The Role of Public Libraries in Socio-Cultural Development in Rural Areas in India

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Abstract

Generally a library is a place where individuals access information and ideas. Access to information is very crucial; it accelerates the level of individual advancement as well as corporate educational development. Information is treated as an economic resource or as a catalyst to development and for making good decision. Information society is a society in which the quality of life as well as prospects for social change and economic development depends upon access to information to meet their needs and requirements. Public libraries are an important entity in local communities, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. They are more than shelves of books. Public libraries offer an ever changing range of cultural resources for the community, and they have become a type of social and cultural institution. This article discusses the broadly accepted conceptualization of information for development of social and cultural activities in people of rural areas by providing the information at all the levels necessary for that. In turn, it links between community development, empowerment and rural public library usage in India.

Keywords: Information Access; Information Society; Information Literacy; Public Libraries; Internet Access; Knowledge Society; Collection Development; Rural Library; Rural Community; Literacy; Information Seeking; Community Development and Empowerment; Socio-cultural Development.

1. Introduction

Generally a library is a place where individuals access information and ideas. Access to information is very crucial; it accelerates the level of individual advancement as well as corporate educational development. Access to information focuses on the rights of individual to have access to the information at the right time. Its importance is also seen as a determining factor to economic, social and political development of any nation irrespective of their culture, ethnicity, language, etc (Oyeronke, 2012).
In this information age, information is treated as an economic resource or as a catalyst to development and for making good decision. Information society is a society in which the quality of life as well as prospects for social change and economic development depends upon access to information to meet their needs and requirements whether the resources are in print, non-print/ electronic or in any format (Martin, 1995).

Access to information is also access to internet with the emergence of information and communication technology (ICT). The internet has become another means of accessing information thereby overcoming inequality of information in a society. With information and communication technology, there is a wide gap or disparity in the availability, access and utilization of information between the developed and developing nations which gave rise to the concept of digital divide. According to (Orakpor, 2007), the libraries can bank on the internet for the right information for users, in the right form and at the right time.

With the emergence of information and communication technology, the means of accessing information also changed as many users go to the library to have internet access. The public libraries are positioned to provide and promote access to information which will translate to development of the society.

Access to information is important. People need information to develop their potentials through education and training to succeed in business, to enrich their cultural experience and to take control of their daily lives. The world has entered an era where the source of wealth and power is increasingly from information and human mental creativity as compared to physical resources.

Libraries are often considered an essential part of having an educated and literate population. Information is an important resource which is essential for the progress of any individual and that of a nation, so access to right or relevantly updated information to its users is required at the right time for any literate society. Any information society requires information at every step. Public libraries help to empower people in the enrichment, orientation and development of the citizens towards inculcating national pride and right sense of national culture.

The public library can act as an important force for local community development and empowerment and can play a significant role in social and cultural development of a community. In this context, the public library can be viewed as a social and cultural institution that offers an ever changing range of cultural resources for the community. This can be particularly important in rural and disadvantaged communities. This role for public libraries often remains unrecognized and the major challenge is how to capitalize on the public libraries potential contribution to development and empowerment of community.

Public libraries receive public funds which are scarce and, therefore, need to prove how the money of the taxpayers is used to benefit both the individual citizens and the communities in which they operate. The current political and economic situation entails a strong pressure to document the value of public libraries.

Moreover, public libraries are facing fundamental changes internationally caused by fundamental changes of society, especially the information technology (IT) development and digitizing, the growth of multiculturalism and fragmenting of local communities and, not least, the continuous economic pressure on the public sector.

The wide range of the public library impact demonstrates a fundamental characteristic of public libraries, namely their complexity. In contrast to other public institutions such as schools or hospitals that produce educational and health care services respectively, public libraries, although they are mainly small institutions, provide a wide range of services directed towards very different spheres of life - towards children and adults, local businesses, services to disabled or elderly people, and the whole educational sector from kindergartens to universities. They also provide a range of services for
leisure time activities, personal cultivation and development of personal and civic skills. In addition, public libraries have impact and value by being a physical place, a cultural and social meeting place, a public room, and a place for studying and contemplation.

Such a complex institution needs to be studied from several perspectives, and in determining the value of public libraries both their cultural, educational, informational, social, political, and economic dimensions are of great importance.

