



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Public library

The public library is the local gateway of knowledge in the society. It provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. It is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

According to 'IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994' 'the service of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex religion, nationality language or social status....' Public library which is called 'Peoples' University', can provide information of different levels to satisfy the educational, cultural and daily life need of the society.

A public library is one of the essential organisations in a society, which the national welfare activities, like education, social, economic and cultural and recreational spheres and to develop these spheres on sound principles and practices.

A society is made up of multi-complex organisations and each organisation is rendering services to the society in its own way, for the betterment of the society.

It is said that a public library is 'People's University'. It is an integral part of education. It plays a pivotal role in mass education. The programme of mass education coupled with a well-organised and service oriented public library and by providing the necessary funds and man-power can contribute immensely towards the welfare and happiness of the society.

I.1.1 Definitions

Jesse H. Shera said that “The Library is a product of cultural maturation. It came into being when societies ceased to be nomadic and became urbanised, and when graphic records became important to the effective operation of organised human relationships. There is no record of when, or how, libraries began, but one can assume, from the scattered and fragmentary evidence that has survived, that early librarians were essentially archival – storage places for the preservation of records that were necessary for the transaction of business of commerce, the administration of the state, and the communication of belief to succeeding generations.”

“Today by public libraries we mean a library open to all without the distinction of caste, creed or sex; free of charge and supported by legislation. And which houses books and other reading materials for use.”

S.R Ranganathan extolled the role of the public library system in these words : “Public library system is the only possible neutral agency to give unbiased political, economical and industrial information to enable the voters to form their own judgment in helping the progress of the country and keeping vigilance over the performance of the Government.”

The public library is as important as any other public institution serving for the welfare of the community. It is by and large one of the essential institutions in a society. S.R. Ranganathan again said, “Libraries have the power to produce material happiness, mental joy and spiritual delight, they are social institution charged with the duty of providing the means for the perpetual self-education of one and all.

The developing countries of the world have realised the importance of the public libraries on the experiences gained by

the West; and the affluence enjoyed by the citizens of those countries. This fact made the Government of India to appoint a committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. K.P. Sinha in the year 1957 to probe into this matter and come out with the prospects of developing the public library services. In this respect the internationally accepted definition of the public library has been clearly brought out covering all aspects. They are as follows :

It is a library

- a) Which is financed for the most part out of public funds;
- b) Which charges no fees from readers and yet is open for full use by the public without distinction of caste, creed or sex;
- c) Which is intended as an auxiliary educational institution providing a means of self-education which is endless;
- d) Which houses learning materials giving reliable information freely and without partiality or prejudice on as wide a variety of subjects as will satisfy the interest of the readers.

The observation made by Bryan Luckham is worth mentioning at this juncture. He says, "The Public library is open to all those who choose to enter. No restriction because of fees or financial status exists. It might be thought therefore that the nature of the public library which were the library would be solely a consequence of the decisions made by the potential customers. The public library, however, is a social institution operating in a dynamic environment of aspirations, expectations, and ideologies, manned and controlled by personnel who can modify the character of the service offered is significant, even subtle ways. Further more, it is an environment which can change considerably in relatively short

periods of time.”

I.1.2 Objective and Functions

The objectives and functions of the public libraries have been brought out by a number of leading personalities in the library and information science profession.

According to S.R. McColvin the following are the objectives and functions of the public libraries :

1. “The provision of public library services should be the responsibility of appropriate public governing authorities and not that of any private or sectional groups”;
2. “They should be administered, governed and financed by these authorities”;
3. “They should be freely available for the use of all the people in the community served”;
4. “They should be as far as they can, embrace all the needs and interests of these people”;
5. “They should be free not only financially, but intellectually, i.e. they should be free from bias and purposive objectives; they should afford full, free, unprejudiced opportunity to all who would use them”.

The Russian library scientist, Leon Carnovsky explained the objectives of the library in his own way. He says, “Thus, we find the following forces behind the evolution of the modern library in a democratic society.

