

Libraries

Introduction

Libraries play a pivotal role in the dissemination of knowledge and are extremely important in building a knowledge economy. There is a need to formulate and create mechanisms and institutions which will bring about a paradigm shift in the libraries and information system (LIS) scenario. In today's context, libraries have to play two distinct roles - to serve as a local centre of information and knowledge, and be a local gateway to national and global knowledge. To fulfill this potential, the entire LIS needs to be revamped – existing libraries must modernise their collection, services and facilities, become more pro-active and collaborate with other institutions and agencies.

Current Scenario

Data: There is no authentic information about the number of libraries actually functioning in India. All statistical information seems to be estimated on the basis of pure guesswork. Further, there are institutions operating as libraries without following any benchmark or standard. Therefore, there is a need to prepare a national census of libraries through a nationwide survey. Census data of libraries and their present situation will provide primary data for future planning.

Table 1: Libraries covered by the Raja Ram Mohan Foundation

Level	Number
State Central Libraries	28
Divisional and District Libraries	451
Sub-divisional/Taluka/Tehsil Libraries	501
Town & Rural Libraries	30134
Nehru Yuvak Kendras	272
Jawahar Bal Bhavans	49
Others	128
Total	31563

Source: Raja Ram Mohan Library Foundation

Management and quality: To provide access to knowledge and resources, each library must provide a range of services to meet the needs of a diverse user community. It must also have a well-rounded collection relevant to its user community. In the changed context, it is necessary to assess the manpower requirements for different types of libraries and departments of library and information science and adequately train the library staff.

Education and research: Library and information science education and research has been in existence since pre-independence days. There are approximately 135 universities and institutions of higher learning in this field. But presently most universities and institutions have not kept abreast with the changes in the LIS sector.

Funding: Out of the Tenth Plan outlay of Rs.131.05 crore, an expenditure of Rs.121.23 crore was incurred – indicating a shortfall of 7 per cent. There is a need to set up a central library fund to not only upgrade existing libraries within the specified period of time but to facilitate libraries to overcome the financial stringencies which presently exist. Further, public-private partnerships could be encouraged in developing library and information services in different parts of India.

Table 2: Number of libraries in India (estimated figure 1996-97)

Public libraries	54845
University/Deemed to be University Libraries	267
College Libraries	8000
Science and Technology Libraries	1200
Social Science Libraries	450
Government Department Libraries	800
Art, Culture and Humanities Libraries	500
School Libraries (Higher secondary/secondary/primary and upper primary)	404128

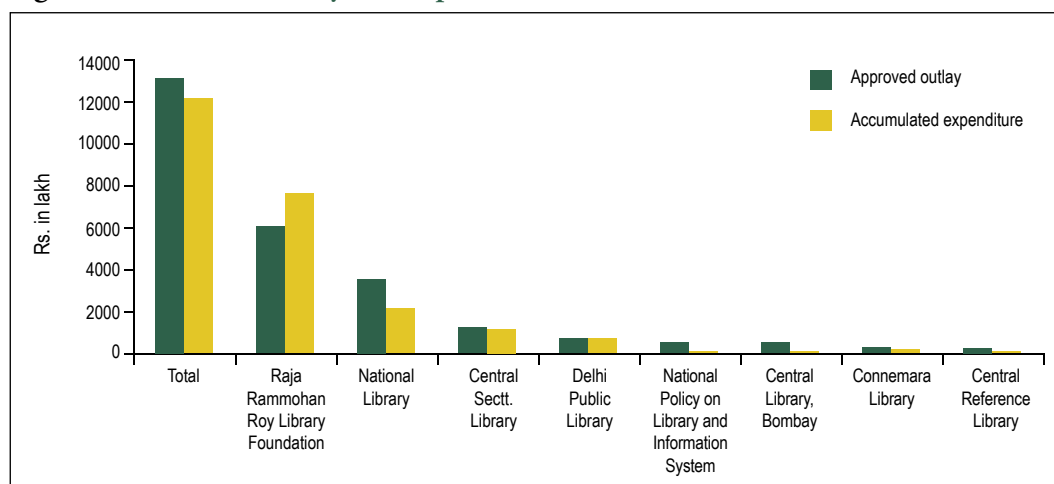
Source: Librarians in Society: An Insider's View, P.R. Goswami

Table 3: Existing library consortia in India

Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Science and Technology (INDEST) Consortium	Membership of 164 institutions – 38 core institutions funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 44 institutions by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and 82 self-supporting institutions)
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) e-Journals Consortium	Funded by the CSIR for its all its 44 labs
University Grants Commission (UGC) e-Journals Consortium	Funded by the UGC for 100 universities and being extended to other universities and colleges
DAE e-Journals Consortium	For 36 institutions under Department of Atomic Energy

Source: Higher Education in India, Pawan Aggarwal, ICRIER, 2006

Figure 1: Libraries: Outlay and expenditure of Tenth Five Year Plan



Source: Working Group on Art and Culture, Eleventh Five Year Plan, Planning Commission