It is necessary to be able to determine and measure the value of public libraries. Clear, accurate and verifiable figures are needed to substantiate the usefulness and value of public libraries in monetary terms to explain politicians as well as the population, or taxpayers from who contribution public libraries are operated.

The public library is regarded as people’s institution. It is local gateway to knowledge that provides basic condition for life learning, and facilitates cultural development of the individual and social groups. The public library provides services to all, irrespective of age, sex, cast, religion, education, and social status. Generally, all users get the material relevant to their needs and requirements in the public library.

Society and culture are two complementary terms that go hand-in-hand. It is difficult to separate one from the other. There can be different sub-cultures within a society that may change from time to time. Culture is not changed by itself but by certain factors that influence the society. Library is one of the factors that changed the culture of certain groups within a society.

Impact of public libraries on socio-cultural development particularly is discussed in this paper to aware the importance of public library services for the community. The study is based on the literature survey.

2. Literature Review

The literature review is the key component of any research study and process. The research ideas are drawn and further developed into concepts from this source and finally developed into theories. The literature review provides a bird’s eye view of the past researches done so far in that area to a researcher. Some of the important literatures useful in this study have been mentioned chronologically in descending order.

Behera and Parida in their study discussed the information need of different rural communities and the impact of rural libraries in achieving their socio-economic development and found that the rural libraries are useful in satisfying the information needs of different communities in their day to day life (Behera & Parida, 2014).

Lamani, Talawar and Kumbar examines the present status of District Central library, Dharwad and the role of this public library as Community Information Centre in contributing towards community development by fulfilling the information requirements of community. They found that the District Central Library, Dharwad failed in providing community information service to their surrounding community members because the resources in this centre is not adequate to fulfill the needs and requirements of the different community groups (Lamani, Talawar and Kumbar, 2014).

Adewusi in his study discussed the impact of community information centres on community development in four communities in Nigeria employing survey research method using mainly questionnaire among teachers, traders, farmers, fish sellers, civil servants, students and others as respondents. The results of study are that the availability of community information services were rare in the communities and the communities yearn for provision of well stocked community information centres with a view to empowering, changing and transforming their life socially, economically, technologically, educationally and politically for the betterment (Adewusi, 2013).
The main goal of the study by Arayesh, Sharifi, & Porsaied was to identify the impact of information and communication technology in rural socio-cultural development in Ilam City, Iran. This study was of practical research manner and its nature was of quantitative manner. The main instrument of information collection in this research was through questionnaire. (Arayesh, Sharifi, & Porsaied, 2013).

Islam & Ahmed in their study focused on the information provision of rural libraries to their communities in northern districts of Bangladesh. The findings are that the rural libraries largely meet the informational needs of the local community and play a vital role in the educational development of local people (Islam & Ahmed, 2012).

The study of Krishnamurthy and others reveals the importance of rural libraries in the development of rural masses in the changing context of the society as well as the role of rural libraries as a community information centre in disseminating the necessary information for their day to day life. It also emphasizes on the special programmes of the government for the enhancement of the quality of life in the rural areas of the Karnataka State. It suggests that the rural libraries should play a role of community information centres (CICs) and should be active in creating awareness among the rural community by providing suitable need-based information for the appropriate utilization of various schemes and programmes of the government (Krishnamurthy, 2012).

Omar and others in their study revealed the potential factors, benefits and problems in using the services provided in the rural library in Malasiya. Potential problems faced by the rural community in using the rural library services need to be overcome to ensure the rural community to be profited from the benefits offered to them (Omar, Bolong and D'Silva, 2012).

The study of Sumi on community information needs and role of informational infrastructure to meet the informational needs of highly literate users of Hamirpur district, Himachal Pradesh. It reports that majority of users of community libraries are school and college students; the books and periodicals were the most accepted means of accessing the information; the maximum Community library users are not satisfied with the services and resources available and they want availability of more Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based services in community libraries with extended hours for library consultation (Sumi, 2012).

Scott in his study on the role of libraries in community building found five aspects of public libraries as agencies of community development. These aspects are (1) how libraries serve as a medium to access information and to learn, (2) how libraries support social inclusion and equity, (3) how libraries promote community engagement, (4) how libraries create a bridge to resources and community participation, and (5) how libraries encourage economic vitality within the community (Scott, 2011).

