

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A
STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CITY CENTRAL
LIBRARY IN HUBLI-DHARWAD**

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Abstract

Public libraries exist to serve communities, their mission is to provide collection and services to meet a community information needs. Public libraries can offer more than just a place to read or borrow books. They can play a important role in raising awareness of different cultures and promoting the integration between different category groups. Public libraries need to serve a wide range of population of different categories. A certain cultural awareness and understanding to diversity is necessary to best meet the need of this diverse population. The present study is trying to focus the role of the City Central Library in Hubli-Dharwad to promote harmonies society.

Keywords: Public Library, City Central Library, Diversity, Cultural Diversity, Indian Culture.

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Introduction

The early notion of a public library was ‘museum of the books’. Today the public library is regarded as the “people’s university”. It is the product of modern democracy and it maintains that knowledge should be free of any subscription and other charges to every person irrespective of cast, creed, colour, age and sex. A library is now therefore freely open to all and free access to information as well.

The public library is established to provide materials, which communicate experience and ideas from one person to another and make them easily and freely available to all people. The public library is a local centre of information that makes all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. It is established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organizations. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a range of resources and services. It is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, employment status and educational attainment (Aboyade, 1984).

The basic feature which distinguishes a public library from other libraries is that it is open to all and is stacked with diverse materials representing all shades of recorded views. UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1949 revised in 1972 and 1994) gave a new image and wider scope to this type of libraries service. A public library can rightly be called index to the human development in the field of humanities and social, physical and biological sciences. Education and library services are the two faces of the same coin which one cannot separate them. It means library is the chief instrument so far perfected accumulating and using man’s

intellectual heritage. Francis Bacon has said that “reading make a full man, conference a ready man and writing a perfect man” (Bacon, 2008)

Definitions of Public Library:

The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994 elaborates the significance of public libraries as ““The Public Library is a practical demonstration of democracy’s faith in Universal education as a continuing and life long process in the appreciation of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture. It is the principle means whereby the record of man’s thoughts and ideas and the expression of his creative imagination are made freely available to all. It is concerned with the refreshment of man’s spirit by the provisions of books for relaxation and pleasure. The Manifesto further emphasis that i) the Public Library should be established under ‘the clear mandate of law’; ii) it should be ‘maintained wholly from public funds’; iii) there should be no ‘direct charge’ for its any of the services; iv) it should be open ‘for free and equal use by all members of the community’, irrespective of their age, sex, religion, language, status or level of education” (IFLA/UNESCO, 1994).

Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science defines it as, “a public institution supported by taxation, one that opens its collections, facilities and services, without distinction, to all citizens”. (Kent, 2003)

Diversity in Public Libraries

Public libraries can offer more than just a place to read or borrow books. They can play a important role in raising awareness of different cultures and promoting the integration between

different category groups. Libraries have obvious role in offering free information about other culture and ethnic groups. As they are used by many sections of society, they also have the potential to provide a natural meeting place for people of different cultures. The success of libraries in promoting intercultural understanding depends on the books and information available and the resources to fund activities.

Public libraries have a social obligation to all the citizens of our country, irrespective of Cast, Creed, Sex ethnicity, background, or economic status. Public libraries need to serve a wide range of population of different categories. A certain cultural awareness and understanding to diversity is necessary to best meet the needs of this diverse population. It is essential that libraries incorporate multi-cultural materials into their collections such as books, films, and other library materials.

Cultural Diversity in India

The Indian culture is one of the oldest culture in the world (Indian Culture Facts, 2011). In India, there are amazing diverse cultures throughout the country. The North, South, East and West are having their own distinctive tradition and cultures and almost every state has its own cultural identification. Hardly any culture in the world that is as unique as India. It is having variety of climatic conditions and geographical features. India is native place to some of the most ancient civilizations (Indian Culture Facts: 2011). India's diverse cultural reality is very much in evidence, with 17 regional languages and 1,652 mother tongues (Khullar, 2005). India is a host to most world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam, etc.

