




THE ROLE OF RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY LIBRARY FOUNDATION (RRRLF) FOR PROVIDING COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICES (CIS) THROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN WEST BENGAL: AN OVERVIEW

Subrata Das ¹  & Dr. Sunil Kumar Chatterjee ²

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Author Details: ¹ Librarian, Dinabandhu Mahavidyalaya, Bongaon, North 24 Pgs, West Bengal, India & Researcher, Department of Library & Information Science, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India; ² Professor, Department of Library & Information Science, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author:
Subrata Das

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Abstract

Public libraries play an important role to fulfill the community information needs among the people of all categories in the society. To strengthen and improve the public library system, State Central Library, District Library, Sub-division Library, Town Library and Rural Library have been established at the State, District, Sub-division, Municipal and Block levels. The Government of India established the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) in 1972 to promote, modernize and promote the library movement in all over India. The RRRLF has established five regional centres in East, West, North, South and North-East India, with its headquarters in Kolkata. The RRRLF provides Matching, Non-matching financial assistance and other assistance for the operation of public libraries in various states of India. The RRRLF, as a nodal agency of the Government of India, has been directly and indirectly assisting in the promotion, expansion, development, information services and modernization of public libraries. It can be noticed that the public library acts as a community information center to fulfill the community information needs of the daily lives of different people in the society. In this article we discuss about the importance of public libraries, the nature and quality of document collection, as well as the types of information services, facilities and programs that public libraries can adopt to provide Community Information Services (CIS). The recommendations of the advisory committees appointed by the Government of India at different times for the development of public libraries, have been highlighted. Besides, the various objectives and activities of RRRLF, which is engaged in the promotion, expansion, development and modernization of public libraries, have also been discussed. At the end of the article, suggestions have been given to eliminate the problems and issues of public libraries for providing CIS through public libraries to the community. For the information and content of this article, articles from various previously published journals, the RRRLF website, and the Google search engine have been used.

Keywords: *Public Library, Community Information Service (CIS), Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Public Library Legislation, Advisory Committee for Public Libraries, National Policy on Library and Information System (NPLIS), National Knowledge Commission (NKC), West Bengal*

Introduction

Public libraries have been fulfilling an important social responsibility by providing lifelong free Community Information Services (CIS) to the people, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender and age. All the general users get CIS according to their needs and requirements from public libraries. Therefore, the public libraries are called the people's universities. No country around the world can be developed without providing public library services to the people. To strengthen the supply of information democratically to promote the social culture, the role of public libraries is very important. Though the actual condition of public libraries in India is not good enough. The development of public libraries is very negligible in comparison to the development of libraries of colleges, universities and special libraries like the research libraries. The administrative control of public libraries is exercised by the State Governments. The development of public libraries is not given priority by the State Governments. But the public libraries play an important role as an important component of the knowledge-based economy.

Community information is such type of information which is needed by the people of the society and it is potentially available in the society for the effective use in which they live. Such information may be needed to solve problems in health, education, housing, family, finance, marriage, employment, legal protection and other necessities. CIS are the information services by the

people, for the people. CIS expand social communication; increase information exchange; reduce information transaction costs; help to select the appropriate information, help to increase the ability of communication and exchange quality information. Public libraries can be transformed from mere store houses to real information centers by providing the CIS.

The Government of India established the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) on 20th May 1972 to improve the condition of public libraries throughout India, especially in remote rural areas, to provide library services to the whole nation through public libraries and to encourage reading. Government of India established a fully autonomous body the RRRLF which is registered under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961. The Ministry of Culture, Government of India provided funding for it. It must be the nodal body of the Government of India which assist in the management, maintenance, development and modernization of public libraries and to promote the public library movement throughout the country.

Objectives of the Study

- ❖ To be aware of the need for public libraries to provide CIS, the nature and quality of document collection.
- ❖ To discuss on the types of information services, facilities and programs that public libraries can adopt to provide CIS.
- ❖ To be aware of the recommendations of the advisory committees appointed at different times for the development of public libraries.
- ❖ To have a proper understanding of the objectives and activities of RRRLF engaged in the promotion, expansion and development of public libraries.
- ❖ To identify the problems of public libraries for providing CIS and to provide suggestions for their elimination.

