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## Library Automation and Networking: Need and Importance of Maharashtra Public Libraries

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**Varsha Patil**

Librarian,  
Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Ltd.  
Regd. Office, 5th Floor, A wing, ICC Trade Tower,  
Senapati Bapat Road, Pune - 411016  
Maharashtra, India  
[varshap@mkcl.org](mailto:varshap@mkcl.org) , [varshamkcl@yahoo.co.in](mailto:varshamkcl@yahoo.co.in)

### Abstract

*The present paper is showing the current status and challenges that the public libraries in Maharashtra State are suffering. Libraries all over the world have already transformed themselves from delivering traditional library resources and services to the technology based resources and services. Public libraries are good media for transformation of information to the general public of the society. Users of the public libraries are from child to adult. Unfortunately the public library system in Maharashtra lacks the basic infrastructure to support ICT implementation and also it lags behind in terms of its accessibility to the common man in Maharashtra*

### Keywords

Public Libraries, Maharashtra State, Automation and Networking

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## INTRODUCTION

Public library is the centre of information which provides services to its readers on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status free of cost. The 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. UNESCO Public library Manifesto proclaims belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women. UNESCO therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries. The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It is supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments. Public libraries must therefore, be allowed to play a role of fundamental importance in the development of future systems of lifelong learning.

Public libraries exist in many countries across the world and are often considered as an essential part of having an educated and literate population. There were well known libraries in the ancient period including those of Alexandria, Greece, and Nalanda and Taxashila in India. The modern concept of free library service has come to India from the western countries. During the first half of the nineteenth century there were public libraries in three presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras and in other parts of the country under the active support and initiative of the Europeans in these towns.

Public libraries in India are established throughout the country and are located in all states, district, talukas as well as village levels. There is one state central library in every state. The development of public libraries in any state is the responsibility of the respective state government. Library legislation in the states ensures the adequate funds and other resources available for public libraries. Public libraries in India are lagging behind other libraries in the world in collection development, access to library resources, provision of adequate facilities and in the use of information and communication technologies for housekeeping operations as well as for user services.

## **PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN MAHARASHTRA : Origin and Development :**

Maharashtra has a rich library tradition. Native general libraries have come-up in good number all over the state in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further 'Home Rule Libraries', 'Marathi Libraries' also were started with the objective of providing reading in the native Marathi Language. Starting with the Maharashtra Library Association (1921) several associations were founded to spread the concept of reading and reading rooms.

The Library development in Maharashtra is based on the recommendations of a Fyzee Committee, appointed by the then Government of Bombay province, for the development of libraries in the State. The Committee constituted in 1939 and submitted its report in 1940. The recommendations of the Committee could not be implemented upto 1947 because of the Second World War. After the independence, the then Government of Bombay province decided for development of public libraries to implement the recommendations of the Fyzee Committee.

The Fyzee Committee recommended that the Government should encourage local initiative by recognizing private libraries and give them financial aid on the conditions that the libraries allow free use of the books and reading material to the non-paying members in the locality within the premises of the library.

The Committee also recommended the establishment of one State Central Library at Mumbai and one Regional Library at Pune. According to the recommendations of this committee the functions of Central Library were entrusted to the Asiatic Society of Bombay in 1947. In 1950, the Trust Deed was executed between the then Bombay provincial Government and Asiatic Society of Bombay for this purpose. During this period the Regional Library was also established at Pune.

The committee further recommended that one District Library and one Taluka Library at each district and taluka places should be recognized. The formula of financial grants to these libraries was determined on the category of public library and the limit which was based on admissible expenditure incurred by concerned libraries in the previous year. The work of inspection and supervision of these libraries was being done by Curator of Libraries, who

was working under the control of then Directorate of Education. This situation continued upto 1967. The working and development of these public libraries recognized under the Fyzee Committee Report could not give sufficient service and attention on account of inadequate funds for their progress. This situation was considered by the library association, library activists, political leaders, in the field of libraries and they pressed Government for the introduction of library legislation in the State.

## **Enactment of Maharashtra Public Libraries Act, 1967**

The Government of Maharashtra had taken into consideration the suggestions and demands of the activists in the library movement and decided to introduce Maharashtra Public Libraries Bill in legislature. The Maharashtra Public Libraries Act was passed in 1967 at the Nagpur Session of the Maharashtra Legislature. However, it was brought into force on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1968, the Maharashtra Day. The Act provides for uniform Public Library System in the State and uniform scale of grant-in-aid.

## **The salient features of the Act, in brief**

1. Establishment of a separate Department of libraries for planning, maintenance, organization and development of Public Libraries in the State;
2. Establishment of the State Central Library for the whole State and Divisional Library in each division, financed and managed by the Government;
3. Establishment of the State Library Council to advise Government on all matters related to the Library development;
4. Establishment of District Library Committee for each district for advising Govt. on all matters concerned with the public libraries in the district;
5. Government is responsible for providing an amount of not less than Rs.25 lakhs every year for the development of public libraries. The administrative expenditure is in addition to the above amount;
6. There is no provision of library cess in the Act.

## **Directorate of Libraries, Maharashtra State**

Directorate of Libraries comes under administrative control of Higher and Technical Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra. As per provisions in The Maharashtra Public Libraries Act 1967 Directorate came in to existence on 2<sup>nd</sup> May

1968. Under the directorate 1 state central library, 6 divisional libraries, 35 District Libraries, 1 reference library and 6 offices of Assistant Director of Libraries & Head Quarter of Directorate thus total 49 offices are established.