Indian culture can be traced back to the Indus Valley (3250 BC to 2000 BC) with subsequent influences of the Vedic culture (1500 BC), Buddhism and Jainism (600 BC to 200

BC), Islam, Adavita, Bhakti and Rajput cultures. Recent major influences include colonization, post-colonial government building, industrialization and globalization (Hussain, 1993). All these forces have created an extremely complex entity called India.

Cultural identity is the sense of belonging and attachment to a particular way of living associated with the historical experience of people. Multiculturalism exists where one society embraces groups of people with different cultural identities.

Today's globalised society is characterized by two profound developments. One is the cultural and social changes caused by migration and the growth of the multicultural society; the other is related to digitization and the growth of the so-called information or knowledge society. Both developments have fundamental effects on librarianship in general and public librarianship in particular (Audunson, 2005). Public libraries are popular community arenas that function as centers for culture, lifelong learning, information, and, not least, as social centers. Public libraries are to meet the needs of the local population and play an important role in terms of access to educational opportunities and social inclusion.

City Central Library Hubli - Dharwad: A profile

Origin

With the enforcement of the Karnataka Public Libraries Act on 22nd April 1965 and as per the notification issued by the Government of Karnataka, the City Library Authority for the twin cities of Hubli Dharwad came into being on 5-11-1966. According to the provision made in the Karnataka Public Libraries Act, 1965 the City Library Authority established the City Central Library, Hubli - Dharwad in the city of Dharwad on 1-1-1967.

The City Central Library, Hubli - Dharwad is located more approximately to the widely accepted belief i.e. in the heart of the city. Since its inception, the City Central Library has made a commendable progress in spreading the cause of the library by opening good number of branch libraries, service stations, mobile library service and service centers in several parts of Hubli - Dharwad city.

Location

The City Central Library, Hubli - Dharwad is located in the heart the Dharwad city, in its own building situated behind the D.C. Compound. The plan as estimated was prepared in 1971 and the foundation was laid in the same year. After 20 years, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri. S.Bangarappa inaugurated the new building in 1991. Before the construction of the new building it was earlier situated in Karnataka Vidyavardhak Sangh Building.

There are 22 branches and 17 service stations under jurisdiction of City Central Library, Hubli - Dharwad, it is also providing mobile Library services in 48 points of Hubli - Dharwad city.

Library working hours

The City Central Library, Hubli - Dharwad is kept open from 8.30 am to 8.p.m. On all weekly holidays and second Saturday including gazetted holidays, the branches are kept closed.

Membership

The membership to this library is made against a deposit of Rs. 25.00 which entitles member to borrow one book, for two books the deposit is Rs. 30.00 and Rs. 40.00 for 3 books.

There is a provision of issuing reference books, text books and costly books on different subjects against a special deposit apart from membership fees. The maximum loan period is for a period of 15 days. There is no fee charged for using reference books and other newspaper and magazines within the premises of the library.

Books and Periodical Collection of the Library

The value of library and its service solely depends upon a comprehensive and useful collection. The City Central Library to purchase the books in different languages, the majority of the books are in local language. To keep abreast with the current affairs, scientific, technological and economic development, the City Central Library and its branches provide access to a number of periodicals, magazines of popular interest. The periodicals subscribed are in Kannada, English, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Telugu and Tamil languages. The total number of periodicals subscribed every year by the city Central Library, Hubli - Dharwad is nearly 100.

Computerization

City Central library has started automation of library activities in the year 2003 by installing computers. From the year March 2003 onwards computer division has started making entry of books in software called E-Granthalaya which is developed by National Informatics Centre. As on December 2012 58,049 books are entered. Computers are supplied by RRRLF and E-Granthalaya provides all housekeeping activities of library.

Services Rendered by the City Central Library Hubli-Dharwad

There was a time when a library was designed to serve the private interest of small group. Today library service is must, in fairness, serve to general public, academicians, students,

research scholars, businessman and others. The library be planned in such a way so as to serve the greatest good of greatest number of minimum cost. The public library has to perform multifarious functions to achieve these ideals and principles.