Scope of the Subject

The article is limited to public libraries, CIS and RRRLF. It has been highlighted how RRRLF, as a nodal agency of the Government of India, has been directly and indirectly helping in the promotion, expansion, development, information services, modernization of public libraries. Besides, in order to understand the subject in depth, the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and the Public Library Act for public libraries have been highlighted. As the geographical scope of the subject the state of West Bengal has been given the priority.

Importance of Public Libraries

- The public library helps in lifelong self-education to each and every people in the society.
- It acts as a container and carrier of recorded thoughts of the human being and works to serve the creative imagination power to the people freely.
- It helps people's thought-provoking concern, increasing the power of knowledge and to strengthen the democracy through books and other materials.
- It helps the common people by providing the best information on various subjects such as sociology, science and technology to remove the problems of day-to-day life.
- It acts as a social and cultural center and helps the common people to make them socially and scientifically minded.
- It provides an opportunity to collect and preserve the materials of past literature and local culture to encourage the people entering into the source of information and education.

Collection of Public Libraries

- The collection of public libraries includes books, newspapers, magazines, maps, atlases, globes and CDs/DVDs obtained from books and magazines etc. Public libraries should build their collections according to the needs and demographics of the area.
- The collection of public libraries should be built by combining the information of various departments of the Central and State Governments engaged in rural development activities.
- Public libraries should have the documents in languages that are relevant to the area.
- Books, magazines and newspapers that are helpful for the preparation of various All India Competitive Examinations, should be kept in the library on a regular basis.
- The process of purchasing books, periodicals and newspapers ought to be ongoing.
- At least 10% of the total collection of the library should be purchased within the last five years.
- At least 60% of the library budget should be utilized for the collection development of the library.

Public Library Legislation in West Bengal

The West Bengal Government enacted the West Bengal Public Library Act in 1979 with an aim of developing public libraries and formulating a specific library policy. Till now, 19 states across India have successfully enacted Public Library Acts, but its foundation was laid in 1930. In the first "All Asia Educational Conference" held in Benares in 1930, S. R. Ranganathan, the father of the library movement in India, first presented the idea of an Integrated Library System. There, he presented a Model Library Act that formed the basis of library act in India as a whole. Although Kumar Munindra Deb Roy with the help of Dr. S.

R. Ranganathan had formulated a Public Library Bill for Bengal in 1931. Continuous efforts were made to introduce a Public Library Bill in the legislature under the leadership of the Bengal Library Association. The West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed the Public Library Act after thirty-two years of independence. After the introduction of the Public Library Act, various efforts were made to manage the government and the government sponsored public libraries in a well-organized and well-planned manner. The West Bengal Government established the Department of Library Services in 1980 to oversee the management of public libraries including the State Central Library, the state library movement and literacy initiatives. Additional amendments were made to the West Bengal Public Library Act in 1982, 1985, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2003 and 2012. This act laid emphasis on the establishment, development, control, supervision of new public libraries as well as information services. The Government of West Bengal, by amending the Rules of Procedure, established the Department of Mass Education Extension on 21st April 1988 vide Notification No. 5106-AR of the Home Department to look after all matters relating to adult education, on-formal education, education for children with special needs and social education not related to higher education. The Department of Library Services was merged with the Department of Mass Education Extension and renamed the Department of Mass Education Extension & Library Services. Since its inception, the RRRLF has been advocating for state governments to enact the act relating to public libraries. It is expected that in the near future, it will be possible for other states to enact the public library act.

At present there are 2,480 public libraries in the state, out of which 13 are government public libraries, 2460 are government sponsored public libraries and 7 are government aided libraries. The government public libraries include the State Central Library, the Government Uttarpara Jayakrishna Public Library with special status, 7 District Libraries and 4 City/Sub-division Libraries. The government maintains public libraries including 19 District Libraries, 232 City/Sub-division Libraries and 2209 Rural/Primary unit/Area Libraries. These libraries have been included in the government grant as per section 16(a) of the West Bengal Public Library Act, 1979. As per the West Bengal Public Library Act, State Library Council (SLC) and Local Library Authorities (LLA) have been reconstituted to organize and manage the public library services in the state vide G.O. No. 909-MEE/Secc dated 28th December, 2011. SLC plays a major role in the decision-making process related to LLA in all the districts.

