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Public Library Services in Digital Environment: A study on Innovation activities with special reference to Public Libraries in Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Public Libraries are an essential part of the society in educating people to strengthen them as the human capital of the community. But today, public libraries are at a turning point and are struggling to survive in the contemporary world. One of the causes of this is the advent of new technologies that have changed the reading habits and learning experiences of people completely. This presents major challenges and opportunities for public library systems across the world. To address the changing needs, community challenges, and to survive in the digital age, public libraries need to be innovative. The digital era is a huge opportunity for libraries to innovate and change. Innovation has a huge significance to revive the public libraries and restore their prime position in society as a knowledge hub. By considering the same, this paper provides an overview of public library and initiatives that portray an innovative idea, approach, or service with examples of innovations that have been identified through a literature review of various research papers in the field of library science. The innovative activities can be categorized into broad areas like- collections, customer services, technology, events, and library spaces/buildings, etc. The paper also describes the role of Librarians towards the transformation of public libraries and their challenges. The present status of Rajasthan State is also described in brief by considering the telephonic interview of library professionals working in Public libraries of Jaipur, Ajmer & Kota District.

KEYWORDS: *Public Libraries, Public Library Services, Innovation activities, Digital Environment, Transformation, Rajasthan*

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries have continued to evolve and adapt their services in order to thrive in a world of constant change. Innovation is seen as a positive and a critical force in the success of organisations, and public libraries are no exception. Public libraries have embraced innovation, seeing an opportunity to redefine their role and relevance. Motivated by the desire to better serve and meet the needs of communities, libraries engage in a continuous

cycle of experimentation, testing new ideas and developing new services in order to establish dynamic, responsive and modern public library services. Information and communication technology has become the backbone of the human community. The Internet is progressing beyond our thinking power to provide quality services to our users, to create, distribute, manage and conserve resources. Human connectivity through wireless devices and mobile telephony is increasing day by day. In the Internet age, libraries are moving rapidly towards the digital age, with the effect that universal services can be used in any corner of the world without any geographical constraint. In view of the changing dynamic of library and information field, and expectations of community public libraries of the nations are moving towards the transformation of their role in the society. The present study conducted to explore the changes which have been taken place in the digital environment and what is the progress at state level public libraries particularly in Rajasthan.

ABOUT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A Public Library is a social institution established by law, financed by public fund, open for all without any discrimination, for free dissemination of knowledge and information in the community. It is the obligation of government to establish a public library system throughout the country at national, state and local levels. Besides this, the rural and suburban areas should also be covered by branch and mobile libraries.

According to UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, a public library is:
- Established under the "clear mandate of law".
- Maintained wholly from "public fund".
- Levies no "direct charge" (fees) from its users for any of its services.
- Open "for free and equal" use by all members of the community irrespective of race, color, caste, creed, religion, age, sex, nationality, language, status or level of educational attainments.

- The local gateway to knowledge provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.
- An essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

According to Dr. S.R. Ranganathan Public Library is "a public institution or establishment charged with the care of collection of books and the duty of making them accessible to those who require the use of them."This definition describes two functions of a library:
i) The care of a collection of books means protection and preservation of collection.
ii) To make them accessible in real sense so that the right person can get right information at the right time.

The above definitions represent that the public libraries are the very important part of the society and they have a huge responsibility of their communities. They are fulfilling this role in one or other manner from a long time but after emergence of new technologies, transformation has taken place in each and every aspect related to libraries which has explained further in the paper.

TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARY RESOURCES

In the information and technology era, the resources of the libraries have also become modern. Recent innovation by libraries in collections focuses on the use and development of digital collections, the use of outreach with physical collections and patron participation in the development of collections. The use of digital technology has not only revolutionized information collection, processing and dissemination but has also changed the way users search and use information resources, resulting in the following major resources of the libraries:
1. E-books
2. E-Journals/magazines
3. Online Databases
4. E-Content for online teaching & learning

5. Audio and Video material
6. Digital Archives
7. Online Indexes and Abstracts
8. Institutional Repositories
9. Web-OPAC
10. Library websites/Portals as a gateway of information
11. Library Networks/Consortium resources

