World Social Forum 2004

International workshop on

Democratization of Information: Focus on Libraries
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Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD) Helsinki (Finland) and
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Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (India)

Rapporteur – General's Report

By

B. S. Kademani
Scientific Officer
Library and Information Services Division
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay, Mumbai 400 085
E-mail: bskademani@yahoo.co.in

Inauguration

The workshop was inaugurated by lighting the lamp by Chief Guest **Dr. T.A.V. Murthy,** Director INFLIBNET, **Ms. Kay Raseroka** , President, IFLA, **Dr. C. R. Karisiddappa ,** President, ILA, and **Dr. R. R. Singh ,** Director, TISS, **Dr. Usha S. Nayar**, Deputy. Director, TISS at the Library.

Dignitaries, delegates were taken round the Sir Dorabji Tata Memorial library and shown the various services offered to the users including the INFILIBNET programme and Digital Library Progrmmes. Digitisation programme of Parsee literature and other services were appreciated by the delegates.

Welcome

Dr. Usha S. Nayar, Deputy Director welcomed the panel members, delegates and the assembled invitees and guests. In her welcome speech she emphasised need for working together in these days of Golobalization inorder to keep up the human touch. She said, intelligence is normally distributed and hence it is wise to utilise the civic intelligence is very essential.

Introduction to Workshop

Dr. Muttayya Koganuramath, Librarian, TISS and Workshop Coordinator introduced the chief guests and gave an over view of the workshop. He emphasized the role of libraries in democratization of information. Further, he stressed on the challenges posed by the technological developments. He stated that the challenges are of three types viz:

- **Social Challenges**, which include Globalization and Digital Divide.
- **Technological Challenges**, which include Information Sources: From Palm Leaves to Palm top.
- **Financial Challenges** which constitute shrinking budgets and manpower.

In order to meet these challenges, library has to perform the role of a super system.

Address by Chief Guest

Dr. T. A. V. Murthy Director, INFLIBNET – Ahmedabad, Appreciated the theme of the Workshop and requested the IFLA chairman present in the workshop to work for and to promote the cause of Democratization of Information. He assured that all professionals across the world are behind her and support her in every respect.

He also said that the fundamental thing to democratization is "OPEN SOURCE".

We have to make the literates to become information literates. We have to take the computer literacy to villages i.e. at the grass root level. He explained the mission of INFLIBNET and underlined the vision of UGC in launching the INFONET programme

to reach out the information allover the country by making facilities to access the world wide information. He opined that it is the major step in process of democratization of Information.

Keynote Address

Ms. Key Raseroka, President, IFLA and Director - Library Services, University of Botswana, Botswana in her keynote address emphasised that without sharing our varied experiences we cannot make a difference and progress. She stated that Library and information services have a key role in society for providing fast access to information. Libraries encourage social inclusion, as they strive to serve communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability. Further she said every one of us should have a place to sit, a place to discuss. Library is the right place for this. She remembered the Ranganathan's five laws of Library Science, for universal equitable access to information and paid rich tributes to Dr. Ranganathan's seminal contributions in this direction.

She very forcefully highlighted the need for democratization of information by refocusing on communication. She insisted to make use of the technology to preserve the oral, traditional and memories for the use of the posterity.

Presidential Remarks

Dr. R. R. Singh, Director, TISS in his presidential remarks lauded the role of libraries for their services to the humanity. He opined that right to upgraded and dynamic memory is very important rather than repository memory. He suggested that Library scientists should take affirmative actions to the dissemination of information to the larger sections of the society to enhance the information democratization. Fight for liberalisation is very easy and fight against the liberalisation is very difficult. He cautioned that lack of supply of information is a social injustice and results in unhealthy democracy.

Panel Discussions

The panel discussions were on the following issues:

- Alternative Knowledge Formation
- Open Source Systems in the Library and on the Net
- Information Literacy And Capacity Building
- Library paradigm – Library Power
- The Right to Memory

Alternative Knowledge Formation

Prof. Harsha Parekh, Former Librarian, SNDT University, Mumbai, India acted as a chairperson of this panel along with Panel Members **Mr. Doug Schuler**, Evergreen State College, Washington, USA and **Dr. Sangayya Shirurmath**, Librarian IIM, Ahmedabad, India.

Prof. Harsha Parekh, in her introductory remarks in the session highlighted role of information as a source of power. Sharing of information in the sense of democratization is not happening due to so many reasons. She insisted that this should be seriously looked into. She lamented for the lack of facilities in public libraries in India and it is really a challenge to deal with.