The study of Hart on the role of South African community library services using a combined data gathering methodologies such as interviews, observation and analysis of documents reveals the low usage of the libraries by the adults in the surrounding villages. The study suggests that a sharper focus on their community information services is needed. More leadership, staff education and focused programming might enable the libraries to fulfill their exciting potential (Hart, 2010).

Gadagin and Kamble in their study on the role of community information centres in rural developments in Karnataka reveals the current status of community information activities and, the libraries are yet to form integral part of community information centres (Gadagin and Kamble, 2009).

The study of Nyana on creation of a library system serving the needs of rural community of South Sahara, Africa reflects some problems faced by African libraries in the provision of information and services to rural communities. The problems are inappropriate collections and services, lack of surveys, analyses of information needs of rural communities, high levels of illiteracy, disregard for oral tradition in the provision of services, lack of funding and cooperation between related agencies, and inappropriate training of African librarians. The study suggests a library system that is sustainable and compatible with the oral tradition (Nyana, 2009).
Bhattacharjee in his study discusses different initiatives that have been taken by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the direction of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), Government of India where the Community Information Centre (CIC) Project is meant to provide internet connectivity and citizen services delivery. The project envisages a community centre with internet facility through V-SAT at each administrative block (Bhattacharjee, 2006).

The study of Kaula on need and development of libraries in rural India discusses the movement for the development of public library activities through the efforts of Iyyanki Venkata Rammanayya followed by the work of Dr S R Ranganathan. The study also mentions the launching of the National Adult Education Programme and the follow up the programme for the establishment of village libraries in several states through various agencies and the national policy and assistance of Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation. It further points out the enforcement of library legislation in some Indian states and the thrust on setting up of rural libraries as information resource centre (Kaula, 2006).

Sunil Kumar study on rural library movements in India discusses the major landmarks, which have made the history of rural library movement, the present scenario of public library movement, efforts for development of rural libraries in context of library legislation, role of national and state level library associations and valuable contributions of Dr. S R Ranganathan and other devoted professionals to give impetus to public library moment at gross root level in Indian states (Kumar, 2006).

The study on modeling community information behavior in rural Sri Lanka by Seneviaratne and others suggests that the Community Information Centres using e-governance strategy with One Stop Shop (OSS) model should be established at the village level using prevailing infrastructure to bridge the information gap existing in the rural areas of Sri Lanka. It analyzes the channels that ordinary rural people consult to obtain information. The Channel Dependency Rate (CDR) was calculated for each channel identified pertaining to the need category measured. It was seen that Channel Dependency Rate for some channels seems prominent and strong for one need category, but weak for another need category. The Channel Dependency Rate shows that information provision in these areas is not well planned. Finally the study reveals the difficulties faced by ordinary citizens in accessing required information such as geographical, structural (socio-economical and cultural) and personal factors (Seneviaratne, Gunawardene and Siddhisena, 2006).

The paper on information support services of the rural development libraries in Bangladesh by Islam and Uddin discusses the situation of these rural development libraries due to the revolution and the advancement made in the information communication technology. It further identifies the tools and techniques used in different functional unit of these libraries in order to meet the growing information needs of the rural Bangladeshis. It presents the various problems encountered by these libraries during the period of providing their services and recommends ways for their further development (Islam and Uddin, 2005).

Uhegbu in his article “deterrents to information service for community development” discusses the barriers to rural information services for community development in Nigeria. It emphasizes the nature and characteristics of a community as well as community information needs and services. Four components of community information were identified which are information itself, the sender, the medium or channel of communication and the final consumer. The major obstacles to community information service were poor view and deep seated doubtfulness of the rural dwellers towards information, the deplorable state of rural roads, lack in interest of government officials, rivalry among the inhabitants of the communities. It recommends that traditional institutions and town development associations be effectively utilized to disseminate information to the people (Uhegbu, 2001).
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Pettigrew and others review the recent trends in the networked community information literature, including public library involvement, and then discuss a major study underway for which multiple methods are being used to collect data from users, librarians, and service providers. The study also contributes to the efforts of other researchers in addressing systematically obvious gaps in the research literature on the nature of networked community information. Such research needs to examine the role of networked community information for individuals, public libraries, service providers, and the community-at-large. The findings might shed light or raise new questions about information behavior in terms of related technologies, different settings such as the workplace, or particular types of information or populations (Pettigrew, 1999).

