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A STUDY OF THE FUNCTIONING OF BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NORTH COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT
Public libraries as evident from its name, inherently, serve the public by offering their collections and services to all members of the community without any discretion. They store information and knowledge in different formats to quench the information requirements of heterogeneous users and support the populace in perpetual self-education through information and knowledge propagation. Public libraries size may range from one-room facilities in sparsely populated rural areas to large multi branch systems that serve millions of people in urban areas and their user population encompasses a wide spectrum of clientele i.e. students, researchers, intellectuals, bureaucrats, housewives, children, neo-literate, retired persons etc. This research paper is part of my PhD Thesis.
KEYWORDS: *Collections, Information, Libraries, Researchers.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The public library is a local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language, social status etc, Experts differ on public library by giving due consideration to some issues of 'public library. The definition given by Mc Colvin accepted universities (1956) is that "it is provided by the local authority, the town, or county council, entirely or mostly at its own expense; governed and administered by the authority or a committee, wholly or largely appointed by itself; available free of any charge to all who live in its area; and offering a wide selection of materials chosen to embrace as completely as possible the varied interests of the individual and the community, free from bias or religion, political or other motives."

Present Scenario in Andhra Pradesh

As stated above, the AP Public Library system's hierarchy starts with SCL, functioning at the top level. DCLs are the second level functioning bodies, and Branch and Village libraries are the functionary bodies at the third level. Alongside depository libraries, aided libraries serve at the lowest level in the Andhra Pradesh Public library administrative hierarchy.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY / PROPOSED RESEARCH

The Branch Libraries are meant to provide Library Services in different towns and villages. A total of 3343 BLs are in the State and all these are independent administrative units under the direct supervision and control of the City Central Librarian/District Central Librarian concerned. The Functions of BLs includes supervision of the functioning of the VLs and Book Deposit Centers and the inspection of Aided Libraries falling in their jurisdiction.

The Branch Libraries make library services and resources available to all members of community irrespective of religion, color, sex, language, status of the society without any discrimination. The uses of the services in the branch libraries differ from place to place and are influenced by variety of factors such as social, educational, cultural and other related issues.

In India only a few states have shown constant interest in the development of branch libraries. There is limited documentary evidence available to trace the development of branch libraries in Andhra Pradesh. Hence the study is framed to identify the development of Branch Libraries in Andhra Pradesh. No systematic studies were conducted on opinions of rural and urban library user groups about the provision of branch library services. On the review of literature, it was found that branch libraries are a reputed part of research and most of the studies concentrated in District Central Libraries / State Central Libraries/ National Library in India. In order to bridge the gap, it is proposed to examine the user opinions on the provision of Library services in the urban and rural set up in Andhra Pradesh. Hence this study was conducted to give an essential input in the future planning for improvement of Branch Library services.

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III. OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The objectives of public library are given by various professional bodies. The philosophy of public library is to provide information resources and services to their users.

According to ALA (1956) the objectives of public libraries are:

1. To facilitate information for self- education of all people in the community.
2. To enrich and further develop the subjects on which individuals are undertaking formal education
3. To meet the information needs of all.
4. To support the educational, civic and cultural activities of groups and organizations.
5. To encourage whole some recreation and constructive use of leisure time.

IV. RECENT REVIEWS

K.P. Sinha (India. Ministry of Education and Youth Services 1959) Chairman of the Government of India's Advisory Committee on Libraries describes the public library as "a library which is financed, for the most part, from public funds, and which is intended as an auxiliary educational institution providing a means of self-education, housing learning materials, giving reliable information freely and without partiality or prejudice on a wide variety of subjects as well as satisfying the interests of readers."

Viswanathan (1990) defines it as "a centre of communal study, an information bureau, a continuation school and a training school for democracy."

Kalia (1991) describe public library as "an institution, established and administered under a State law by a local government or an adhoc autonomous library authority or a government department maintained wholly out of public funds, open to all without distinction and free of charge."

The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) define public library as: "The local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups;" and "a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women;"

Librarian's Glossary (1987) describes public library as "a library provided wholly or partly from public funds and the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but is freely available to all".

V. ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The following are the major areas where public libraries, help to the societies for its posterity.

Educational: The role of modern public libraries is to educate every citizen by providing access to their collection in different formats and various services. It supplements formal education and supports the non-formal education and continuing self education. It is also the best institution for eradication of illiteracy. In developing countries, the vital role of public libraries is to impart basic education to the common people.

Informational: Information is the basic resource for individual and national development. The public library has a key role in collecting, organizing and providing access to a wide range of information resources to meet the heterogeneous needs of the people. The public library has a particular responsibility to collect local information and make it readily available. Thus the public library can act as a community information centre.

Cultural: The public library has an important role in the cultural development of the society. A public library collects and preserves the cultural heritage of the locality and this will enable the people to enrich their cultural awareness. Public libraries can promote the participation, enjoyment and appreciation of all art forms. The public library can foster culture by stimulating the creative talents and conducting cultural programmes.

Leisure: The public libraries can play a part in encouraging a positive use of leisure and providing materials for change as well as relaxation. Cultural and recreational activities enhance the social, physical and mental development of the people.

Social: The social role of public libraries is to provide materials and services to the people, which will help them to understand the different social conflicts, problems and the different measures to control them. By eradicating the social evils in the community, the public libraries can establish order in the society. In addition to these, the public library has an important role as a public space and

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meeting place. Use of the library for various purposes brings people into informal contact with other members of the community and can be a positive social experience.

Developmental: The public library is the most effective instrument for the economic development by disseminating recent information in Agriculture, Industry and related fields, to the respective people.

Political: One of the modern roles of public library is to make contribution to democracy and citizenship through well informed people. The public library is the only agency which can provide a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas, and opinion through the provision of resources and services in a variety of media to the people; which will enable them to know, defend and enjoy their rights and realize and discharge their duties in a society. Thus the public libraries play significant roles in the universal diffusion and enhancement of knowledge among the populace of a nation, in the moral and cultural enrichment, in the economic, scientific and industrial development of society.

V. GENESIS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES – INDIA

Evolution of libraries in India, as elsewhere, is closely associated with human civilization and evolution of writing material. In order to go along with the evolution of writing and reading material, the genesis of PLs in India can be depicted in a chronological order. Their evolution can be elucidated under three headings, viz. Ancient Period, Medieval Period and the British Period. During the ancient and medieval periods, it was the rulers of various princely States of India had taken keen interest in the development of public libraries. The Public Library system in India has developed initially under the patronage of the aristocracy. During the British rule the then Europeans inhabitants showed their interests and joined hands with Indians in funding 'native general libraries' in several areas of the western and eastern India. Independent India recognized the Public Libraries as a strong foundation for a democratic set up, and the rise of nationalism and the desire of the Indians to know more about the culture and traditions of India prompted the establishment of several public libraries with more books in Indian languages. In India, there are around 65,000 and in Andhra Pradesh around 3343 public libraries. The Government of India established a nodal agency Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation for development of public libraries in India, which has also taken initiatives in resource mobilization for modernization of the state and district central libraries, the development of infrastructure and training of personnel.

VI. GENESIS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES - ANDHRA PRADESH

The first Public Library in Andhra Preadesh was established in Rajahmundry in 1839. 'Manthana Adinarayanamoorty'(a school teacher) established Shri Sarswati Nilayam in Visakhapatnam in 1886, which happened to be the first Public Library to offer free book service to the populace. As per the Resolution of GoI dated 3rd November 1868, Gustav Oppert, who made a library tour to South India found that 30 libraries were existing by then in Visakhapatnam, most of which are now defunct.

Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act

The Hyderabd Public Libraries Act has been replaced by the Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act (APPLA), 1960, for cohesive and systematic development of public library system in AP. This Act paved way for the constitution of the Department of Public Libraries (DPL) in 1961, as an administrative body for the entire public library system of the state regarding funds provision through Library Cess; and the establishment and maintenance of a network of public libraries. A provision for separate Director for the same administrative body was made under the Act in 1967. The Director monitors and controls the affairs and issues relating to the public libraries in the State. With the amendment made to the Act in 1989, Andhra Pradesh Granthalaya Parishad was constituted, as an apex body with a chairman appointed by the Government.

To depict the hierarchical pattern of Public Library System in A.P.:

The State Central Library (SCL), Regional Library, District Central Library (DCL), Branch Library, Village Library etc. come under the purview of DPL. And the functioning of DPL is controlled by the Education Department, Govt. of A.P. and the Minister for Primary Education happens to be the Minister for Public Library.