Advisory Committee for Public Libraries

The Government of India appointed a committee, 'Sinha Committee' in 1957, led by Dr. A. P. Sinha, to prepare a report on the state of the public libraries in the country. The main points made by the Sinha Committee in its report were that the public library services should be provided free of cost by the government to the citizen; the public library system of the country should be started with the National Library and gradually extended to the state Central Library, District Libraries, Block Libraries and Panchayat Libraries; the State Government should take over the responsibility of the public library services of their state.

For preparing the National Policy on Library and Information Systems (NPALIS) a committee had been formed by the Government of India under the chairmanship of Professor D. P. Chatterjee (the then Chairman of RRRLF). In March 1986, the NAPLIS committee submitted the suggested draft to the government. According to Professor Chatterjee's Committee, rural libraries should be given priority in the public library system. In any village or a group of villages with a sufficient population, there should be a rural library which would also function as a community information centre. RRRLF requested the Government of India to adopt the NAPLIS policy in line with the National Education Policy, National Science Policy and National Industrial Policy etc.

In March 1986, the Government of India appointed another committee called the Empowered Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor D. P. Chatterjee to look after which recommendations of the NAPLIS Committee should be adopted. The Empowered Committee also emphasized on the importance of CIS in its report submitted in March 1988. According to the Empowered Committee, rural libraries should be developed as community information centres as recommended by NAPLIS which would provide services to adults, children, educated and illiterate people from all sections of society through reading materials and audio-visual aids. The collection of rural libraries should be built by collecting the information in which various departments of the Central and State Governments are engaged in rural development activities so that rural libraries can provide CIS.

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was founded on 13th June 2005, by then-prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh under the chairmanship of Sam Pitroda. The NKC also focused on improving library and information services apart from important issues like education, science and technology, agriculture, industry, e-governance, etc. The NKC recommended several measures to strengthen public libraries including a national census of all libraries; establishment of a central library fund; establishment of a National Mission on Libraries; modernization of library management, etc.

On the recommendation of NKC, the Ministry of Culture constituted the National Mission on Libraries (NML) on 4th May 2012 to restructure the system and services of public libraries and provide digital content-based services to the larger citizen of the society. RRRLF was declared as NML's nodal agency for planning, budgetary, logistical, and administrative issues. The recommendations, made by NML for the development of public libraries, are - Creation of National Virtual Library (NVL); establishment of NML model library and development of existing libraries; quantitative & qualitative survey of libraries; capacity building. The Union Ministry of Culture will keep under administrative control only six public libraries which are- the National Library in Kolkata, the Central Reference Library in Kolkata, the Central Secretariat Library in New Delhi, the Delhi Public Library in Delhi, the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna, and the Rampur Raza Library in Rampur.

Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation

Raja Rammohun Roy was a social reformer and a pioneer of the Indian Renaissance. He emphasized the need of modern education for the progress of the nation. One of the most important years in Indian history is 1972. The Indian Government celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its independence; established the RRRLF to honour Raja Rammohan Roy's two hundred years birth ceremony and acknowledged the International Book Year with the theme "Books for All" this year. The RRRLF was established with the primary aims of enhancing public library conditions; developing, modernising, and expanding public libraries in isolated rural areas; expanding library services nationwide through public libraries; and promoting reading habits. The RRRLF was formally inaugurated on 20th May 1972 at the National Library campus in Kolkata. The Core Committee of RRRLF was formed with 22 the Government nominated individuals from among distinguished educators, librarians, administrators and senior officials from the State and Central Governments to serve on the RRRLF. Moreover, the Administrative Committee of RRRLF consists of 10 members and the Grants Committee consists of 12 members. The Chairman of RRRLF is the Minister of Culture, Government of India or a representative appointed by him. The current Chairman of RRRLF is Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, while Professor Ajay Pratap Singh serves as the Foundation's Executive Head and Ex-officio Member-Secretary. The Foundation works through State Library Committees (SLCs) in each State. The State Library Planning Committees (SLPCs) set up in each state under the direction of the Foundation work in close and active collaboration with the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. To take part in the Foundation's programme, each State Government must pay a certain amount of money that is decided by the Foundation. Additionally, in collaboration with Nehru Yuva Kendra, an independent organisation under the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, RRRLF has taken the initiative to develop District Youth Resource Centres (DYRCs).