The purpose of Mostert and Vermeulen study was to identify the characteristics and possible weaknesses of public libraries, specifically in South Africa; to study trends with regard to community libraries and to establish norms for community libraries; to conduct a survey of the community libraries in the Borough of Pinetown, and to test the validity of these libraries against the norms established. It also states that public libraries in South Africa have largely failed to address the information needs of developing communities. As a result, the establishment of alternative library services, notably resource centres and community libraries, have gathered momentum since the 1980s. The concept of community libraries, currently embraced by an increasing number of public libraries, is explored, and the community library system implemented by the Pinetown Public Library is evaluated against norms derived from the literature on the development of public libraries in Africa and South Africa (Mostert and Vermeulen, 1998).

Mr. M. Ali Anvar conducted a study on community information services in Malaysia to observe the information seeking behavior of community based organizations in the Klang Valley. The study shows that how the community information services are meeting up the demand of information of community and discusses different community information services models (Anvar, 1996).

3. Public Libraries

According to (Nwokocha, 2004), public library is defined as it is being established to serve the generality of the residents of the community or town where it is located. Compared to other libraries it has about the most heterogeneous clientele as there is no restriction as to who can use it.

According to (Roberson, 2005), a library is as an institution that manages the intellectual products that individuals can gain access.

As per (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1997), public library is the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. Knowledge is an important resource and public library is not only a cultural institution but also an essential welfare through the minds of people.

The advent of information technology from the middle of 20th century has gradually changed the traditional process of information acquisition, communication and storage. The society is transformed with new a paradigm which is regarded as information society or knowledge society. Along with the traditional form of reading material such as books, manuscripts the new forms like microfiche, CDs, DVDs, journals, have become very important. The impact of ICT is slow in the public library in developing country like India compare to other types of library. The public library must be really accessible and its door open for free and equal use by all members of the community regardless of race, colour, nationality, age, sex, religion, status, or education (Odin, 1990). Public library is a learning centre where people can take part in learning activities, discuss and share knowledge and information.

There are the problems of inadequate funding, training and retraining of staff, high rate of citizen’s illiteracy, outdated and irrelevant collections of the public libraries and lack of recognition on the part of government to know the importance of libraries to economic, social, educational and national
development of the country. The public library is positioned to provide and promote access to information which will result in to development of the society. Public libraries play a vital role in the lives of individuals and their communities. For generations, the local library has acted as a vehicle for access to knowledge, ideas and information and as a democratic service open and available to anyone. The public library is a trusted and recognised feature of the local area, but it is also a remarkable national asset and network.

4. Mission of the Public Library

The mission of the public library is represented below:

• Creating, developing, and strengthening reading habits in early age children and newly literature people.
• Supporting formal and informal education.
• Providing opportunities for self developments.
• Creating awareness of cultural heritage.
• Supporting oral traditions.
• Ensuring access to all sorts of community information.
• Facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills.
• Supporting and participating in literacy programs for all age groups.

5. The Structure of Public Library System in India


The structural set up of a public library system in the India is represented below:

State Central Library
↓
Divisional Central Library
↓
Divisional Library
↓
District Central Library
↓
Branch of District Central Library
↓
Block Central Library
↓
Village Library

Fig. 1: Structure of Public Library System in India
The controlling authorizes and functions of each library in the hierarchy are mentioned below:


**Divisional Library**: Maintained by State Government, Co-ordination between District Libraries.

**District Central Library**: Maintained by Local Library Authorities, Contact development, co-ordinate Branch Libraries.

**Branch Library**: Town Library- Inter library loan, web based service such as e-learning, community information organizing programs for all age groups of people.

**Block Central Library**: Maintained by Local Library Authorities, Co-ordinate Village Libraries.

**Village Library**: Maintained by Local Library Authorities, also known as Rural Knowledge Centre, Community Information Centre, Panchayat level information centre, programme which help to maintain harmonious relation among rural community, fulfill information requirements of village people.

6. Socio-Cultural Development and Public Libraries

There are different opinions about community development. Some describe it as improving a quality of life; some think it is all about building community networks while others believe it is about empowering individuals and communities. In a traditional community development model, community developer works with groups of people to help them to reach their goals, and these goals could be anything from providing more public washrooms in a community to mobilizing community members to participate in an arts project.