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

The advent of new technologies has changed reading habits and learning experiences of people completely. The digital environment and the technology come with a huge opportunity for libraries to innovate and change. Presently libraries are utilizing technology in every activity and service such as, Library management software, Internet and Wi-Fi, online services, RFID, social media applications, mobile services, networking and consortium services, etc. to provide prompt and advance experience to their users. The use of emerging technology in services of public libraries is given following:

Automation of Library Operations: Presently libraries are using Library management Software for automation of their routine activities with implementation of RFID technology. Online cataloguing and classification services being used for processing of print books and periodicals. Digitization of documents and rare literature is being done for archiving of content. But if we talk about the public libraries of India, only few libraries are automated thus, throughout the nation a drive have been started with support of RRRLF and other government projects and schemes, towards the automation of public libraries but still a big number of public libraries operating their activities manually. Now, automation of library activities should be taken on most priority by public library authorities.

Internet & Wi-Fi facility: Government should take steps for providing public access to the Internet & Wi-Fi through public libraries. They should encourage developing communication access centers, which will play an important role in bridging the digital divide. There are proposals from the telecommunications ministry to open cyber-cafes and it would be a good idea to put them in public libraries.

Online/Virtual Library: Setting up the computer labs in every public library is the basic need for providing electronic access to the electronic information resources. Every online activity and service depends on the access of computer facility to the community. Government should provide financial assistance to the public libraries for establishing the electronic resources labs and provide public access to the computers without any delay.

Application of Social Media Tools: Social networking websites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. are very effective in communicating and collaborating with the users as these technologies have become an important part of everyday life in the present times. Through Facebook & WhatsApp, many libraries have expanded their digital reference service by providing chat and instant messaging facility. It is also provides regular updates regarding activities.

Library Blogs: Librarians are using library blog services to communicate their work updates, showing their experiences, achievements and sharing their views on this platform. Through blogs they can get information about the technologies used in other libraries and it also helps to develop the mutual cooperation among libraries.

Library Websites/Portal: Presently, only some of the public libraries in India have their own library website or portal. To showcase and access to the information related to the library resources and services, library website is must to create in this digital environment.

Mobile based Library Services: - Mobile based library services is a revolutionary concept to reach people in remote locations and mobile based library services has definitely provided excellent opportunities for the libraries. At present, most youths have mobiles and almost every service can be created and delivered through the android mobile apps which can be

used by the libraries also like SMS alert, OPAC service, GPS and others.

Public Library Network: Public library and information networks should be planned to access electronic information over national and international networks and to access local information in multiple formats. In India, the four states have already established the public library network i.e. Jammu & Kashmir Public Library Network, West Bengal Public Library Network, Karnataka Public Library Network, Tamilnadu Public Library Network.

Consortium for Public Libraries: Now libraries are establishing consortium through centralized subscription of resources and to share the electronic resources and services. Common need of resources can be handled through consortium and the lots of money can be saved by consortium development. National level and State level Consortium should be developed for public libraries to provide the access to maximum number of resources at minimum cost.

E-Learning through Public Libraries: In a country like India e learning has more relevance. A large percentage of target population is beyond the reach of formal education channels due to various inherent weaknesses of the system and lack of infrastructure. The initiatives may further benefit the rural folk who are the victim to leave formal education channels either due to lack of facilities or due to lack of commitments.

INITIATIVES TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Public Libraries persist to improve their services for community people with opportunities for participatory planning, improving access and engagement of community in different activities. Public libraries can provide a wide variety of innovative programmes, to make public libraries more relevant and to create sustainable vibrant communities.

The following activities can be initiated by public libraries:

Innovations in Development of Reading Culture:' Bookstart babies do better' mean children who have an early introduction to books benefit educationally, culturally, socially and emotionally. For developing the reading culture in the society public libraries can play a significant role by organzing many events for promotion of reading habits and make reading joyful for the all ages of society.

Home Work Help Clubs: By providing the required literature and study material to the students for their assignments and assisting them for the home work through help of senior people of the community, public libraries can start a help club by engaging the people who are interested to do these types of activities.