Objectives of RRRLF

The RRRLF is an advisory and consultancy, promotional organisation that provides funding for the development of public libraries throughout India. The main objectives of RRRLF are described below-

- ❖ To promote and expand the public library movement throughout the country and to assist in the implementation of public library act in various states of India.
- ❖ To promulgate a National Library Policy. To assist in the development of a National Library System by formulating a National Library Policy by the Central and State Governments.
- ❖ To publish periodic reports on the development of public libraries and to advise the Government of India on all matters relating to the development of public libraries.
- ❖ To help in the development of a National Library System by integrating the services of the National Library, State Central Libraries, District Libraries and other public libraries through inter-library loan system.
- ❖ To assist public libraries in organising various workshops, conferences and exhibitions.
- ❖ To provide financial and technical assistance to public libraries and to regional or national organizations engaged in promoting the development of public libraries.
- ❖ To establish regional library service centres throughout the country which will provide reprographic and book preservation services to assist in the reproduction and proper preservation of textual material in printed or manuscript form.
- ❖ To maintain a national register of qualified librarians and their fields of specialization throughout the country.
- ❖ To take necessary measures for developing public libraries throughout the country and for encouraging the general public to use public libraries.
- ❖ To encourage for the research on the problems and various topics of public libraries.
- ❖ To strengthen the children's library network throughout the country and to introduce mobile library services.

To implement and supervise the above objectives, the Government of India has established a Directorate of Libraries under the Ministry of Culture. For over 50 years, RPRLF has been undertaking various schemes for the establishment and development of public libraries in the country. Over 35,000 public libraries around the nation have received support from the foundation so far.

Activities of RRRLF

1. Establishment of Zonal Offices and Survey on Public Libraries

RRRLF has established five Zonal Offices in five regions of the country. The administrative officers of the Zonal Offices are professionals in Library and Information Science. The administrative officers regularly visit all the public libraries in their zonal areas and inform their headquarters about the condition of the public libraries. RRRLF has carried out a survey on the condition of public libraries through the private organization A. C. Neilson Org. Marg Pvt. Ltd. The report states that out of 5,57,137 villages in the country, only 49,757 villages have libraries, i.e. only 9% of the villages in the country have public libraries. From time to time, RRRLF has been continuing the survey about public libraries across the nation, either directly or through organisations.

2. Initiatives for the establishment of Public Libraries

RRRLF has been requesting the State Governments to provide funds for the establishment of public libraries in more villages, purchasing of land, construction of buildings and for the acquisition of necessary furniture. RRRLF has established a number of rural libraries in various villages of the country by providing financial assistance to the states. RRRLF spends more than Rs.35 crores annually for the growth and development of public libraries across the country.

3. Provide Matching Grants to the States

Every year, RRRLF provides 'Matching Grants' to the public libraries of each state for the purchasing of books, furniture, computers, etc. If the State Government bears 50% of the estimated cost of the public library and the remaining 50% is borne by RRRLF, in the case of developed states; and in the case of backward and developing states if the State Government bears 40% of the estimated cost of the public library and the remaining 60% is borne by RRRLF; and in the case of North-eastern States, if the State Government bears 10% of the estimated cost of the public library and the remaining 90% is borne by RRRLF. RRRLF also provides Matching Grants for the following programme of public libraries-

- To assist in building up adequate collection of books and text materials.
- To assist the public libraries for increasing accommodation.
- To assist in developing rural book depository and mobile library services.
- Grants for purchasing of library furniture, display materials and other items for the convenience of readers.
- To assist the public libraries for the modernization of library services such as computers, UPS, printers, library automation software, scanners, bar code readers, networking and resource sharing, WIFI facilities, CCTV, library website, generators, LCD projectors etc.
- To assist in organizing seminars, training (orientation/refresher), workshops, library awareness programmes, book exhibitions etc.
- To assist in creating facilities for physically challenged readers like braille books, talking books, audio-visual materials, multimedia kits, specially designed reading tables and chairs, wheelchairs, specially designed toilets, ramps with railings etc.
- To assist for digitization of copyright free manuscripts, rare books and documents, old journals, historical records and other materials.