In a public library, librarians and staff members work with community members so that they can understand what the community needs from the library in order to improve their quality of life. The librarians and staff members work with communities to understand how the public library can help them to reach their goals. In a public library context, community development also means building relationships with people. By providing access to current resources and technology, a public library successfully allows itself to go beyond a simple consultation or support process and expand into meaningful and inclusive collaborations, building stronger relationships and partnerships within its community. But the most important thing is that successful community development, especially in small rural communities, depends heavily on the success of its public library in identifying information needs and contributing to the future of the community.

Across the world, in both developed and developing countries, the mission of public library in many communities is to equip patrons with equal opportunity of access to resources and to provide that access for continuous development of knowledge, personal skills and civic skills and lifelong learning. The public library can become an intellectual centre of life for the area it serves, providing a vital link for communities with their past, present and future; and a means of access to the knowledge and the information that people need. The public library may contribute to community empowerment by -

- providing free public access to computer and information technology resources;
- helping people to locate information thus creating better informed communities;
- running programs that promote lifelong learning and literacy in the community; and
- building connections between individuals, groups and government (Roziya, et al, 2011).

A rural library is a library or library system that serves a rural community or population that primarily lives on agricultural activities, and in remote communities (Reitz, 2004). According to
(Kempson, 1986), a rural library should not solely be based on the provision of printed materials; the rural library should be rooted in the community and for the most part, facilitated by members of that particular community; and the rural library service should be a channel for transferring information both to and from the local community.

It is believed that a rural library has an advantage over other communication channels such as media and printed materials in that it can deliver highly personalized services to the village people by:

• helping the rural children and adults to maintain knowledge gained from their education;
• helping a rural community to understand the social, political and economic endeavours of the country and nation building efforts;
• helping in the development of wholesome family life, providing materials about social, economic and health care development; and
• inspiring members of the community to read, to use books, information and knowledge access, and to enjoy all materials in the library for education and recreation.

Men, as social animal, have always sought to examine themselves and their social life. Several intellectual disciplines such as theology, economics, political science, history, psychology and ethics were developed to explain different aspects of human enterprises. The father of sociology Auguste Comte (1798-1857) felt the need to create new discipline to deal with social institutions as marriage, family and community as well as the numerous social structures and processes, i.e. Sociology. He was of opinion that the most important job of sociologists would be to study the small unit of society such as the family and community to find out how these groups produce self-sacrifice, loyalty, mutual respect, and all the other basic kinds of social bonds needed to tie members of a large, complex society together.

M. Francia Abraham quoted Edward B. Taylor definition of culture as “the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Abraham, 2006). Culture covers the way of life of a social group consisting of belief, values, standards, practice, language, and technology shared by members of a social group. Culture refers to the ways of life of the members of a society, or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, their marriage customs and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits (Giddens, 1997).

7. Role of Public Libraries

Public libraries collect and preserve a wide range of materials relating to the society or all groups or individuals. It performs their roles with a view to providing and enhancing access to information in the society without discrimination. As a gateway to information, knowledge and culture, its aim is to provide timely accurate, current and reliable information to the society.

Provision of access to information using various mode and means in the public libraries is an integral part of the national socio-economic development and improvement of the general quality of life. In this case, the public library is playing the role of a cultural and communication centre.

Public libraries help in facilitating the planning and implementation of learning programmes that equip users with the skills necessary to succeed in a changing society. The public library providing information resources for learning and research, the public libraries are important in the development of information society. The economic role played by public library depends on the access to information because national development is very much influenced by the amount of available information.

The role of public libraries as a place for people to gain information technology (IT) skills is a appreciable idea in the capacity building. The public library promotes information literacy by providing training programmes for lifelong learning. The training of the citizenry in information technology application and utilization leads to e-library, e-commerce, and e-governance and e-health.
The public library also plays a vital role by providing access to a wide range of library and information resources both in prints and electronic that appeals to all categories of users. This provision of access to information tries to bridge the gap between the information rich and the poor. They are charged with the responsibility of acquiring, disseminating, organizing and administering information.

The purpose of a library in modern society is to educate the community in the widest sense. Society consists of various groups of community belonging to one or other social group, such as shopkeepers, businessmen, technologists, bureaucrats, clerks, students, educationists, teachers, engineers, doctors, intellectuals, mechanics, agriculturists, farmers, labours, etc. The interest of knowledge of these different groups of people within the society is very much varied according to their human needs. The primary role of public library, such as State Library, District Library, Block Library, Tehsil Library, Taluka Library, Village Library and others is to provide the best information facilities to all those library users in the community. Library and society are interlinked and interdependent. Society without libraries has no significance and libraries without society has no origin that’s why public library is regarded as ‘social institution’, a product of society for its cultural advancement (Khanna, 1987).