VII. FINDINGS

The present study is taken up on Branch public Libraries of three selected districts of Andhra Pradesh. For this purpose, 133 Branch Libraries are studied and information gathered from these libraries. Out of the studied 133 Branch Libraries, except five the rest are established on or before the year 2000. It means most of the libraries are more than a decade old. Out of the 133 libraries studied, 44 are from Srikakulam district, 37 from Vizianagaram district and 52 from Visakhapatnam district. Most of the Branch Libraries are located in villages and at a place convenient to all users.

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About 90 libraries are located in government buildings and the remaining are mostly located in rented buildings. Regarding the availability of space, most of the librarians reported positively with the available space for libraries. All most all the libraries are maintaining circulation section, reference area and reading area in their libraries.

Due to paucity of funds, none of these libraries are able to go for computers, reprographic service and display of new arrivals.
The working hours of the Public Libraries varies from library to library. It is found that the working hours of the Branch Libraries of the three districts differ statistically. It is reported that none of the Branch Libraries are working on holidays and public holidays due to limited staff and the librarians reported that the demand from users on this aspect is negligible.

Though, all the Libraries are sanctioned with librarian post, 98 libraries are managed by librarians and the remaining posts are yet to be filled. Out of the 98 positions, all are professionally qualified and 46 librarians are qualified with graduation in library science and even more, the remaining with certificate course in library science. Since the librarians are qualified with library science degree, it would be easy to introduce any kind of information services suitable to user, keeping in mind other aspects like funds, infrastructure etc.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

1. It is suggested that the government should come forward to develop the existing library buildings and go for construction of new buildings for rented branch public libraries.
2. It is suggested that computers facilities should be made available in branch public libraries on priority basis.
3. It is suggested that all the branch public libraries should be filled with one librarian and one attender, otherwise it would be difficult to open the library on the days, when the staff on leave.
4. It is suggested that the Branch Public Libraries should be provided with reasonable funds from all kinds of sources to improve the furniture in a phased manner. In this context, the librarians are advised to approach the members of parliament of their respective areas to seek funds to improve the furniture.
5. It is suggested that all libraries should be provided with usable toilets on priority basis.
6. It is suggested to have computer with internet facility in all Branch Public Libraries to make use the facilities and services offered by government.
7. The librarians opined, that the facilities in the libraries like tables, chairs, fans, lights, and newspapers be improved to make it more convenient for the users to stay and spend reasonable time in libraries.
8. It is suggested to remit the municipal cess collected from property tax to the libraries regularly.
9. It is suggested that the library should acquire basic cartographic materials, such as Indian maps, maps on states, globe etc.
10. It is suggested that at least 100 to 200 books be added to existing collection annually.
11. It is suggested that all libraries should subscribe at least, two newspapers in Telugu and One in English. Besides this, the library should also subscribe Employment news, Vijetha Competition, Udhyogasopanam, Vivek etc.
12. It is suggested that the libraries should come forward to aware the women on various government and non government programs towards development in all respects.
13. It is suggested to continue the publicity on government programs, related to community development using information technology to the possible extent.
14. It is suggested that the number of news papers be increased, keeping in mind the amount sanctioned in the budget.
15. It is suggested to go for automation and their application in these libraries in a phased manner.
16. It is suggested to train the professionals on library automation areas.
17. It is suggested to encourage all categories of users particularly, women and down trodden to enroll themselves in libraries on special occasions like library week celebration, birthdays of great people etc.
18. It is suggested that mobile library service be made available to offer the library services to rural and remote villages users.
19. It is suggested to constitute library committee with at least Five Members representing all walks of societies and the librarian is the convener of committee.
20. It is suggested to make provisions to develop catalogue or database for the library collections.
21. The government may be requested to provide special grants to construct toilets on priority basis.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The public library system is one of the important item to meet the information needs of people. For functioning of these libraries, the state government enacted the public library bill and offering facilities to that effect. The development of public libraries in India is far behind in comparison with developed countries. Therefore, the state governments are required to initiate steps to develop the public libraries using the facilities of Information and Communication Technology. The public libraries in rural areas equipped in such way to meet the information requirements of the people, like a information center.