4. Provide Non-matching Grants to the states

All of the money provided as 'Non-matching Grants' comes from the Foundation's own funds. Under this scheme, RRRLF bears 90% and the State Governments bear 10%. In the case of West Bengal, RRRLF has provided a grant of Rs.48,000 to Dhanyakuria Saradhan Pathagar, North 24 Parganas in the financial year 2020-21 from Non-matching Grants. It has also provided a grant of Rs.1,50,000 to Bengal Library Association for organizing national level seminars and workshops, Rs.2,25,000 to Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti and Rs.1,00,000 to Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kalyani. It has provided a grant of Rs.1,00,000 to Patul Chadimata Sadharan Pathagar, Hooghly for celebrating its 75th anniversary in the financial year 2020-21. Besides, Egra Katha Chhanda, East Medinipur received Rs.7,68,800, Gaddiya Mission Grantha Mandir, Kolkata received Rs.2,23,918 and Santipur Sahitya Parishad, Nadia received Rs. 7,17,862 as grants. Sree Sree Saroda Maa Pathagar, Birbhum received Rs.2,92,794 as grants in the financial year 2022-23. The Non-matching Grants provided by RRRLF to public libraries in various states are-

- To assist in building up adequate book collections in public libraries through central selection of books.
- To assist the NGOs for providing books, furniture and equipment, computers, printers, UPS and other related accessories, construction, inverters, water purifiers etc. to public libraries.
- To assist in setting up RRRLF Knowledge Corners for women, senior citizens, newly-educated, career guidance sections in public libraries.
- To assist the libraries for celebrating Golden Jubilee/ Platinum Jubilee/Centenary/125th year/150th year etc.
- To assist in organizing the national level seminars, workshops, training and awareness programmes.
- To assist in collection and compilation of statistics of public libraries through government and private organizations.
- To assist for providing the public library services in rural areas by supporting institutions or organizations run by the Central and State Governments. Services are provided through public libraries in rural areas on the Sriniketan model of Rural Organization Department, Visva-Bharati University.
- To assist for establishing children's libraries and RRRLF children's corners in public libraries.

5. Aid for construction of building for Public Libraries in the State and Union territories

The construction of public library buildings is a very important issue. Although philanthropists have come forward to donate land for the construction of public library buildings in villages, the State Governments are unable to allocate the cost for the construction of library buildings due to lack of funds. In this regard, the financial assistance of RRRLF for the construction of public library buildings is very commendable. Apart from district, sub-division and town libraries, RRRLF provides a grant of Rs.4 lakhs for the construction of rural library buildings.

6. Modernization of Public Libraries

Modernization of collection and services of public libraries is very much needed to reach the common people of the society. The integration of computer and communication technologies helps to share the information quickly and easily. In present times, automation and library networking have become essential in public libraries. RRRLF has come forward to provide computers to all the State Central Libraries (SCL) and District Libraries (DL). RRRLF wants to create a network between SCL and DLs in the first phase. In order to satisfy the increasing need for knowledge and information from the rural community, all Sub-divisional, Town, and Rural Libraries will eventually be connected to the SCL and DL network to create the Indian Public Library Network. Modernization of public libraries will enable the common people to access to the necessary information.

7. Opening New Sections or Reading Corners for Women, Children & Physically challenged users in Public Libraries

From various survey reports, RRRLF has realized that women, children and physically challenged among the common people, do not get adequate opportunities to get information from public libraries. If these two categories of women and children are neglected in the society, it will weaken the democratic foundation of Indian society. Therefore, RRRLF has been opening separate new sections for women, children and physically challenged in public libraries, providing the necessary funds to collect necessary books and information materials in the sections. Through such services, the reading habit of women, children and physically challenged of the society will be developed. In the financial year of 2020-21, RRRLF has allocated Rs.7 lakhs for opening a new section or reading corner for physically challenged users in the library of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata.

8. Annual Lecture Program

Every year, RRRLF organizes lectures on public library across the nation to raise awareness of public libraries. The general public is made aware about how public libraries can help people from all walks of life by providing CIS.

9. Assisting LIS Associations and NGOs

RRRLF assists all library associations at the national and state levels in organizing and conducting conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. on public library issues. Such type of conferences highlights the importance of public libraries in providing CIS to the society. RRRLF also maintains contact with many national and international professional organizations like IFLA, ILA, IASLIC etc.

10. Annual Awards Programme

To encourage every member of the society to provide CIS, RRRLF has been organizing seven annual awards every year in different categories. These include one award for the best State Central Library and six awards for the best District Libraries. RRRLF has also introduced one award for the best Rural Library for each State since 2005. Besides, the Foundation also presents the Raja Rammohan Roy Award every year to the best author of an article on the development of public library system and services or on suggestive measures for increasing reading habits. Such awards encourage librarians of public libraries to provide more CIS.

11. Training and Refresher Courses to the Library Personnel

To enhance the skills of working librarians for using the modern technology RRRLF provides grants to the Public Library Directorates of different states regularly to conduct training sessions, refresher courses, and other events.

RRRLF frequently allocates funds to the Public Library Directorates of various states to hold training sessions, refresher courses, and other activities in order to improve the proficiency of working librarians with contemporary technology. RRRLF has prepared a training module to enhance the skill of working librarians. The training module is divided into three levels. In the first level, it organizes a strategic planning workshop for senior officers related to policy and administrative matters of public libraries of the states. 2-3 officers from each state will participate in this program. In the second level, it provides hands-on practical training on ICT skills, administrative and management skills to the library staff of the state central libraries, district libraries and big cities. This training module will be organized in each state in phases. In the third level, it provides training to the librarians on the day-to-day functioning of public libraries and to make the library users aware about the services of public libraries. Such programs will be organized in various public libraries in each state which will be conducted in the local language by local resource persons.

12. Encouraging Research Programs on Problems and Issues on Public Libraries

The main object of a democratic government in an independent country is to establish an information society or knowledge society. RRRLF strives to improve the knowledge and social structure of the common people of society through its various programs. It also provides grants to inspire young and experienced Library and Information Science professionals to pursue research on public library issues. The recommendations derived from the research help RRRLF in formulating various programs and plans for public libraries.

13. Assistance in Projects and Fellowships

A special library and computerized statistics unit on Library and Information Science for the Research Cell provides the necessary information for the various activities of the Research Cell. About 5000 important books and journals in Library and Information Science and related fields are collected in the library of the Research Cell. Besides conducting research projects on public library related subjects, the Research Cell provides consultancy and services as and when required. It prepares and publishes a report on books lost in public libraries for the Government of India.

This fellowship program has been created to support and revitalise a number of organisations under the Ministry of Culture as well as other recognised cultural organisations across the nation. So that scholars/academicians can be encouraged to associate themselves with these institutions for working on projects of mutual interest. The scholars/academicians will be selected from the specific resources of the institutions so that they can undertake projects and research work related to the core objectives of the institutions for enriching the institution with their creativity and academic excellence. RRRLF awards fellowships every year to only five distinguished men and women who are active participants in the library movement of the country, have contributed through organizational initiative, intellectual leadership or have the contribution to the promotion of reading habits among the public. Both International and Indian citizens are eligible to apply for the fellowship. But the percentage of foreign recipients, however, will not surpass one-third of all fellowships granted in a given year.

14. RRRLF's Digital Library Initiative

To initiate the digitization of rare books including pre-independence newspapers, journals and other documents held in public libraries. To create a digital repository to provide access to digitized documents to all stakeholders of the public libraries. To digitize selected copyright-free materials including paintings, photographs, manuscripts etc. available in public libraries, make them available to the community. The aim is to create a National Digital Repository by creating metadata of all rare materials and digital versions of copyright-free works available in public libraries as part of India's National Digital Preservation Programme. This digital repository will also host content related to public libraries and their systems, services and development in India. For this reason, the responsibility of digitising the collections of different libraries has been given to the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC). CDAC has already completed the digitization of about 800 copyright-free books of the Ramakrishna Mission Delhi Branch Library. CDAC has completed about 5 lakh pages of rare books, handwritten journals, bound periodicals, and historical artefacts and records belonging to Bongiyu Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata. It has also digitized 3 million pages and 3333 Bengali songs in various languages of the Rabindra Bhavan Library of Visva-Bharati University founded by Rabindranath Tagore. The National Informatics Centre (NIC) authorities have been given the responsibility of hosting the digital library portal.