1. The desire to supplement the work of the school.
2. The desire to help the workers to improve themselves.
3. The desire to provide a counter-attraction to vice.
4. The desire to make for peaceful and orderly social change through democratic processes.
5. The desire to help the individual to develop as a human

personality to develop intellectually, and culturally as a free man, free of the domination of caprice and subject only to the rule of reason and intellect.

Carl M. White, the American expert, put down the following as the objectives of a public library :

1. "To accumulate and make available now and in the future the best work of the mind, regardless of when or where the work was done."
2. "To afford access to all responsible intellectual work without interference from political or religious authority."
3. "To further research."
4. "To aid formal instructions."
5. "To supply the information in the management of practical affairs."
6. "To promote popular enlightenment and enrich human life."

Coming nearer home, S.R. Ranganathan, the doyen of the profession in India describes the objectives in these words:

1. "Help the lifelong self-education of one and all."
2. "Furnish up-to-date facts and information on all subjects to one and all."
3. "Distribute in an unbiased and balanced way all shades of recorded views and thoughts to one and all; and serve as a help in the discharge of their political in respect of local, national and international affairs."
4. "Contribute to productive drive by informing to management of the latest trends in diverse enterprises by ploughing back into the minds of researchers, designers and technologists every piece of relevant new thought promptly."
5. "Preserve the literary remains of humanity for posterity"

as vehicles of culture and source materials for antiquarian research.”

6. “Provide to one and all harmless and elevating use of leisure”, and in general
7. “Work for continued social well-being, an the agency in-charge of all socialised thought.”

I.1.3 Public Library as a Democratic Institution

The 1940s witnessed a thorough change in the political scene of the world. Autocracy which was prevailing upon the mankind from the past many centuries slowly vanished from the scene. The place was occupied by democracy. The societies in the world are now enjoying the democratic status, as they are established on the principle of society is by the people, for the people and of the people.

The present day public library is a universal provider, not just for the underprivileged but also for the serious readers. Every citizen is provided with an equal opportunity to have success to the information to whatever extent it is required. Thus, it has its contribution towards reconstruction of the welfare state, and in times fulfils its responsibility in an ideal democratic society.

In this context S.R. Ranganathan has expressed his views as follows : “An institution collectively owned and maintained by a community – be it a nation, local body, educational institution, research institution, business organisation, government department, or any other corporate body – holding a collection of documents for the use of the members of community and to such others as may be allowed by it, and charged with the duty of promoting adequate and proper use of the collection by all members of the community.”

The UNESCO in its First International Declaration on the

need and function of the public library, has stated that, "As a democratic institution operated by the people, for the people, of the people, the public library should be established and maintained under clear authority of law : supported wholly or mainly from public funds; open for free use on equal terms to all members of the community regardless of occupation, creed, class or race."

As such a citizen in a democratic country is having every right to make use of the information resources housed in the library, whatever he needs. He is absolutely a king in a Democracy. It is the duty of the public library to provide him whatever information he requires.

In a democracy where people are the rulers as well as the ruled, education must be widespread. The universal adult suffer age needs universal availability and successibility to books. If the people responsible for electing the government are to form sound opinions on social and economic matters, they must have free access to accurate information on all topics of public interest. In the eyes of all democrats, the public library system is vital. It is the 'foremost agent' for preventing people from lapsing into illiteracy. It preserves knowledge with a purpose, streamlining it into the service of community. It is also agent to cultivate emotional integration as it does not discriminate users on the basis of caste, creed, sex, race, age, economic and political status and education.

These are a few services rendered by the public library, which strengthen the activities and principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, and which safeguard and secure democracy.

I.1.4 Public Library as a Social Institution

A public library being an institution for serving the

members of the society, becomes a social institution in its own right. The services rendered are unique in nature, as it is serving the entire population, not to a limited clientele found in Academic and Research libraries. There is a continuous interaction amongst the citizens, throughout their life, and the library. The public library brings about an emotional integration as the readings and writings of some or similar books engenders a fellow-feeling among themselves.

