Annual Review of Information Science and Technology, 13, 61-81.

- Dhiman, A. K. (2006). Information technology and marketing of library services. Library Progress, 26(1), 29-38.Hussain, Akhtar, & Kumar, Krishna. (2006). Use, collection and services of IIRS Library: A survey. In Bandyopadhya SS et.al. (Eds.), Proceedings of National 11 Conferences on Information Management in Digital Libraries (NCIMDiL-2006). Kharagpur: Central Library I.I.T., 643-646. Kaur, Baljinder, & Verma, Rama. (2006). Use of electronic resources at TIET Library Patiala: A case study. ILA Bulletin, 42(3), 18-20.

- Kumar, Devendra. (2009). Information needs of faculty members and research scholars of Chaudhary Charan Singh University: A case study. Library Philosophy and Practice (E-Journal), Annual Volume, May 2009. Retrieved June 1, 2010

- http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1266&context=libphilpr ac Lohar, M. S., & Kumber, Mallinatha. (2002). Use of library facilities and information resources in Sahyadri Colleges, Shimoga. Annals of Library and Information Studies,

- http://www.svbpmeerut.ac.in/ Swain, Delip K., & Panda, K. C. (2009). Use of e-services by faculty members of business schools in a state of India: A study. Collection Building, 28(3), 108-116.

Rajesh Chandra Richhariya