Public library as a local center of information has to be organized effectively by the concerned authority ensuring its accessibility to all the sections of the society. The public library service acts as an intellectual catalyst for socio-cultural development by providing facilities for the purposes of acquiring education and information as well as recreation, aesthetic appreciation and research (Rath, 1996). It should serve the users with free of cost to all age groups at everywhere with the best possible means. The collection of public library should focus all the sections of the society to provide their information needs in educating their personal life and social attitudes as well.

According to G. L. Trehan, it is the social function of the library to provide book service to the community. Library is the only organized social institution which fosters the habit of reading of books (Trehan, 1980). Public library has a very important role to play in the future development of the country particularly in the socio-cultural and educational enlightenment. Role of public library on social-cultural development is presented below:

7.1 Cultural Center for the Society

A public library functions as a cultural center of the society. It provides and focuses for cultural and artistic development in the community and helping to shape and support the cultural identity of the community. The public library collects all documents related to different cultural fields and promotes awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of arts and scientific innovations through its services. It does not only preserve documents of cultural heritage, but also organizes cultural programmes through its audio-visual services and inter-cultural activities as well. It also provides access to cultural expressions of all visual and performing arts. The cultural development can be achieved by collaborating with other organizations or participating in the local, national or international level by organizing cultural programmes and by ensuring the interest of the local community.

Public libraries are the barometer of its general culture (Rath, 1996). It should be a key agency in the local community for the collection, preservation and promotion of local culture in all its diversity. Public libraries in a developing society preserve cultural heritage, provide access to all form of cultural expression, makes efforts to foster inter-cultural dialogue, favour cultural diversity, and supports oral tradition (Venkatappaiah, 2007).

7.2 Community Information Center

In an information age, the key function of the public library is to provide up-to-date facts and information to all the sections of the community. Information needs of various citizens may vary from person to person, but public library should serve its best to provide and fulfills the information desire of the users.
Public library, besides its reference and information services, may also organize community information service considering the local situation. In organizing community information service, social, cultural, economic, educational level, racial, employment opportunities, religious differences, etc. may be considered since it may differ from one community to the other within the locality.

Public library is for the community and is the community agency to provide local information needs in various forms. It should provide those information by documents or oral, printed or electronic devices.

**7.3 Recreation Center**

Public library serves as recreation centre for the children and local young adults by providing recreational reading books for their personality development and spiritual growth in their leisure time resulting in creativity development in the community. Children and young adults basically need special care in their personality development to meet the challenges of the society. The library should know their information needs and should develop good collection for leisure readings like biographies, sports and games, travel books, religious books, audio-visual materials, magazines, popular novels, etc. including electronic information resources. Collection of reading materials that suffice local youth information needs may help them to feel that the library is mean for them and help them to overcome a feeling of alienation from the library or even from the society as well.

For developing public library as recreation centre special training may be essential for the library staff to cover customer care service. Young adults feel shy in searching information and need care and help in different areas of activities. This is the best period to guide them in the right direction to become good citizen and social in the society. Children’s Club or Youth Club may also be formed to organize cultural programmes, such as, art competition, concerts, film shows, story hour, etc. The public library must aware of the cultural and social changes in the community and develop flexible services to meet the challenges in these situations.

**7.4 Knowledge Center for Disadvantaged People of the Society**

The public library services have no limitation. It covers even the remotest area of the country. All people in the society should have equal opportunity to access information from the library to develop their knowledge in one way or the other. Prisoners, patients in the hospital bed, blind persons, inmates of the rehabilitation centers, etc. should also have an opportunity to access information at their respective places with free of charge. This accessibility can be achieved by extension services. Bookmobile/mobile library, audio-visual programme, concerts or extension lending services may be adopted to provide such facilities to those disadvantaged persons. Special training programmes on information and communication technology may also be organized to the physically handicapped persons for their rehabilitation.