In the worlds of James Thompson, "Libraries command respect in our society. They are as ubiquitous as schools. Their value is acknowledged without reservation and considerable accounts of public money and resources are made available for library purposes.

The public library is striving hard in meeting the needs of its community at all levels, and touching all the social strata via., urban, suburban and rural, rich and poor; old and young; literates and illiterates; diseased and disabled, prisoners; normal and abnormal; and that section of the society which is constantly on the move like sea-farers and so on. The information urge of these people is a problem and the public library has involved to solve these by opening branches at appropriate places and through mobile library services and other modes of communication.

A modern public library is a social institution geared to serve its society. It is 'free' for all people. It provides an opportunity by making available various types and forms of informational, educational and recreational materials. The one and only way to a large mass of population with all the communication media, i.e. through the public library. The adventures and experience of the mankind have been described in the printed book. By exposing oneself to the accumulated

experience of the past, can help in saving a lot of time, money and energy in undertaking certain tasks. The community can ill-afford duplicating its efforts in its stride towards peace and happiness, growth and progress. The public library takes one away from the trial and error and trivialities in pursuit of the advancement of knowledge.

I.1.5 Public Library as an Educational Institution

The present day provide ample opportunities to bring about any radical change in education in accordance with the contemporary needs. It is possible to muster together the human and material resource needed for the task of a gigantic re-construction of education and society. At this juncture, the opinion and ideas of Gandhiji are worth considering, as has been brought out by Flossie Williams, “The substance of Gandhiji’s Ideas of Education” are :

1. “A universal compulsory education of seven years from 7 to 14 years for all boys and girls.
2. It should be given through the mother tongue.
3. Education should be correlated with production work.
4. Self-sufficiency is the acid test of education.”

In the words of eminent Indian educationist, D.S. Kothari, “The basic of the education is to promote powers of the mind, acquisition of special skills and advancement of knowledge, but above all, to generate in the young generation a sense of purposefulness and maximum dedication, confidence in themselves and faith in the country’s future.”

Education is a continuous process and it has to go in accordance with the growing needs of the society in the sphere of commerce, technology, political and social issues. The schools, colleges and universities are imparting formal

education to enter into any field of society.

Education and Library

It is to say that the library services and education must go hand in hand. This idea is explained by Nourse as, "The educational goals of the public library are less obvious but mere complex; further more, they are in a process of flux and should probably be encouraged to change even more rapidly in the future. The people's university is still that supplying not only specific answers to specific questions (some quite technical), but also an unstructured intellectual browsing opportunity for any individual."

Thus, the library's role in education is a prime one, as public libraries cannot fulfill their responsibilities in isolation from educational system.

The public libraries are essential institutions or organisations bridging the gap between formal and informal education. These are fountain heads for self-education. Self-education is the application of former education having a lot of opportunity to apply the intellectual faculty of the individual. Thus, all the facets of human mind and the human personality blossom forth.

It is an established fact that public library provides means to an individual to continue his education, through self-efforts. The spectrum of the public library service are directed towards self-education. Public libraries can promote true citizenship of the community, of the nation, of the world. The treasure-house of knowledge, stimulates social reforms, cooperation, builds up moral courage, induces tolerance and invokes sympathy, in an atmosphere of freedom.

I.1.6 Public Library as a Cultural and Recreational Centre

Library involvement in general, cultural activities is not a new thing. Libraries are not only accommodating books, they have provided an accommodation for meetings, seminars, lectures and all other extra-library activities evolved out of the community. And the role of library were well-understood in a socio-democratic way, people demanded an arena, a forum, a stage to demonstrate their cultural heritage. Thus, by the turn of this century the libraries are planned, designed and constructed, taking into consideration of this vital aspect, with lecture halls, meeting rooms, seminar halls, exhibition halls etc. as a permanent feature. Many influential voices have been raised in support of libraries as community cultural centres.