Career Guidance and Support Services:
- Libraries provide an opportunity to fight unemployment
- Helping in apply to jobs online for the people having less digital skills
- By organzing special talks on career guidance

For en example: The phone-in-programme on career guidance was organised by MSSRF, supported of IPLM and NASSCOM Foundation on 15th May 2017. Prospective students who have completed their 12th exams can seek immediate information on various career options. The librarians shall mobilise the students in their respective libraries to participate in this programme. Both users and non-users shall get access to experts. Students and parents shall receive timely guidance, appropriate information, for taking informed decisions on the future path in education. Educational experts from diversified fields will be counseling via mobile phones.

Training and Awareness Programmes for the Community: Public libraries can conduct various type of classes, workshops, training and other activities for people of the community to aware them and trained them on particular

public benefit areas. The public library can have a training center for the community.

Information Literacy: Information literacy competency ensures maximum utilization of the information resources as well as optimization of information handling capabilities. Public libraries should develop the online user guideline for accessing online resources and services. Public library authorities and public librarians should impart information literacy competencies to the public library users. Public libraries can also play a pivotal role for national development programmes and bringing mass affectivity of such programmes.

Digital Literacy: The digital age had left a knowledge gap in society. "A Bridge across the Digital Divide" ICT learning centre should establish in all public libraries. The public libraries should provide access to computers and other digital tools and helping people with the skills to use the technology effectively. Libraries can hold programmes to learn how to use devices like iPads and smartphones.

Skills Learning Programmes: Public libraries can provide a place to find the resources to learn new skills. As an example a Workshops for children during summer vacations was organized at Central State Library, Chandigarh, in this workshop, the following activities arranged for the children:

- Personality development through theatre for boosting their confidence for public speaking and do away with stage fear.
- Creative writing workshop in which the children learn how to write creatively and at the same time come on the stage and speak up their writings.
- Craft workshop to bring out creativity in children like-making candle stands, pencil stands, decoration items,
- Clay Modeling, Drawing, painting and calligraphy workshop,
- Workshop on Science experiments

Similarly, the other skills like improve English skills and creative learning programmes for women, young adults and some interesting

activities for old age people can also be organized by public libraries.

Community Participation and Involvement: Participation demonstrates how libraries are moving towards a participatory model, positioning themselves as collaborators. The all activities and services of library should be community centered. Social inclusion and community participation is also important for library development and collective efforts are needed to connect the communities for design, marketing, selecting books and making libraries a most comfortable social space.

Community Outreach Activities: Public libraries are not only a book storage place. It is a place for communities to share resources – space, information, knowledge and a place for people to connect. Through public libraries outreach programmes, all community members can access services and participate in community life. They should establish personal connections with the community that help to define their needs and interests to strengthen community in ways that yield significant return on investment, including drawing people together for diverse purposes.

Partnership between Libraries and other Public Sectors: Public library authorities must develop strong and sustainable working relationships with other Information centers, Special & Academic libraries in the region to develop collaboration for promoting and modernizing public library services in the country. The trend of partnerships shows how libraries are increasingly using partnerships with a wider range of organisations to achieve shared outcomes. Public libraries can work together with schools, healthcentres, tourism centre, employment sectors, banking sectors, e-governance, online shopping and for other various purposes of community benefit.
Example: MSSRF Library, Chennai as an INELI Innovator with the support of IPLM and Apollo Hospitals Chennai, conducted Telehealth awareness services to 8 Public libraries in Tamilnadu. The Program was health awareness about the "Urinary Tract Infection" by Senior Nursing Trainer, Apollo Hospitals, Chennai. Participating public libraries were from

Poompuhar, Puducherry, Thottiam, Manalurpet, Thiruvaiyaru, Melpatti, and Aruppukottai.

Digital Content Creation: Public libraries can play an important role in setting up facilities to preserve and give access to indigenous knowledge and the nation's cultural heritage. Digitalization of classical literature, rare books, manuscripts, local contents and database creation related to local community, should be initiated by public libraries with support of national and local government.

Marketing of Library Services: Public libraries should plan for promotional activities for social branding and imaging, for maximum utilization of resources and services. It will also help libraries to showcase themselves outside the library building and to reach the people and attract them towards the library.