15. Publications of RRRLF

Rabindranath Tagore's Web Bibliography Collection; Books for the Millions at their Doorsteps : Information Manual of RRRLF programmes; A decade of the foundation (1972-82) : souvenir of the decennary celebration; National policy on library and information systems and services for India : perspectives and projections; Indian libraries : trends and perspectives; Raja Rammohun Roy and the new learning : Raja Rammohan Roy memorial lectures; Two decades of the foundation (1972-92): souvenir on the occasion of the 20th celebrations; Granthana: Indian Journal of Library Studies; RRRLF Newsletter; RRRLF Annual Report etc.

Proposals and Suggestions for Providing better CIS through Public Libraries

- Public library may take grants or financial assistance from the State Government, RRRLF or any other organization, eminent persons or library lovers for providing better library infrastructure such as expansion of library building, increasing reading rooms' seating capacity, furniture, exhibition materials, specially designed reading tables and chairs for physically challenged readers, ramps with railings, generator/emergency facilities during load shedding, drinking water, separate toilets for male and female users, separate sitting arrangement for women in public libraries located in Muslim dominated areas, parking facilities etc. so that the common people from all walks of life can get CIS.
- Public library may ask financial help from the State Government, RRRLF or any other organization, eminent persons or library lovers for physical facilities in the public libraries like text book section, separate reference section, career guidance section, separate children's section, neo-literate's corner, separate women's section, separate section for elderly persons, separate section for visually impaired, seminar hall/exhibition hall etc.
- While purchasing new books, public libraries should purchase books based on the recommendations and needs of the users. English magazines should be kept in the library regularly along with Bengali magazines as a helpful magazine for the preparation of various All India Competitive Examinations and the number of magazines should be increased as per the requirement of the users. Some braille books and talking books, audio visual materials should be collected for physically challenged readers. To enrich the library collection e-resources should be kept along with the books and magazines. To fulfil this object for providing CIS as per the need of the society, grants from the State Government and RRRLF is very much needed.
- Besides the common library services like book circulation, reference services and reading room services public libraries should provide various services such as inter-library loan, newspaper display service, career guidance services, information

services through the use of computers and internet, user education, information literacy programme, photocopying, Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), electronic document delivery etc. for providing better CIS.

