

*Guest Editorial*

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a company's commitment to operate in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner, while recognising the interests of its stakeholders. Through CSR, the organisations serve the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, employees, shareholders, communities and the environment in all aspects of their operations. The thrust of CSR in public sector is on inclusive growth, sustainable development and capacity building with due attention to the socio-economic needs of the neglected and marginalised sections of the society.

In today's globalised economy corporate plays a vital role in shaping the quality of life of the society. According to Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen "Market forces alone are not sufficient for equitable distribution, and some sort of intervention is required, be it political or from business houses, towards society".

Realising the importance of CSR in business, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has brought out the CSR Voluntary guidelines in 2009; and later in 2011, these guidelines were made mandatory for all corporate including the PSUs. Each business entity should formulate a CSR policy and be an integral part of overall business policy and with its business goals. Corporate firms in the first instance should provide welfare facilities for all its employees such as education and health care facilities including a community library at its works by spending 2% from their profits.

With regard to the promotion of public libraries under the banner of CSR, Andrew Carnegie is an all time role model who founded 2880 libraries all over the country long back. His popular words "distribution of wealth for people welfare is equally important as earning". He used to keep a lighting lamp in each library as symbolic spread of knowledge in the darkness of ignorance. That is how he became a role model for all time with regard to CSR and public libraries. The present corporate sector can also take a leaf from his life book and practice it.

We all know that in a knowledge society, public libraries play an important role in education, social and cultural development of the local community in particular and society in general. However, the status of public libraries in India is in a deplorable condition due to various reasons mainly paucity of funds and lack of patronage from the State Governments. In spite of relevant legislation, public libraries have been neglected compared to other Government service establishments because they come under the state subject; and there seems to be no respite to this problem in the near future.

In recent years we have witnessed sustainable development in areas like - health, sanitation, education, energy, environment and community development by the active participation of big corporate firms and public sector units in various parts of the country under CSR. It is unfortunate to know that 'public libraries' have been excluded from this list of community services. There is an urgent need to revive these public libraries despite their inherent problems by adopting new and innovative public-private partnership (PPP) models for their growth and development. A Society for the Promotion of Public Libraries (SPPL) was established in Visakhapatnam in 2011 with the sole objective of reviving public libraries by seeking support from corporate firms and PSUs under their CSR mandate. The society has already organised various programmes since its inception, including a book on "Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Libraries". This special issue is also an attempt to spread the idea on how CSR can help the local public libraries.

To create awareness about CSR among the library professionals, we have invited experts to contribute articles on the topic, which are published in this special issue. The paper by Y. Manohar discusses the concept of CSR and its relevance to the present day business; and how the private and public firms can improve the society. It describes the role of public libraries in augmenting the welfare schemes of the working communities and bridging the 'digital divide' among the various sections of the society. The author lists out various CSR initiatives undertaken by the PSUs in and around Visakhapatnam including RINL's efforts in establishing a public library.

The paper by K.C. Das describes the concept of CSR and its importance to the business community in ensuring sustainable development by fulfilling its social obligations to the society by supporting public

libraries. The author stresses the need for the private sector to invest in rural areas which are hitherto left out in the development process. He argues that only public libraries can bridge the 'information gap' and bring in the expected change in the society. Bhuvanewari Ravi and Gayathri Vivek in their paper describe the historical origin of ancient universities and centres of learning, including public libraries in our country and their contribution to the society. It examines the importance of public libraries in educating the masses, increasing the literacy rate and disseminating knowledge. The authors discuss the current problems of public libraries in our country and suggest a new PPP model for their promotion.

The paper by D. Muralidhar and M. Koteswara Rao describe the present status of public libraries in India and the need for mobilising support for their improvement. The authors stress the need for implementing the NKC recommendation for PPP. It describes the concept of PPP and the role of public and private sector firms in promoting public libraries using the PPP model. N. Sambasiva Rao and Nirmala Kumari in their paper discuss the history of public libraries in India and their current problems and suggests methods to revitalise the public library system through CSR initiatives. The authors describe the role of public libraries in enabling the creation of knowledge society where they indirectly contribute to the economic growth of the nation. The last paper by P. Vijay Kumar explains the concept of CSR and its importance in community development through public libraries. The author describes different CSR initiatives undertaken by various private and public sector firms in India. At the end, the author emphasises the need for proper implementation of different CSR models enabling the public libraries to utilise the opportunity for their growth and development.

Summing up, all the authors have examined and analysed all aspects of CSR and its ramifications in the context of public libraries. The authors have also examined in detail the problems of public libraries of our country and the need for their improvement through alternate means like CSR. We hope that this special issue will help library professionals and other stake holders to reaffirm their commitment in promoting public libraries through CSR.

We hope that this special issue on 'Corporate Social Responsibility' is expected to create awareness among library professionals as well as corporate houses & PSUs about CSR and pave the way for the development of public libraries. I wish to thank all the contributors for their excellent articles on the topic and the Director, DESIDOC for accepting our request to bring out a special issue on this subject and entrusting me with the job of guest editor.

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### About the Guest Editor

**Dr PSN Murthy** holds a Post Graduate Degree in Commerce from Andhra University, Visakhapatnam and a Masters degree in Library & Information Science from Dr BR Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad. After working for eight years in Andhra University, in 1982 he moved to Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Central Library as Library Manager and retired from active service in 2011. He has published more than 12 papers and organised many seminars on library and information services in addition to organising book donation events to rural libraries, public libraries, school libraries and NGO-managed Libraries. He also delivered radio talks on various issues like-Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Libraries; Public Library System in Andhra Pradesh; CSR and Public Private Partnership, etc. He is the founder President of the 'Society for the Promotion of Public Libraries', Visakhapatnam and is deeply involved in the development of public libraries and NGO managed libraries in and around the Visakhapatnam under CSR mandate.

He is a recipient of the *Jawaharlal Nehru Award* for outstanding library services of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant in 1994; *Samaja Mithra* for best citizen award by Prothsaha Cultural and Social Welfare Association, Visakhapatnam in 2011; *Aanimuthyam Lifetime Achievement State Award 2011* by Mother Teresa Social Welfare Organisation, Visakhapatnam; *Nandana Nama Samvastara Ugadi Puruskaram-2012* by Shaka Granthalayam, ZGS, Visakhapatnam; and *Dr Ranganathan-Prof PN Kaula Award* for 2011 by Prof PN Kaula Endowment for Library & Information Science, Lucknow, and *Iyyanki Venkata Ramanaiah (Grandhalya Karta)* for the year 2011 by Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad.