

Guest Editorial

Libraries and Librarianship in India

India has a long tradition of libraries, their evolution and development running parallel to that of the culture and society. There are records of libraries functioning even in 450 A.D. In the Nalanda University, there was a huge library housed in three buildings, Ratnasagar, Ratnodadhi and Ratnaranjak. The names given to the buildings denote the importance given to libraries. During the same time period, other universities, e.g., Vaikramsila, Vallabhi and Kanchi too had libraries with good collections of books. Medieval India does not have as encouraging records of libraries though the kings had libraries in their palaces. Libraries in modern India owe their existence to the British who established colleges which had good libraries. Establishment of universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras having libraries also laid the foundation for libraries in modern India. Public library movement began with the setting up of libraries in 1910 by Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, the erstwhile Maharaja of Baroda. A great visionary, the Maharaja planned to establish a network of libraries in the State. At the top a Central Library was established at Baroda with a staff strength of 50. He even introduced the publication of a journal. But with his death things came to a standstill. The development of libraries during that period was not sustaining. Their development lacked collective efforts; it was due to individuals. Lack of continuous flow of finances could be another reason for the slow and poor growth of libraries.

Library development in modern times has been quite encouraging. An estimate puts the number of public libraries in the country at 1,46,173. Library legislation that is important for the development of public libraries has been passed in 19 states so far. Libraries in the higher education set-up have been progressing well. There are 45 central universities, 326 state universities, 130 deemed universities and more than 35,000 colleges all having good libraries. Their libraries have been on the path of development. Special libraries in the country attached to research and development institutions are also progressing well. Formation of library networks and consortia has resulted in cooperation and collaboration amongst libraries. National Mission on Libraries (NML) set up on the recommendations of National Knowledge Commission has been entrusted with the development of libraries and librarians in the country. It has been set up with the following objectives specifically:

- Revamp and modernize the library sector and setting standards for quality improvement of services;
- Coordinate with stakeholder ministries to ensure effective implementation of the NKC recommendations and management of the post-implementation scenario;
- Coordinate with other national stakeholders of the library and information sector; and
- Review and assess current status of library and information science education and in-service training facilities.

These objectives should be in quotes as these have been taken from Dr. Banerjee's presentation¹.

The NML has been actively working and has set up a national Digital Library of India . It is also doing assessment of the status of libraries which is very important. Capacity building is another area that it has undertaken.

With a view to sustaining continuous growth and development, evaluation of library and information scenario of the country is essential to make further improvements. It is necessary to know the status for evaluation. The present issue is an attempt towards this end. It contains four articles, namely, Library and Information System in Andhra Pradesh: An Overview; An Overview of CSIR Libraries as Knowledge Resource Centres: Some Issues and Trends; Academic Libraries in Transition from Library as a Place to Library as a Learning Centre: A Case Study of Indian Institutes of Management; and Open Access Movement and Social Sciences in India: A Study of Open Access Publishing in Social Sciences and its Implications for Libraries. The issue has been planned to present library development in the country by surveying different types of libraries And librarianship in the country. More articles will follow in the forthcoming issue.

The article on status of libraries in Andhra Pradesh by Prof. R.S.R Varalakshmi presents a picture of all types of libraries the state. Information about the libraries has been presented on six parameters-budget, professional staff, collection, automation, ICT infrastructure and services. The analysis is based on data gathered through a questionnaire, phone calls and information available on institution's website. The author observed that the functioning of all types of libraries of the state is lopsided.

A survey of CSIR libraries attached to the 38 laboratories and 3 CSIR units has been presented by Dr R.K. Verma and Jaya kalra. The study is based on data collected on the infrastructure, resources, and the services provided by the libraries using a questionnaire. They have reported that most of the libraries have their own webpages. Only some have their presence on social media. The CSIR intends to develop its libraries as knowledge resource centres which the authors believe requires the staff to be more skilled in the latest techniques of knowledge management. Documentation of the resources and services on the library webpage ensuring access to them in the most effective way is strongly felt. They recommend that libraries should generate knowledge products and ensure tacit knowledge management in view of the strong knowledge base of the scientists working in the laboratories.

Indian Institutes of Management are premier institutes imparting management education in the country. The first two IIMs were set up in 1961 at Bangalore and Ahmedabad. Now there are 13 of them, the latest coming up in 2010. The article by Mr Bharat Kumar is based on a survey of libraries in seven IIMs. He has surveyed the IIMs that were set up not later than 2007. Those set up after 2007 have not been included as they are comparatively new to be comparable to others. The study points out that these libraries, as expected, are better off than other libraries in the higher education set up. They have implemented ICT in their in-house activities and provide services based on them. However, the author points out that there is scope of more cooperation amongst them to standardise procedures and also to save on resources and train staff.

Open access movement is picking up fast. It has been more evident in the case of science and medicine. The article on open access by Dr Prabhash Narayan Rath here presents the status of open access in social sciences and its implications on libraries. The article reports that there are 60 open access journals in India out of which 45 have appeared only during the last 5 years. Majority of these are peer-reviewed. They charge processing fees at the time of submission or at the time of acceptance. Most of these are available only in e-form. Only 25 % of them are available in the creative commons attribution. Libraries have to be cautious in subscribing to these journals in view of their quality as most of them have started appearing recently. Libraries can guide the authors about the quality of these journals and also about the open access philosophy.

It has been planned to present the status of libraries and librarianship in other parts of the country in the next issue.

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Prof Jaideep Sharma
School of Social Sciences &
University Librarian
IGNOU, Maidan Garhi
New Delhi-110 068
E-mail: jaydeepsharma@gmail.com