Smart Buildings: As per the functions and activities of public libraries, new smart buildings or renovation in old buildings is required to create more attractive, quiet spaces for the community. Besides offering new technologies and services, libraries should offer people a welcoming and attractive place with versatile furnishings, to encourage them to dwell in their spaces, whether this is to read a newspaper, to meet people, to use computers, or to study. Government should invest money to create smart public library buildings like shopping malls and corporate buildings.

CURRENT STATUS OF RAJASTHAN'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

State of Rajasthan was formed on 1st November 1956. It has 33 districts covering an area of 3,42,239sq. km. The Maharaja's Public Library, Jaipur, was established in 1866. During 1866-72, Sir Frank Alexander, a British librarian, was invited to organize this library. There were many libraries in the Princely States. The Rajasthan Library Association was stated in 1962 under the guidance of Professor S. Bashiruddin. It established branches in all the divisions and districts headquarters. The Rajasthan Library Association drafted the Library Bill and submitted it to the Government in 1965. After serious persuasion of the Association, Rajasthan

Public Libraries Act was passed in 2006. It has a State Central Library, 7 Divisional Libraries, 33 District Libraries, 9 Tehsil Libraries and 228 Block level libraries. These libraries contain a large number of books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blu-ray Discs, e-books, audio books, databases, and other formats of information resources. The Architecture of Libraries ranges in size from a few shelves of books to several million items. The Rajasthan Government planning to computerize all public libraries in the State for providing modern facilities to readers and subscribers and open new libraries upto the panchayat level across the State to promote reading habit among the villagers. State Language and Library Department are already working in this scenario by providing better facilities to connect them through e- library system as well.

According to One Newspaper report also, the Rajasthan School Education Minister Ms. Vasudev Devnani taken a meeting (in 2016) of Senior officials of the language and library department and stated that the state government will soon digitize the public libraries and a special drive will be undertaken to increase membership. "Records of all 41 public libraries in the state will be digitalised," he said in a review meeting in Jaipur. To enhance the environment of libraries, the Minister suggested officials to hold discussions on relevant issues every month to turn libraries into knowledge hubs. He also said that Libraries should undertake special drives to increase membership, and adding facilities should be improved and new books should be purchased.

Although Government is planning and taking initiatives to develop and improve the public libraries of the state, but if we look at the present situation of public libraries in Rajasthan, it is not very good. Only few libraries have developed and implemented some of the technology in their services and trying to be innovative for their community to meet the demands of today's changing world. There are many challenges in front the public libraries and their librarians to develop the libraries and also in implementation

of ICT. To find out the present status and scenario in terms of innovative activities and the new initiative to be taken by public libraries, researcher enquired the 4 public libraries from three districts i.e. Jaipur, Kota and Ajmer. One is the oldest public library in Jaipur 'Maharaja Public Library' which is divisional public library, a state central library 'Radhakrishanan Public Library', 'Divisional Public Library, Kota' and 'Divisional Public Library, Ajmer'.

After enquiry of the present status of these four public libraries researcher found that:
- All basic services i.e. circulation, cataloguing, classification, reference services, periodical services, reading spaces, etc, are being provided by the libraries.
- All libraries are automated with one or the other library management software.
- They have : Children Library, Brail Section and special collections in library
- They organize various events on different occasion e.g. various Jayanti, Special Days/Weeks of Public importance.
- Some libraries also started partnership with some of other public sectors like-visiting Schools and people of slums for awareness and promotion of reading culture
- Programmes related to promotion of reading habits in Children
- Organization of training and workshops for public library professionals for their up-gradation and motivation.