Tools of organization of knowledge are parts of the main stream of knowledge formation. We need to create alternate tolls. She explained the types of knowledge by categorising them in to two broad groups of knowledge, viz:

- Traditional
- Conventional

There should be a mechanism to unfold these groups and reach to public at large breaking barriers of tradition and technology.

Mr. Doug Schuler, the invited speaker in this panel talked on the subject 'Civic intelligence'. The media specially brings out day in and day out several burning issues to our awareness. The issues have to be properly addressed. This requires certain type of intellectual intelligence to monitor the events happening around us. He said, civic intelligence is the ability for civil society to develop and implement appropriate responses to complex situations. He categorically stated that one cannot solve the problems in isolation. To solve the environmental problems we require intelligence. Added to this we see that there is enormous spending by governments all over the world. Civic ignorance results in spending on unnecessary activities such as defense, etc. It is the basic duty of all the governments to see that there should be alternate ways of creating and dissemination of knowledge to all by devising certain tools and techniques.

Dr. Sangayya Sirurmath in his presentation on "Alternative knowledge formation" reiterated that the knowledge is the most important asset and it is having a greatest competitive edge in the present context. Information is considered to be as essential as food, air and water. It is the basic resource. Distribution of knowledge generated anywhere to all the people irrespective of space and time, language and religion is more essential. He emphasized that literacy must go beyond basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. IT skills are essential for study and advance skills contribute to information literacy. Therefore, he outlined the features of knowledge Management and its role in democratization of information.

Prof. Harsha Parekh, in her remarks on the questions asked by the participants expressed her unhappiness about the performance of public libraries in the state, particularly in the rural areas. She lamented for the closer of public library facilities in some places. She suggested for active collaboration and consortia approach be followed to solve the situation. She forcefully argued that public libraries should never be looked down upon. She reminded the noteworthy work of World Bank and UNESCO in this regard and called for starting a movement by the youth in villages.

Open Source Systems in the Library and on the Net

Prof. E Rama Reddy, Librarian, University of Hyderabad, India, was in the chair. Mr. Sunil Abraham, MAHITI, Bangalore, India, Mr. G. K. Manjunath, Chief Librarian, IGIDR, India, and Mr.N. V. Sathyanarayan, MD, Informatics (India) Pvt. Ltd., India were the invited speakers in this session who made their presentations.

Prof. Rama Reddy, in his introductory remarks stated that the primary objective of open source system is thinking together – working together and growing together. Generally speaking library as an open source system. We have to realise the ground realities. Though lots of information generated it is said that only 10% of information produced is made available. Open source refers to software in which the source code is freely available for others to view, amend and adapt. He also mentioned the advantages of open source softwares and challenges posed by them for Library and Information professionals such as compatibility, lack of control, responsibility and technical support. It would be better if the government makes arrangement for keeping open their information on the Internet so as to reach the common man.

Mr. Sunil Abraham, one of the panel members, highlighted that there should be a philosophical synergy between free softwares and public libraries. He quoted George Bernard Shaw's words "if you have an apple and I have an apple, and exchange the apples each one of us still will have one apple. If I have an idea you have an idea, by exchanging these ideas each one of us will have two ideas". He stressed the need for collaborative efforts in this area. He said that knowledge is not easily privatisable commodity. He also narrated the case of Brazilian government when decided to produce HIV AIDS drugs, the prices of drugs fell drastically to 98%. Building a library is helping the civilisation to march forward and mass public movements are necessary in this direction.

Mr. G. K. Manjunath, spoke on the theme "open archives". He said that now-a-days knowledge is no more a monopoly of an individual. Open archives is basically a collaborative effort by institutions, individual researchers, programmers and others and making the information available to anybody and anywhere in electronic form. There are more than 500 sites developed for this purpose where working papers, discussion papers, theses, reprints etc. are made available to users. He explained the implications on library such as print vs softcopy, cost , maintenance, space, administrative work etc. He listed the examples of open source archives for social scientist such as REPEC metadata initiatives and services offered at IGIDR library.