**7.5 Creativity Center for Children**

The Children should not be ignored for giving guidance and training for their future in the society. Children born with different creative mind need to be explored and developed. The children’s section of the public library is organized and operated in such a manner that it takes special care for creating and reading habits in children from an early age. This section may be equipped with picture, children book, toys, etc. that can develop and stimulate creative attitudes and personal growth in children. For achieving this, programmes, like film shows, fancy dress, story hours, dramas, recitation, etc. may be organized to bring awareness among children. If our children are provided with their creativity developmental sets, they will bear in mind and will follow when they grow old and can behave as good citizen of the community. We can, therefore, organize public library as a play center as well as creativity development center of the child.
7.6 Centre of Communal Harmony and National Integration

A prime role of a nation is to establish cordial relationship among the citizens of different cultures within the society. No country stands with single community, race, religion, caste, rituals, etc. At the same time, every country has its own diplomacy to the other to construct cordial relationship in one way or the other.

As communal harmony and national integration are prime problems of today. Meeting between the social leaders and local community in order to build up confidence and remove misunderstandings and prejudices is advisable. Public library should arrange such meetings by its own or in collaboration with other organizations providing wholesome recreation to all. Public libraries having served the nation with equal treatment play an important role for the unity, co-operation and national integration of a country. Through its provided services it can lead the people to the common front. There may be different castes/tribes within a society having their own culture, but library services may bring together to them and create integrity. This service is very clear in the case of India. India is a vast country, comprising different culture, religion, castes/tribes, etc. It is said that India is a land of diversity. In this situation, the prime importance of India is national integration. Public library is the best agent for the national integration in India through its innumerable services.

7.7 Community Resource Center

The local community can develop their personal intellects through the library services, namely, reading, film shows, seminars/workshops, lectures, etc. Public library is the best institution of the society to learn and disseminate their knowledge. It is not only a center of information and knowledge, but also to educate and train the other citizens to become resourceful and intellectual to the society as well.

7.8 Bridging the Digital Divide of Local Community

Digital divide means the unequal and disproportionate pace of development in society having access to digital information, infrastructure (ICTs) and other ICT-based services. There is a wide division between those who have real access to ICT and are using it effectively, and those who don’t.

Access of the right information at the right time at the least cost is the search of a person at this information age. Research and development increases new areas of knowledge. New development in Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) created certain problems between the community such as information rich and information poor, or who have and who have not. The community consisted of various localities, rich and poor or educated and uneducated; all need to have the same skill to access their personal information requirements. This diversification creates exclusiveness to those who have not of the latest technology to access their information needs. Exclusiveness in the society may result anti-social activities of the people.

Public library is the only institution that can provide equal chance to the society to access information needed through the latest technology with free of cost. By accessing information needed through public library services, local community can have the same opportunity and their exclusiveness may be diminished. In other words, the public library services can bridge the digital divide through its ICT services to the community with free of cost.

8. Conclusion

Public libraries have moral right to provide access to information to all which can be used for self empowerment, economic, educational and nation development. It is also supposed that the public libraries should help in accessing information regarding required materials, and information literacy programmes needed by its community users.
Public library opens doors for equitable access of information and knowledge to its citizens and it also have the potential to play a significant role in supporting and contributing in achieving socio-economic development. It is also expected to provide people oriented information resources and services that will enable access to information and broaden the mind of the citizens.

Public libraries should strive to acquire information resources both in print and electronic format on social, economic, political and educational development that are current and relevant in making the communities to be literate.

The rural libraries and rural community resource centres should have well developed infrastructure for the smooth flow of information and should be encouraged to take part in the integrated rural library programmes. Trained library personnel should be appointed for managing and running the activities of rural libraries and rural community resource centres.

The rural libraries by developmental activities and programs strengthen rural public libraries in supporting rural development and empowerment. Public library acts as vital thing in the development of communities, particularly in a rural and disadvantaged community. It has been established as an essential element in the life of community members, as it provides information that is essential for the community progress.

In the age of information society of today, there is information explosion in all the disciplines. To collect, organize and disseminate the information effectively and efficiently professionally qualified and trained personnel are required. They should also have good communication skills only then the public libraries can perform their role as the institution of lifelong learning.

With growing complexities of the present day society and the increasing demands for information, it is important for more community development oriented activities to supplement traditional library services in developing nations. Active small and rural public libraries can add significantly to the quality of life in rural communities.

Most public libraries in the world are getting connected to the internet, and Indian public libraries should not be left behind in this development. There is urgent need for more development of our information resources by getting connected to the global information resources available to the whole library community users in the world.

9. References