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## **GUARANTEEING ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The library is a social institution. Libraries form a vital part of the world's social and educational system. They are entrusted with the responsibility of carrying knowledge to the doors of those who require it, so that it can be fruitfully utilized both by the educated and the uneducated. Knowledge is available through books, films, recordings, and other media. People in all walks of life use library resources for their day-to-day life. A public library is a social organization, supported by public funds, which provides for self-education, free information on social, economic, cultural, and recreational needs of all members of rural and urban classes of the society. It serves the public without any discrimination of caste, creed, age or gender, status, and educational attainments. It is, therefore, described as 'People's University'. It is a democratic institution of the people, by the people, and for the people. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents visited the library to read newspapers.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Protection, disseminate, exhibition, discrimination, attainments*

## INTRODUCTION

In modern societies, every human activity is organized through institutions. Every major social task, whether economic performance or health care, education or research, business or industry is institutionalized. The protection of the environment or defence is today invariably entrusted to institutions and organizations. Libraries and other similar types of institutions are those that collect, stock, process, organize, disseminate and distribute information/knowledge recorded in documents. Since knowledge and information are so vital for all round human development, libraries and other institutions that handle and manage knowledge and information are indeed invaluable. In this Unit, you are introduced to the important role that libraries play in the educational process of formal and non-formal learning, in research and development, in cultural activities, in spiritual and ideological realms, in recreation and entertainment, etc. With spectacular advances in information technologies and increasing categories of users and their information needs in different situations, modern society is heading towards an information society in which the central instrument of change, force and direction of change are knowledge and information.

## PUBLIC LIBRARY AND CULTURE

Culture is closely related to social life. Public library is a product of society for its cultural advancement. Libraries can be called centres of cultural excellence. This is because libraries maintain records of the past. It is in the libraries that the cultural heritage of human beings is presented and passed on to posterity. The public library has to contribute to the cultural enrichment of the society by organizing extension activities like lectures, seminars, symposia, book exhibitions and cultural gatherings. Culture is passed from generation to generation either through personal contacts or through recorded knowledge. The society as a whole, or a region of it, or an era, all are found embodied in the pages of documents. The success of libraries as cultural agencies depends upon the degree of enlightenment of the community and quality of the resources and services offered. A network of quality libraries is essential to make a nation aware of its cultural heritage. Sayaojirao Gaekwad, The Pioneer of Public library movement of India, made this statement: A library is instituted to preserve the records of the deeds and thoughts of men, for the instruction and enlightenment of future generation.<sup>1</sup>

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND COMMUNICATION

Libraries not only conserve our culture, but also act as agencies of communication. The power of communication of ideas is the most significant achievement in human life. Books and libraries are the most powerful means of

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/role-of-public-libraries-in-building-knowledge-society/258139>

communication. In books, achievements of life, experiences of the departed and the thoughts of saints and scholars, scientists, educationists, artists, poets and philosophers are recorded. Acquisition, accumulation and sharing of ideas through experience and passing them to fellow beings distinguish man from animals.<sup>2</sup>

## **PUBLIC LIBRARY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Nations of the world are divided into rich and poor based on their strength of information. Out of many channels of information, libraries are the richest and the most economical source of information for the socioeconomic and cultural development. The establishment and the development of libraries in general and the public libraries in particular are an investment. The larger population of our country is spread over in remote villages. The prosperity of our nation depends entirely on how far we are able to improve the economic and social life of rural masses. Library service helps the rural people, in getting accurate and timely information, to adopt new technologies and it helps them to improve the quality of rural life.

## **ROLE OF LIBRARY IN RESEARCH**

Supporting research is yet another important role of the library. Access to existing knowledge and information is essential for research. The knowledge that is newly created is primarily communicated through journals, research reports and other similar publications: Every library attached to an institution engaged in research should have a strong collection of such publications to support research programmes. The libraries attached to universities, research organisations and research and development wings of industrial establishments play the key role in this respect. However, no library is without a research function in some form. Even public libraries have a research role especially in the social sciences and humanities.<sup>3</sup>

## **ROLE OF LIBRARY IN DISSEMINATING INFORMATION**

Libraries, through their books, are actually repositories of information and knowledge. Information is indispensable for any human activity aiming at social progress. The researcher, the teacher, the student, the administrator, the industrial and business manager, the artisan, the entrepreneur, the farmer, the worker in the factory and the field, all need the information to equip, themselves better for the fruitful pursuit of their respective

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.studymode.com/essays/Role-Of-Libraries-In-Society-462740.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.studymode.com/essays/Role-Of-Libraries-In-Society-462740.html#google_vignette)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lisedunetwork.com/role-library-society/>

vocations. The basic information role of the library is to collect material containing information through appropriate methods.

It is primarily in this sense that a library is described as an information centre. But a library also has an information role in the sense of providing information relating to the socio-economic needs of the people. A library can stock career information books and help those who are on – the lookout for a career in a particular field. Similarly, well-produced “how-to-do-it” type of books would be helpful in providing guidance to youngsters wanting to start some enterprise. In short, a library should be so equipped and organised that it will be able to serve its community with all types of information that may be in actual or potential demand.<sup>4</sup>

### **LIBRARIES AS GATEWAYS TO KNOWLEDGE**

“In sandy soil, when deep you delve, you reach the springs below; The more you learn the freer streams of wisdom flow” (Thirukkural-396).