Further, researchers found that other than the above mentioned activities and services, the 'Kota Divisional Public Library' has taken many initiatives and done so many innovations in their services. This public library has set up its image as 'the ideal public library' among the others. If we talk about the innovation in services and initiatives of this public library, these are:
- Library services for visually impaired: For this service, the Voice Donation Program appreciated by IFLA and the success story of visually impaired 'Akshita. Eyes on Sky' Ranked First in index.
- Library Services for Transgender (LGBT): This library second in Nation (First is Kerala

State Central Library) but first in Rajasthan, started this service.
- The only public library of Rajasthan which support to UNSDG Goals of innovation.
- Music Library Service: First public library of Rajasthan introduced for music lovers. It has seventeen hundred songs which is not available on Internet. It also provides lyrics and helps for karaoke singing.
- Community engagement through Pathak Sanvad Yojna: First in Nation for Talk Show as reported by Indian public library movement (IPLM) for young authors.
- Bibliography Services for Research Scholars: Only for library and information Science students and more focus on local and abroad students.
- Read loud activities
- Story telling activities under the joint collaboration with 'Navchetana Foundation'
- National Digital Library of India service
- Own Book Reading facility for competitive students on monthly charges basis.
- Audio Book service: First in Rajasthan, have 2207 book on different issues.
- Instant Reading machine for visually impaired or senior citizens
- Kids projects email helpline service.
- Outreach services: Under the collaboration with Navchetana foundation, started services for homeless kids and slums, teach them through help of senior reader.
- English speaking course with British collaboration.
- Read and Review Segment where reader after read the book, records the review and avail for other readers in soft copy.
- Science and Spiritual Collection development: separate Kalyan Section developed.
- Membership of Daisy and Bookshare: Bookshare is the world's largest online library of accessible e-books for people with print specifically designed for use by people with "print disabilities", including blindness, impaired vision, and dyslexia.
- Awards and recognition for the community for their active engagement in public libraries.
- Future project: Human Library (making human stack) - Book will replace by experts

means now author and subject experts will be registered as a book in library, till now 67 experts get registered as human stack. Now readers can interact with experts directly.

- Planning to start community Radio for broadcasting local tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

After study of these four public libraries, except the one public library i.e. 'Divisional Public Library, Kota', a general scenario which reflects towards innovation/initiatives and where these public libraries of Rajasthan are lagging behind is given asunder:

- Do not have internet and Wi-Fi
- Do not have computer labs
- Do not have their library websites/portal
- Very less number of e-resources
- No public library network
- Not having consortium services
- No E-learning initiatives
- Not having adequate area & space
- Not having digitization tools and equipment
- Very less initiatives towards community engagement
- Very less initiatives towards training and skills enhancement programmes
- Lack of information and digital literacy programmes
- Lack of collaboration and partnership efforts with other sectors
- Lack of self-motivation to take the initiatives
- Lack of awareness and expertise for innovation services and activities
  In view of the innovations, initiatives and implementation of ICT for further development and setting up the libraries as a knowledge hub is still not at the stage where they had to be reached. The challenges being faced by library professionals of these public libraries are as follows:
- Inadequate funding, problems in transfer of funds
- Lack of attention of government authorities and system (particularly local government) towards development of public libraries and their librarians
- Lack of manpower: no full flash librarians are appointed in the libraries and other professional staff is also not recruited

- Lack of enough sanctioned posts, forcing most of the services to be operated by voluntary non-professional staff
- The public libraries are not in the under the direct control of a full time library professional
- Less Attraction of professional librarians towards public libraries, Problem of educated professionals preferring to work in special and academic libraries than public libraries.
- No involvement of community and librarians in collection development
- Changing requirements of library users
- Lack of proper infrastructure
- Unhelpful social attitudes/lack of community support
- Poor legislative backup and Inadequate resources
- Lack of dedicated and aware personnel
- Lack of Collaboration and co-operation among libraries from every sector
- Public library professionals are not getting allowances and service conditions comparable to the counterparts in academic, research and special libraries.
- Little emphasis on adoption Information & Communication Technology for public library systems and services

In view of the scenario presented above by this study, it is clear that even though there are lots of difficulties, but librarians/library professionals has to work as an innovator/leader and to take some initiatives on their own for the development of public libraries which is explained further in the paper.

NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION OF LIBRARIAN INTO INNOVATOR/LEADER

H.K. Kaul (2002) opined that "Our public library system in the country failed totally in bringing knowledge to the doorsteps of every individual. It is advisable for us to look at the problem afresh, especially when the computer and communication technologies have now become available to us at a minimal cost". Considering this and the challenges & problems being encountered by the public library librarians in developing the public libraries as per the study

concluded, to overcome these problems on a part of librarian, there is need to understand the new role of library leaders in remaining accountable and relevant for the community with a goal to expand their capacity to meet government objectives to fight with digital and social exclusion.

In view of this scenario, to help librarians of public libraries, a program named 'INELI' has been started at international level. To support the public library movement and to change the scenario of public libraries in India, this programme is very helpful for librarians to become the Leader & Innovator to position the public libraries as critical community assets to drive community development through knowledge and information services.

About INELI India and South Asia: The International Network of Emerging Library Innovators **(INELI) India and South Asia** (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Myanmar, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), **is** a Program of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. INELI is the e-learning global library leadership capacity building programme that nurtures a network of librarians as emerging Innovative Leaders in Public Libraries. This program provides an opportunity for the librarians to develop their knowledge, attitude, and skills for enhancing their inner leadership qualities through a variety of learning environments and networking events. INELI India is one of the seven regional INELIs that have been initiated in August 2015 exclusively for Indian public librarians. The selected INELI Innovators of India shall be fostering and enhancing their own libraries by designing and creating innovative knowledge based services for building sustainable vibrant community oriented libraries.As part of the INELI program, the INELI Library Innovators are moving a step ahead in support of the larger Indian Public Library Movement. They are envisioning the role and repositioning their public libraries as community led as knowledge and information learning centres. In support of this movement, MSSRF has partnered with the Indian Public Library Movement, hosted by the NASCOMM Foundation in "Repositioning and

Strengthening the Capacities of the Public Library as Knowledge and Learning Centres in India". The focus is on allowing the INELI Library Innovators having fostered leadership and innovative skills shall continue to facilitate and create an enabling library environment for their communities. Across 25 States in India, the INELI Library Innovators shall be:

- Enhancing the capacities of their library staff, by adopting a consultative, needs assessments approach for meeting information, educational and learning needs of its diversified community.
- Introducing creative, interactive and innovative ICT enabled knowledge services that support the community to make informed decisions.
- Measuring the impact of change using an effective monitoring system for showcasing changes.
- Facilitating and Sharing of best practices on content and services delivered for the community by the Librarians to state/national level stakeholders for repositioning and advocating of socially inclusive public library policies.

This Public library innovation movement focuses on issues related to integration of apt technology, packaging of content for effective delivery of services for its communities and improve the access to information to the changing dynamics of the society. And this programme is supporting to create the innovators and leaders for the public libraries who can the picture of their libraries for the advantage of society and the nation as well.

CONCLUSION

Public libraries support lifelong learning and facilitate information access for social and digital inclusion. According to this study, several trends can be seen which affected the activities of public libraries. These trends are evident in the range of innovative services can be developed by public libraries for the community people. The study shows the trends of participation, partnerships, learning and new outreach activities with approach of their development, and with examples of how these trends are perceptible in some of the public

libraries of the Rajasthan State. These common trends express the priorities of leading public library services, providing libraries with an opportunity to incorporate these innovations and initiatives into their own strategic planning and goal-setting processes. By following these objectives and actions, public libraries can build on successful experiences and stories with inspiration as how to progress the development of their service.

Despite advances in ICT, information resources, various government projects and schemes, initiatives of public libraries, the benefits have not reached to the majority of the population particularly to the remote places of the country. The main reasons behind the unsuccessful public library movement are lack of priorities on the part of government and absence of an integrated approach to social welfare and community development. The technology alone cannot be transformed the overall scenario, the mind set and perception of Government, librarians and the community also has to be changed for establishing the public libraries as a community knowledge/resource centre.

Finally, it can be stated that the Public Libraries can have substantial and enormous effect on the lives of people. Public libraries can provide solutions to every people's problems of the

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community by adapting the changing needs and behaviours of the people and offering them anew shaped advance public library services for today, and into the future. Considering the reality that a knowledge rich and informed people can make the world better and the better world can makes every individual happy and successful, and for this, public libraries can work as a lifeline for the communities like a heart-beat.

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