Library Cooperation in India: Present Status and Future Needs

Jeyarani Durairaj

Indian Institute of Technology - Madras
The establishment by the Government of India of the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centres (INSDOC) as a National centre for dissemination of scientific information was the first organised effort towards library cooperation in the country. Considering the area to be served, in 1964 a regional centre of the INSDOC was established at Bangalore and another in Madras recently. Others at Bombay and Calcutta are planned. Also, National centres in specific disciplines, under the auspices of different Ministries and Agencies are also functioning, for example the Library and Information Centre of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, the Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC), the National Medical Library, the Standards Information Centre, the Small Enterprises National Documentation Centre (SENDOC), the Social Sciences Documentation Centre and the National Information Centre of the Electronic Commission which is planned as a computer-based Data service. The National Science Press, the National Agricultural Library and the National Patent Information Centre are also being developed.

The need for co-ordinating and integrating the various centres for providing better services was felt and the Government of India included in its Science and Technology Plan proposals for the establishment and development of the National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT). This was presented at the first UNISIST meeting of Experts at Colombo, Sri Lanka, in December 1974. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Government of India is the UNISIST Focal Point for India and has the responsibility for the implementation of the NISSAT and for linking it up with other co-ordinate systems in the country.

The DST encourages and supports a few existing information centres to serve as Branch Information Centres (BIC) in a particular discipline/industry. BICs in the following areas have been established:

1. Machine Tools - Central Machines Tools Institute, Bangalore
2. Aeronautics - National Aeronautical Laboratory, Bangalore
4. Food Technology - Central Food Technology Research Institute, Mysore
5. Leather Technology - Central Leather Research Institute, Madras
6. Drugs - Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow

Besides the above, BICs in Metallurgy, Electrochemistry, Essential Oils and Aromatic Chemicals, Wood Science and Technology, Raw Materials and Industrial Products, Science Policy Studies, Environmental Studies and Patents are being developed. About 5060 BICs are expected to be functional by 1985, some of them covering interdisciplinary areas such as environmental studies, energy and science policy. The information system for Iron and Steel Technology being planned by the Hindustan Steel Ltd., and the Information System for the Electrical field to be organised by the Bharat Heavy Industries would be integrated into the national network. The BICs already established have taken up various projects to build up capacity for effective and efficient information service.

The INSDOC has compiled Regional Union Catalogues of Scientific Serials as also Catalogues of Scientific Serials of big libraries. Most of these are now in machine-readable form and can be manipulated for various outputs. It has also, in collaboration with the University Grants Commission (UGC), compiled and published a Directory of On-going research in the Universities in the country. A similar Directory has been prepared for the Laboratories of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). These are being integrated and the data converted to machine-readable form.

Directory of Data Centres has been compiled jointly by the Documentation and Research Centre (DRTC) Bangalore and INSDOC, Delhi, as a project of the DST and converted into machine-readable form. Another Directory of Information Facilities available in Science and Technology Institutes in India has also been prepared by INSDOC. The different data bases would ultimately be rendered in machine-readable form for various referral and information services. INSDOC has also formulated standards in the field of documentation.

India is a vast agricultural country. It strives towards rapid economic development through industrialisation. A single national centre cannot cater to the needs of the entire area in dissemination of information. The States have therefore established their own networks and these are linked to the national units. For lack of time and space the infrastructures in the State of Tamilnadu alone will be discussed in this paper. The State of Tamilnadu is one of 24 states into which the country has been divided. It is situated in the South Eastern part of the Indian peninsula and has an area of 1,30,069 sq.kms. with a population of 4,11,99,168.
Technical education in Tamilnadu

There has been a spurt in the number of institutions of technical education in the past two decades as seen from the statistics given below:

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<tr>
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<th>1956</th>
<th>1974</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Annual Intake</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Colleges</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>810</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Schools</td>
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<td>-</td>
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Financial Expenditure:
- 1951 - 1956 = Rs. 80,000,00
- 1969 - 1974 = Rs. 447,000,00

The State also has a Regional Engineering College at Tiruchirapalli and the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, both established by the Central Ministry of Education for teaching of technical courses. Recently the State has established a Technological University besides the already existing three Universities for pure as well as applied sciences and one Agricultural University.

Industrialization

The Directorate of Industries and Commerce of the State is responsible for the planning and implementation of programmes for the promotion of Industries and Commerce in general and Small Scale Industries in particular. For effective implementation of these programmes the State has been divided into nine regions. Each district of the State has a District Industries Centre (DIC) whose personnel identify the industrial potential in the district and select suitable schemes, prepare project profiles, help in adapting appropriate technology, arrange financial assistance and extend marketing support to the entrepreneur. The DICs have personnel in each Taluk i.e. smaller units into which the districts are divided for administrative convenience, who deal exclusively with development work. The DICs through their contact with the concerned governmental departments and other agencies co-ordinate their work.

Industrial Estates have been established in various parts of the State and this helps in the dispersal of industrial units and balanced industrial growth. There are at present about 46 such industrial estates and others are being developed, especially in backward areas. The Tamilnadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) has been set up to develop major and medium industries in the State. The major and medium industries in the private sector are helped by the State Industrial Development Corporation (SIPCOT). Besides the above, the Tamilnadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC) and the Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) cater to the needs of the industrialists.
It has been estimated that the State has 11.46% of the total small scale units in the country with a Gross Value of 12.36%. In 1971 the total number of small scale units was estimated as 18,440 and in 1978 as 21,273.