This Thirukkural wants to educate us by saying that water will spring from the sandy well depending upon the depth of digging; similarly the knowledge will flow from a man in proportion to his learning. In the similar way libraries acts as the Centre of Learning in all human activities have relied heavily on knowledge and information. Modern society needs in supporting the educational and research activities of society, promoting culture, disseminating information and providing recreation and making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users (Pope, 2004).

A library is not a building stacked with books, it is a repository and source of information and ideas, a place for learning and enquiry, and for the generation of thought and the creation of new knowledge. Public libraries in particular have the potential to bridge the gap between the ‘*information poor*’ and the ‘*information rich*’ by ensuring that people from all sectors and settings of society and the economy across India have easy access to knowledge they seek (National Knowledge Commission, 2007). The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how the public libraries support and guides the digital and modern world.<sup>5</sup>

### **OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY**

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Agnes-Mainka/publication/263373392\\_Public\\_Libraries\\_in\\_the\\_Knowledge\\_Society\\_Core\\_Services\\_of\\_Libraries\\_in\\_Informational\\_World\\_Cities/links/5894795eaca27231daf8bc6f/Public-Libraries-in-the-Knowledge-Society-Core-Services-of-Libraries-in-Informational-World-Cities.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Agnes-Mainka/publication/263373392_Public_Libraries_in_the_Knowledge_Society_Core_Services_of_Libraries_in_Informational_World_Cities/links/5894795eaca27231daf8bc6f/Public-Libraries-in-the-Knowledge-Society-Core-Services-of-Libraries-in-Informational-World-Cities.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/public-libraries-in-the-modern-world/133955>

The objectives of a public library are associated with its parent body i.e. community and its duty are to cater to the information and recreational needs of its users i.e. community members. The main objectives of a public library are as follows:

1. To provide up-to-date and authentic information on all subjects;
2. To provide services free of cost or at nominal rates to each member of the society without any discrimination;
3. To provide a harmless and elevating use of leisure;
4. To be responsible for preservation and development of cultural and antiquarian heritage of the community<sup>6</sup>

## **FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Libraries are fulfilling the reading requirements of the each and every citizen to the fullest extent without making any discrimination on the basis of membership and thus it is considered as peoples University. It focuses on providing knowledge on all matters including academic and non — academic. Now —a-days Public Libraries are functioning as mobile – channels in providing knowledge to the people of rural and urban areas.

Public libraries are constantly serving community functions and are performing various important roles in educational, economic, political, social and cultural development of the country. Information, as the most important instrument that lead to explosive growth of knowledge and the direct relation of information to developments in all walks of human life have elevated the role of Public libraries in our society.

### **1. Centre for cultures:**

Public library, being a part of a centre of education and information, is required to serve as a centre to promote local or regional culture. For this the Public library have to acquire all materials of mankind depicting this excellence in prose, poetry, drama, music, painting, dance and sculpture.

### **2. Centre for information:**

All human being needs information, either individual or collective, and it is information transfer and information revolution through which culture change, and socio economic development of Nation is possible. Public Libraries are the local gateway to knowledge and it should provide information suiting needs of individual and groups. A country like India has rich human resources, which need to be made productive. Lack of Information and lack of free flow of information from the knowing to the unknowing are impending this effort public. Therefore libraries should provide information which suit the needs of door steps and in a language that can be understood easily.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.lisedunetwork.com/public-library\\_17/](https://www.lisedunetwork.com/public-library_17/)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/public-libraries-in-the-modern-world/133955>

### 3. Centre for education:

Education is a critical fact, its determining the peace and direction to development. Education is for complete living of man, so bread and butter aim is an inevitable aspect- hence the importance of vocation. It can play vital role to educate citizen by providing access to their collection in different formats and various service and to supplements formal education and support the informal education and continuing self-education. In emerging country, public library is an education centre. It will promote education at all levels primary, secondary, higher, non-formal, adults, distant, vocational and so on. It has to serve as a centre for informal self-education and opens its doors to all types of the people in a community without any consideration. Education is very important and essential commodity for all peoples.

### SELECTION POLICIES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY

Public library is 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. Materials selection policies of a public library maintain some policies. Some of them may be as:

- To see that no race, nationality profession, trade, religion, school of thought, or local custom is overlooked.
- Every library collection should be build up according to define plan.
- Knowing the general and special community, collection will be developed.<sup>8</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Public library is very important in the life of any nation. It attempts to meet various needs of readers, provide various information sources and services. Public library play important role in the development of society. Around the world, many rural community members believe that public libraries support and assist their self-development and self-improvement. Residents come to the rural public libraries for more than just reading. Hence it has been established as a crucial place in the life of a common man. It will help for their own development, family and community development. From the analysis, it stated that library has to play a vital role for the improvement in society.

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