1. Lending Services

All public libraries provide book borrowing service to the members of particular library. Any kinds of documents can be borrowed by the users. Users can borrow books for 15 days. Overdue charges are levied at the rate of 25 paise per book per day. Only fictions and general books and fiction are issued for home reading, reference books, periodical and audio-visual materials are not issued for the home use. In addition to this, public libraries have provide educational books in different disciplines in the local languages and in the national languages also. The library is providing inter library loan facility to the users, whenever the need arises, including photocopying services. In case of book or periodical or some other documents required for study and reference is not in the library then the interlibrary loan facility is not available here.

2. Reference and General Information Services

City Central Library has a reference section, containing reference books and other reference materials which can be consulted only in the library. Reference sections typically include reference materials such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, yearbooks, directories, government publications and atlases. Some reference materials are also available on CD-ROM. Maximum utilization of this service is by the general public, high school students, under and post - graduate students.

3. Magazines and Newspapers

Public Libraries carry a range of periodicals and journals including national and local newspapers in different languages like English, Hindi and regional language. Magazines are on different topics (E.g. History, Health and Lifestyle Business, Education, Science & Technology, Nature, etc.)

4. Children Section

Childhood is early life that a taste for books and the habit using libraries and their resources are most easily acquired. City Central Library has Special collection and separate area is maintained for the children who is below 14 years age. The children section is lively, stimulating place in which activities of various kinds will be a source of cultural inspiration. There are no well trained personnel to know and understand the psychology of children and encourage them to make use of the library.

5. Mobile Library Service

Public library have been introduced mobile library service in urban as well as rural areas and it depends upon the selection of collection and personnel. Mobile library also known as the “Book mobile” “Library on wheels” (Public Library Services, 2008). Retired community and housewife’s are the major users of the mobile library. Mobile library stops at each of the scheduled locations for 2-3 hours duration. Books may be borrowed and returned at the place by using membership cards, and users can read the books in the mobile library van. Mobile librarian has to obtain maximum knowledge about the users. But unfortunately the collection is being not changed in many mobile libraries.

Extension Activities of the Library

The City Central Library is well equipped with all infrastructures and it undertakes the extension activities like storytelling, debate and quiz competitions, organizing lectures to the people of Hubli - Dharwad. It also takes up the following extension activities.

a. Book Exhibition

Normally book exhibitions are organized two or three times in a year on the occasions of Gandhi Jayanthi, Republic Day and during the National Library week celebrations.

b. Film shows

Since 1981 the library is making all possible efforts to organize the documentary film shows at different parts of the city. It is rather a regular activity carried out to increase the popularity and importance of the public library among the general public. In addition to these extension activities, City Central Library Hubli - Dharwad also conducts seminars and symposia on various aspects. It is thus emerging as a powerful communication media in the society.

Suggestions

- Library authorities should provide accurate and up-to-date information of day-today developments. The public libraries should develop co-operation between neighboring libraries.
- The building and its furnishings should be attractive, informal and welcoming and direct access by readers to the selves is essential.

- Steps should be taken to maintain more silence in the reading room to enable the users to get maximum relaxation.
- Continuing efforts shall be made to identify underserved and hard-to-reach children and to develop appropriate services in response to their needs.
- There should be trained personnel to understand the psychology of the children.
- The City Central Library should link in itself with other educational, social and cultural institutions, including schools and adult education programmes.
- Special programme should be developed for further of the school dropout s in cooperation with adult education agencies.

Conclusion:

The public library today is regarded as multi-purpose informative, educative and cultural agency. It exists to facilitate the flow of information and ideas. The need for City Central Library for capacity building should be seriously planned and streamlined for lifelong learning. In order to spread the Indian culture, City Central Library must be equipped with state-of-the-art technologies to ensure perpetual and free flow of information well-organized, preserved for the posterity to bring the people closer together. In spite of some barriers City Central Library Hubli-Dharwad are providing services to people of Hubli-Dharwad city. With sufficient space to provide dif

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