- Besides providing help to the public libraries for providing regular services, RRRLF can also help the public libraries for collecting and providing various CIS like livelihood information, education information, health information, accommodation or housing information, transport information, employment information, agricultural information, drinking water information, emergency services information, consumer information, cultural and recreational information, legal information, various rural development information of the Central and State Governments.
- Due to the lack of sufficient number of computers and information and communication technology equipment in public libraries, the library cannot provide effective computer and internet services to the users. In order to modernize the library services and bring modern technology of information collection to the common people, provision of computers, automation software, printers, scanners, bar code readers, internet connection, resource sharing, WIFI facilities, CCTV, library website, LCD projectors etc. should be available in public libraries. Although some sub-divisional libraries have library software, bar code readers, printers, scanners, xerox machines, and CCTV systems, they are able to provide CIS using modern technology but due to the lack of such modern technology in rural libraries, it is not possible for rural libraries to provide CIS by using modern technology. If the state government provides special grants to public libraries for adequate computers and information and communication technology equipment, it will be beneficial for public libraries to provide CIS. For this, RRRLF needs to motivate the State Government to provide more grants to the State's Public Library Directorate.
- Public libraries should make people aware about the library membership, working hours, access, weekly and other holidays, lending rules, infrastructure and physical facilities, and other facilities to the marginalized groups such as rural and low-income groups. People should also be made aware of the career guidance section for job seekers in public libraries. Public libraries should promote the information services they can get from libraries by organizing various social programs such as celebration of important days, seminars, annual lectures on libraries, annual awards for best readers, book exhibitions etc.
- A common library network should be established and the State Central Library, District Library, Sub-division Library, City Library and Rural Library should be connected to that network to meet the growing thirst for knowledge and community information needs among the common people of the society. All the public libraries which have copyright free manuscripts, rare books and documents, old journals, historical records and other materials should be assisted by RRRLF for digitization.
- There is a severe shortage of professional and non-professional staff in public libraries. Currently, a librarian has to handle the responsibilities of two-three libraries, as a result of which it is not possible for libraries to provide CIS properly. Therefore, professional and non-professional staff should be immediately appointed in public libraries to fill the vacant posts to provide CIS properly.
- Public libraries should be established in the area where there is enough population like near the parks, shopping malls, a village or a few villages where a lot of people gather daily. RRRLF can play an important role for providing CIS by developing the infrastructure of public libraries established in rural areas, providing access of books, educational materials, computers, information and communication technology equipment.
- Mainly the fund of the public libraries come from the annual or one-time grants from the State or Central Government, Matching and Non-matching Grants from RRRLF etc. Government grants for the public libraries are negligible. RRRLF should keep the regularity of providing Matching and Non-matching Grants to public libraries for various CIS and activities. In order to strengthen the State Public Library Directorate, RRRLF should provide more funds on the basis of population ratio instead of providing Matching Grants on an ad hoc basis.
- RRRLF should convince the Union Ministry of Culture/Human Resource Development for the enactment of library laws in all the states and union territories of the country. RRRLF's programmes should be more clearly communicated to the common people of the society so that they can take full advantage of CIS.
- The maintenance and preservation of the records and special collections of public libraries is a very important issue for providing CIS. Since there is no Government grant for the preservation of library collections in the library budget for public libraries, it is not possible for libraries to take preventive measures for the preservation of records at regular intervals. If special Government grant for the preservation of library collections is available in the library budget for public libraries, then public libraries can adopt pest control methods as a preventive measure for the preservation of library records before the Durga Puja holidays every year.
- An area profile of the area in which the public library is located, should be prepared. While preparing the area profile, data on population size, age distribution, caste, income level, poverty level, educational level should be collected as well as talking to the common people of the particular area. CIS should be provided according to the needs of different people of the society after identifying the social need according to the information obtained from different sources.
- The staff of public libraries have not been able to become proficient in the use of information and communication technology, which is hindering the acceleration of the automation process of public libraries. If the authorities of public libraries encourage librarians and staff to participate in various conferences, seminars, and training programs on library issues, then the librarians and staff will be able to provide up-to-date CIS by taking lessons in the application of modern technology in the library.
- Above all, the librarian of a public library will help the entire society, either individually or collectively, to fulfil their goals by providing and serving community information. He will connect different people of the society with the various activities of the public library so that they can meet some information needs by exchanging information among themselves. He will

identify the non-users of the library and highlight the importance of the public library to them and encourage them to use the library.

Conclusion

For providing CIS public libraries play an important role in national development. The same importance is given to public libraries as to libraries attached to schools, colleges, universities and special libraries. RRRLF is the only national organization in India which devotes full time for the growth and development of public libraries. Although RRRLF has many programs and plans for public libraries, but they are not being implemented due to inadequate and limited financial budget. The Government of India needs to allocate at least 3 to 4% of its annual financial budget for the development of public libraries throughout the country. RRRLF should influence the Central Government to formulate a National Public Library Policy as soon as possible. Only a National Public Library Policy can provide the necessary guidance for the development of public libraries in the entire country. The effective and positive aspects of public libraries should be highlighted among the people of the society by establishing public libraries in remote areas/backward areas of the country. Public libraries should be given more importance for providing CIS to ensure that people from all walks of life can access the relevant information as per their needs and requirements. It is very important for the unemployed youth of the society to get timely information which helps them to make quick decisions and live as responsible citizens. Providing relevant and up-to-date information to the unemployed youth should be given top priority by public libraries. In the current information society, there is an explosion of information in all branches of knowledge. Public libraries need professional, qualified and trained library staff to collect, organize and disseminate information effectively and efficiently. Public library staff also need to have good communication skills; only then public libraries can play their role as the institutions of lifelong learning. Finally, it can be said that the RRRLF can play a more important role in providing CIS through public libraries by developing public libraries in an all-round way.

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