The suggestions made by Lord Goodman in the seminar 'Public Library aims and objectives' are worth mentioning in this connection. They are :

- To promote and encourage the use of public libraries as centres, where individual can take part i the arts in a positive way.
- To encourage the public librarian to assume the role of initiator and organiser of cultural events.
- To encourage the public librarian to liaise with local societies and cultural organizations, fostering the creative use of leisure in the field of the arts.
- To promote and encourage the use of the public libraries as a 'Special Library', agency for local associations and cultural organizations.
- To promote and encourage the use of public libraries as cultural information centres.
- To promote the provision of leisure material for the

individual.

- To promote the provision of leisure and amenity services to special groups in the community.

The public library assumes two prime advantages at the time of its establishment, as a social and cultural focus : its location is usually central and its visual impact is imposing. As a consequence of all the above mentioned facts, the public libraries, of this century offer a very wide range of facilities for cultural activities. The physical as well as material facilities provided by public libraries are as under:

They are equipped with latest photo-phone arrangements in their auditorium to arrange for lectures, seminars, book talks, poetry recitals, group discussions, dramas and music-concerts etc. The same hall gets converted sometimes into an exhibition hall for the display of books, handicrafts, paintings and other materials. Quite a number of libraries have a separate books-exhibition halls.

They have in their collection gramophone records both – non-commercial as well as recreational, along with tapes and cassettes. The users are served with their choice, in a separate room, with ear phones, called as ‘Listening posts’.

They show films of educational, cultural as well as of recreational value at regular intervals. They are equipped with radio, television and video tape recordings also.

At times public library assumes the role of publisher on behalf of the entire community by bringing out informational publications.

As a centre of cultural activity in a society, public library fulfils two tasks. Firstly, it promotes in particular overall development of an individual, and develop the cultural aspect of the society in general. Secondly, it gets an opportunity to

expose its collection to the citizens to make use of it to the maximum extent.

1.2 Need for the Study

The 'Public Library Services in West Bengal' is not so satisfactory in respect of comparison with some other countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia etc. in the world. In developed countries, public library services are the base of their daily life. But our public libraries do not fulfill the demand in our society satisfactorily. The necessity of 'public library services' is very much important in our society today. Many public libraries in our state are not organised to render their services. These are not managed properly to satisfy our society. We are not so aware to render varieties of library services for the shake of society. There is no such guideline of 'public library services' in our state, that guides to librarians, administrators, managing committees, boards, local library authorities. So this present study is very much significant and relevant to the present scenario when the users of public libraries are decreased day by day.

1.3 Objective of the Study

Various types of library services will have to render in the public libraries. As a result they can do work as the heart of the localities / areas in the way of the development of the society. So this research work will help :

- a) To popularize the public libraries in our state;
- b) To render community information services to citizens;
- c) To be a guideline for public library services in our state;
- d) To be an important tool in case of decision making of

public library services;

- e) To know, how do the public libraries render the public library services of the different countries in the world;
- f) To implement the model public library services in our state (West Bengal).

1.4 Scope and Coverage of the Study

The present work is intended to be a study of the 'Public Library Services in different Continents of the World : An evaluative study, suggesting a suitable model for West Bengal'.

There are mainly two sections namely 'public library services in the different continents of the world' and 'suggest a model public library services for West Bengal'. The domain of this study has been restricted to few countries (developed in public library services) in the world.

The present study has covered only USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Kenya, China, Brazil and India among the different continents of the world. It excludes other countries of the world. These selected countries have covered all continents of the world. The famous countries in different continents of the world in terms of 'public library services' are included in this present research. However this is not possible to cover all countries of the world due to shortage of time, cost and other so many factors in this study. The main emphasis of this study is concentrated on 'public library services' but not 'public library systems'. This research work emphasizes mainly for framing of 'model public library services for West Bengal', with the help of 'public library services' in different continents of the world.