Mr. N. V. Sathyanarayan, illustrated lucidly how Internet is going to be a strong source of democracy. He further stated that the Internet is going to be inevitable as a source for education, scientific, social , cultural exchange and exploration. In his view Internet is accepted worldwide as 90 % of the information available on Internet is in English only. This indicates the magnitude of the problem of accessing the information. He narrated the examples of open source software initiatives in libraries such as Koha; D-space; Greenstone; RIB-University of Tennessee, used by NASA, DOE, DOD, and others; Visual Data Centre (VDC)-Horwad-NIT project; Fedora-University of Verginia and Cornell University. He also voiced the following concerns of open source system;

- Fragmented approach places question mark on reliability and longevity
- Software compared to peer reviewed papers
- Implementation costs

He said that CDS-ISIS is the best example of open source software in library and information field. Many are using this software for various applications using the PASCAL interface. He lamented that it is not widely spread because of non-availability of source codes. He suggested that SOUL software developed by INFLIBNET can be made as an open source thereby benefiting many universities, colleges and others.

Information Literacy and Capacity Building

Prof. C. R. Karisiddappa, President, ILA and Professor, KUD, India chaired this session and **Dr. B. D. Kumbar,** Reader, Department of Library & Information Science Karnatak University, Dharwad, India and **Mr. D. V. Singh,** Librarian, Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi were the panel members.

Prof. Karisiddappa, in his introductory remarks stated that library is the memory of the mighty minds of the past who worked restlessly to create useful edge to the society. It is a power house and has to be exploited for the public good. Librarian is considered as a teachers' teacher and he is a philosopher, friend and guide. Because he has fairly acquainted with the books and users. He is constantly guided by the Five Laws of Library Science. He suggested that Ranganathan's laws are to be seen in the context of information literacy and users capability building by empowering users with information. Provision of right information in right context to the right user will go a long way in the process of increasing the productivity and capacity building.

Dr. B. D. Kumbar, presented his paper on "Growth and development of public library system in India with special reference to Karnataka" and explained how public library development enhance the democratization of information. He stressed in the discussion that the public libraries are by the people, of the people and for the people. Public Libraries are the basis for socioeconomic development of the nation. Public libraries fulfill educational, informational, aesthetic, research and recreational needs and aspirations of people.

Mr. D. V. Singh, in his paper entitled "Information literacy and capacity building: Issues, challenges and strategies" gave an account of changes that have taken place in each revolutions, viz., Agricultural revolution, Industrial revolution, Information revolution. He is of the opinion that the fruits of agricultural revolution, and industrial revolution have reached the common man whereas the fruits of Information revolution have not reached the common man to the extent it should have been reached due to lack of education, information literacy and socioeconomic reasons. He identified four types of information literacy viz. :

- traditional literacy
- computer literacy
- media literacy
- network literacy

He listed the characteristics of information society, factors affecting human resource development and some strategies to develop information literacy and capacity building.

Prof. C. R. Karisiddappa, in his concluding remarks stated that we are in the learning society. All of us should learn at every moment. In this direction librarians have a big role to play. He remembered the good old Chinese proverb, " If you give a fish to a man he will eat for a day if you teach him how to catch a fish, he will live for life". Therefore to enable and empower the user, it is essential on the part of the library and information professionals to commit for the information literacy.

Library Paradigm – Library Power

Mr. Mikael Book, NIGD, Helsinki, Finland, Chaired the session and **Dr. Pandey S. K. Sharma,** Senior Library and Information Officer, UGC, New Delhi, India, presented the paper.

Mr. Mikael Book, in his introductory remarks recalled the statement of Lars D. Eriksson " The strength of the libraries lies precisely in the fact that it is powerless, that it cannot be integrated into the political structures". He further argues that "Freedom of information is not only a part of the society, it is also a precept for life in society". He is of the opinion "A constitutional provision for upgrading of the library and Internet is absolutely essential".

Dr. Pandey S. K. Sharma, gave an account of how libraries are confronting with many problems and they are mainly due to the challenges posed by the technological developments. He said that there is a change in user information seeking behaviour, needs and a visible shift in library paradigm. Dr. Sharma traced the efforts made in India to cope up with the shift in the paradigm. Highlighting the UGC's role in promoting the library and Information Science Education and its organized efforts in producing the manpower, explained the significance of the latest Curriculum Development Committee Report.