The Director of Libraries is the Head of the Department and he has been entrusted with certain functions under Superintendence, direction and control of the State Government. He is responsible for planning, maintenance, organization and development of Public Libraries and Library system in the State. He is assisted by the Divisional/Assistant. Director works at the Divisional Head Quarters. 6 Assistant Directors are responsible for supervision, inspection and technical guidance for the recognized public libraries. They have been allotted with the staff viz. Inspectors and Sr. Clerks.

The Director is assisted by one Deputy Director and one Assistant Director at head office. Deputy Director looks after establishment so also, the work of Book Selection Committee and preparation of bibliographies. He is expected to give technical guidance to the Divisional Libraries. The State Central Library, established at Mumbai and the Divisional Libraries established at Pune and Nagpur are under the control of Class I Officers. They have been given the additional responsibilities of receiving, processing and preserving the books received under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867. They are also at the apex of the Inter-Library-Loan system in the state and division respectively. Following are the different types of libraries working under Directorate of Libraries, Maharashtra State:

<b>A</b>	<b>Government Libraries</b>
1	State Central Library
2	Government Divisional Libraries
3	Government District Libraries
4	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Reference and Research Library, Dapoli, Dist.- Ratnagiri
<b>B</b>	<b>Aided Public Libraries</b>
1	District Libraries 'A' grade
2	Taluka Libraries- A, B , and C
3	Other Libraries- A, B, and C
4	Class D Libraries
5	Grampanchayat Libraries
<b>C</b>	<b>Research Institutions</b>

#### Services of the above Libraries are as below:

- Lending Services/Loan of reading materials for home
- Reading Room Services
- Reference Services

#### IMPORTANCE OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION AND NETWORKING OF MAHARASHTRA PUBLIC LIBRARIES:

Presently all Govt. public libraries working under Directorate of Libraries are having more or less same collection of copyright books majority in Marathi language. These books are old and rare which are not easily available elsewhere and difficult to find if needed. Also data of books available in all libraries is not available at one point. Communication between libraries is also very rare. Hence, chances of duplication of books are more. Due to these barriers, libraries are lacking in giving services to its readers.

#### Library Automation:

“Library Automation is the use of automatic and semiautomatic data processing machines to perform such traditional library activities as acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation although these activities are not necessarily performed in traditional ways, the activities themselves are those traditionally associated with libraries; library automation may thus be distinguished from related fields such as information retrieval fields, automatic indexing and abstracting and automatic textual analysis.” In short Library Automation means the use of computers to perform the different routines, repetitive and clerical jobs involved in the functions and services of the libraries.

#### Advantages of Library Automation of Maharashtra Public Libraries:

- Acquisition, accessioning, classification, cataloguing, circulation, serial control, information storage and retrieval, indexing etc. can be mechanised by using library software.
- A machine readable record can be used by many users for various purposes at many numbers of times. For example, a record created for acquisition section can be used for other purposes like accessioning, circulation etc. this saves the time of library staff.

- Library automation relieves the library staff of repetitive work and save the time of the library professionals in routine housekeeping operations.
- To bring accuracy and speed of work.
- To bring economy and provide prompt library services.
- To increase efficiency of technical processing over a manual system.
- To do financial savings due to automation.
- To improve library and information services for end users.
- To improve the efficiency of library administration and management

### **Networking:**

**Networking:** Business dictionary defines Networking as “In the world of computers, networking is the practice of linking two or more computing devices together for the purpose of sharing data. Networks are built with a mix of computer hardware and computer software”.

**Library Networking:** The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) in its National Programme Document (1975) defines a network as: “two or more libraries and/or other organizations engaged in a common pattern of information exchange, through communications, for some functional purpose. A network usually consists of a formal arrangement whereby materials, information and services provided by a variety of libraries and other organizations are available to all potential users. Libraries may be in different jurisdictions but they agree to serve one another on the same basis as each serves its own constituents. Computer and telecommunications may be among the tools used for facilitating communication among them”.

### **Advantages of Networking of Maharashtra Public Libraries:**

- All Maharashtra public libraries will be connected through network.
- Networking will help in Cooperative Collection Development.
- Development of Union Catalogue, bibliography and database of all libraries at one place will be possible.
- Meets Specialized User Demands.
- Breaks Financial Constraint.

- Reduces Unnecessary Duplication of Work.
- Library networking of all Maharashtra public libraries will break the barriers of distance, time and the physical movement of library resources.
- Hardware Resources Sharing: Various hardware resources like computer, printer, scanner etc. can be procured by a networking group for the benefit of all the libraries of the network. Networking is also needed to connect personal computer with the mainframe or super computer for problem solving.
- Software Sharing: Individual library is not able to procure expensive library software. Hence, all participants' libraries can procure the software in group which will reduce the cost of software or one library can procure the software and all other libraries will shared the same by networking as server and client machine.
- Document Delivery Service.
- Data of all Maharashtra public libraries can be placed on internet by creating internet website. With the Internet website facility, access to various types of information viz industry, agriculture, information technology, and so on can be searched and the same information may be send through e-mail, or social networking sites also.
- People will be connected to mainstream and global access to information would be possible.
- With the introduction of ICT, the public libraries may act as community information centre.

### **CONCLUSION**

With the introduction of Library automation of Maharashtra public libraries, data of all libraries will be handled with ease, accuracy, great speed, high rate and better quality. It will save cost, time and labour of library staff and will avoid duplication of work. All libraries will be connected through networking, hence collection will be shared. It will also help to adopt the suitable strategies for improving collection building. Union catalogue and cooperative bibliographic services will be introduced. Hence automation and networking of public libraries working under Directorate of libraries Maharashtra State is essential.

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