To realize the present situation of West Bengal public library services, limited public libraries in different districts

sample as surveyed. This work is not merely a study, survey study or survey report. It is a guideline for West Bengal public library services. For preparation of model public library services of West Bengal, public library services of different continents of the world have been evaluated. This present study is based on the documentary and non-documentary information sources of public library services around the world.

Information source coverage : It includes

- a) Documentary sources : Books, chapters of edited books, journal articles, reports, PhD thesis, paper of conference proceedings, E-resources including website, e-journals etc.
- b) Institutional sources
 - Public Libraries
 - Library Organisations / Associations
- c) Human sources
 - Librarians
 - Experts
 - Teachers of 'library and information science' courses
 - Senior professionals

In case of the documentary sources only Bengali and English language have been considered for this study.

1.5 Limitations

The present study being a one-man investigation, the work had to be done with available resources and time. The followings are the limitations of the study :

- a) The study have covered only seven countries in different

continents of the world. There are so many countries where public library services are very much advanced.

- b) In West Bengal, the study covered only those limited public libraries which permitted and provided essential and sufficient data. The investigator was not allowed or permitted to study 'public library services' in many public libraries.
- c) Information about public library services in different countries of the world are collected through e-mail and from different country web sites via Internet. In this time, different machinery and technical problems occurred to collect data of different countries.
- d) It has not been possible to me to present personally in those said countries for collection of data.
- e) In case of some countries, up-to-date data / information are not supplied by them in different issues.
- f) Language is the barrier of some countries, e.g. China, Brazil.
- g) There is no sufficient published data / information in case of some countries, from which some ideas can be taken to prepare this work.
- h) Some countries have no sufficient data/information about public library services on Web.
- i) Many library authorities/ administrators / librarians worried to give interview or data/information regarding public library services.
- j) Same type of data/information in same parameters in said different countries have not been got. For this reason, comparative study in different countries have not been prepared.
- k) Statistical data on 'public library services' of different

countries in different years are collected. Statistical data in the same year of different countries. Data also have been got in different formats. For this reason, it is not possible to represent data in different countries in the same manner.

1.6 Methodology

The major part of this study demanded an investigation of public library services of different countries in the world and investigation of primary documents on 'public library services' published all over the world.

The methodology has been used in each of the states of the study.

- a) **Preliminary work** : Before going through the actual study, a pilot study was carried out to the area covered under the study. For completion of this work, at first, I consulted with my respected guide Dr. Udayan Bhattacharya and then journal articles were searched / reviewed to know the research scholars' angle of vision on this subject. The study had been done with a detailed literature search. The LISA (Library and Information science Abstract) was used as a basic source for literature search. In addition, regional, national and international level journals and bibliographies in this field were also scanned. Original articles related to the study were also collected from different sources.
- b) **Data Collection** : In spite of many limitations, the very necessary information have been collected from the librarians, information managers of the public libraries of the world personally or through e-mail.

Within West Bengal, some public libraries have

been selected for survey and study with the help of questionnaires. The necessary data of public library services were collected by survey method in West Bengal. A questionnaire was constructed for collection of data. At many times, the libraries were visited personally. At the same time, the different services rendered by those public libraries in different districts of West Bengal, were observed also.

For collecting necessary information/data of public library services in West Bengal, both questionnaire and interview methods were adopted. Various websites in different countries of the world had been navigated time-to-time and web information on public library services are also collected. Besides, the investigator consulted with subject specialists, senior professionals, teachers and has recorded their views about this work time-to-time.

c) Compilation : After the collection of necessary data/information from different levels, all the relevant informations have been arranged / organised in systematic and logical manner. Based on this, a suitable model of public library services for West Bengal has been framed.

1.7 Style of References

The format for references (including electronic items) in different chapters are in accordance with the guideline forwarded by Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed., 2010).

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