Mr. Mikael Book, gave the details of NIGD and its activities towards democratisation of information. He said that NIGD is constantly trying to produce ideas for government for taking policy decisions. He also gave a rich tributes to Dr. Ranganathan and his five laws. He also reminded these laws which have given the solid base to the total library activities. Recalling the work of Timo Kuronen who has advocated supplementary laws viz.:

- Every reader his/her library
- Every writer his/her contribution to the library

He pleaded for the constitutional upgrading of the libraries and of the Internet. He strongly questioned about what is library power and where comes the library in power structure ? He substantiated that the Internet is to be the great library of the world.

The Right to Memory

Fifth panel was chaired by **Ms. Kay Raseroka,** President, IFLA, and Director, Library Services, University of Botswana, South Africa, **Ms. Mirja Ryynänen,** Member of European Parliament, Finland, and **Dr. Ravinder Kumar Chadha**, Director, Parliament Library, New Delhi, India presented the papers on this theme.

Ms. Kay Raseroka, in her inaugural key note address explained the significance of the Right to Memory. She further illustrated the role of the library in acting as a public memory. She also emphasized the need for preserving the rural culture, traditions and oral culture of the public in the library by making the use of appropriate technologies.

Ms. Mirja Ryynänen, Member of European Parliament, Finland, presented her paper on "Democratisation of Information: Information literacy". She stated that the information literacy must be considered as a basic human right for life long learning. In her opinion promoting information literacy means empowering people to reach their potential in the information society. In this process the priority is to be given to develop democratic information society. She pleaded to develop equal quality schools and libraries. She has reminded that the appreciation of knowledge is embedded in our culture and also the power of knowledge is most important than the physical power. She said that librarians need politician and politician need librarians. Hence she argued that the information literacy is the pre-requisite of the information society.

Dr. Ravinder Kumar Chadha, presented the paper on "The Right to Information". He explained in detail the Fundamental human right and Right to access to information. He said that understanding of the basic rights facilitates equitable economic growth and helps us in tackling corruption in the country. He also highlighted the usefulness of records management and impact management. He explained the Indian scene of right to information bill. Further informed that "Freedom of Information Acts" are enacted by

seven states. He emphasized the IFLA manifesto and role of libraries in the process of democratization of information.

Ms. Kay Raseroka, in her concluding remarks cautioned that the information professionals should understand that the information is for the public and we are accountable to public. Library power should be incorporated in the constitution. She said that the librarian is not just a librarian but he is the means to transfer information which is power. This is time to realise the value of information in the lives of people. She called upon the women librarians present in the workshop to stand up and realise their importance in the service of humanity.

Concluding remarks by the Rapporteur–General : Mr. B. S. Kademani

I feel honoured and privileged to be associated with the 'International Workshop on Democratization Information : Focus on Libraries' under the aegis of World Social Forum. I take this opportunity to congratulate Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD) for initiating and providing a forum for discussing the library issues in context of society in this workshop and Dr Muttayya Koganuramath , Librarian, TISS and his active members of the library for hosting and making the workshop a great success.

All the presentations by the Chairmen of the sessions, panel members and the subsequent discussions with the participating delegates in the workshop stressed the importance of ' information' for the development of the society and how to make the fruits of innovations and development to reach the common man.

Since beginning libraries, be it public, special, academic etc. are serving people irrespective of caste, creed, economic status and gender is a step towards democratisation of information which is enshrined in Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science.

Libraries are the best suited places in the process of democratisation of information than any other institutions. Therefore, the stress should be laid legalising the library system by way of enacting the library legislations and needed constitutional amendments.

With the advancement of computer and telecommunication technology, it is possible for any one to store a large amount of data and communicate anywhere in the world at a faster rate than it was before. This has given a new boost to the libraries to play the role of 'Super System" in dissemination of nascent information in quickest possible time and enabled the librarians to play a role of "knowledge disseminators" rather than to be the custodians of documents. The technology has bridged the transnational and regional boundaries.

It is fine, the technology is available, but how to make it percolate to the grass root level, each and every individual at villages, remote places and each and every sections of people (farmers, artisans, cottage industries, etc.) which is still a dream in our country. The technology penetration in developing countries is still very low when compared to

developed countries because of political, social, educational, cultural, linguistic, infrastructural and other barriers.

How to overcome these barriers and how to bridge digital divide between rural and urban, developed and developing countries, and rich and poor is a burning issue.

Policy makers, Library and Information Professional Associations (National and International), Library and Information Professionals, Social Scientists, Philanthropic Institutions, Non- Governmental Organizations, Pressure Groups have a greater role to play in bridging the digital divide by making the libraries as centers of information in achieving the above objectives.

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