The Small Enterprises National Documentation Centre (SENGOC)

The SENGOC was established in 1971 at Hyderabad, by the Government of India to provide systematic information service to the small scale sector. It is a clearing house of information for both small industry entrepreneurs as well as to extension agents. It collects and organizes information on small industry development and has a Central Information File which will soon be computerized.

To cater to the information needs of this set-up the State has started Technical Information Sectional Libraries in different places:

1. Guindy, Madras
2. Ambattur, Madras
3. Katpadi
4. Salem
5. Coimbatore
6. Madurai
7. Tiruchirapalli
8. Tirunelvelli

These collect relevant data on all aspects of various types of industries from Governmental and other agencies and disseminate the information.

To encourage big industrial units to establish their own Research and Development wings the Government of India has announced the incentive of tax exemption of about 4% of the total turnover if utilized for R & D, Contributions to local/regional libraries also earn tax exemption.

The State plans an intensive non-formal, continuing education in 1979-80 with 3,600 adult education centres. The Southern Regional Patent Office has been established in Madras, Tamilnadu. This office, through its Central office would provide information on patent literature.

Public Library System

The State Public Library system plays an important part in adult education. As on March 1978 the Tamilnadu Public Library System had a network of 1,455 units in the State. According to the Delivery of Books Act of 1958 one copy of all publications in the country is to be deposited in the Regional Centre at the State Central Library at Madras. Besides this State Central Library and its branches, 38 other units established and maintained by other Agencies which are open to the public, are also receiving help from the State.
The Embassies of foreign countries such as the United Kingdom and USA have libraries attached to them. These have valuable collections in Science and Technology and are open to the public.

Discussion

A study of 58 University libraries in the USA reveals that the Library operating expenses double every seven years and this is true in other countries also.

As financial resources are always limited the developed countries have explored avenues for pooling them. The American Library Association (ALA), after a series of meetings in 1968 in various parts of the country, found that the barriers to resource sharing were mostly associated with people and not with technology. In the case of a developing country like India the barriers are not merely people but, in an equal measure, technology also. Quick means of communication like the Telex, duplicating machines, and processing equipment, are beyond the reach of most libraries.

It has been found from experience that libraries can cooperate in various aspects of their activities. But all libraries may not be able to interact in all the activities. Such total interlinking is also not necessary.

The types and needs of clientele served by each library/Agency differs. The first step in the planning of network should therefore be a survey of the clientele. In a developing country like India the important categories of the users of the information network can be identified as follows:

1. Rural Population in the villages which form the backbone of the country. The information needed is basic knowledge of agriculture, Appropriate Technology, Health Education, Family Planning and Adult Education.

The Public Library System with its numerous branches is best suited for this. It can, in cooperation with the Department of Public Health, serve the rural population.

2. Academic community of the State which needs the latest sophisticated information on innumerable subjects. The State has Universities with departments in various disciplines - pure and applied. Cooperative acquisition, cooperative cataloguing and even cooperative storage can be explored wherever possible. Building and maintaining of Regional Catalogues, providing SDI service are some of the many activities which, as cooperative efforts, yield maximum benefits with minimum expenditure.
3. Industrialists - This category of information seekers is steadily growing and can draw upon the resources of the Regional Centres of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the District Information Centres (DIC) the Technical Information Libraries in the different parts of the State, the Patent Offices, etc. and academic libraries.

The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, developed in 1973, a new wing, the Industrial Consultancy Centre (ICC), to collaborate with the Industry and fulfil its need for information. With its well-qualified Faculty in different disciplines, its Laboratories with many sophisticated instruments, its third Generation computer which is now being utilised for Information Retrieval by the Regional Centre of the INSDOC, has the capacity to develop into a strong Regional Centre for the Southern Region and act as a clearing house for information in different disciplines.

National Grid

A central coordinating agency which will integrate the library services at various levels in the country as conceived by the NISSAT plan is laudable. This agency will strive at pooling of all resources, avoid duplication of stock and efforts and create means of distributing available information as widely as possible and with ease.

Even countries like Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany which are approximately equal in area to the State of Tamilnadu have felt the need for, and developed various cooperative schemes to pool their resources and minimize the expenditure. The organisation of a grid in a country as vast as India with sixteen states, some of them larger than the State of Tamilnadu, and with varied cultures and over fourteen official languages will indeed be a formidable task and would face organisational and financial constraints. Nevertheless a beginning has been made.

There is a dire need for creating the library habit which is declining these days among the younger generation. The Library must, therefore, project its image in as attractive a form as possible by holding 'Open Days', conducting Seminars, Lectures by the library staff and Faculty, and provide relevant bibliographic services to its users. The role of voluntary library associations such as the Madras Library Association (MALA) which was started in 1928, the Indian Library Association (ILA) and the Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC) is very relevant for this purpose. Sufficient funds should be provided to these organisations to write articles on library use, hold exhibitions, conduct seminars pertaining to industry and initiate and support research into surveys connected with library use, improvement of library facilities and identification of problems connected with library services.