

The Role Played by Public Libraries in Promoting Information Literacy and User Education

Sidharta Chatterjee*, Mousumi Samanta** and Sujoy Dey***

Public Libraries (PLs) continue to contribute a great deal to user education in local communities. This paper analyzes the importance of PLs in driving community literacy through promotion of user education for the progressive improvement of the society. The paper stresses the relevance and value of PLs by reassessing the benefits they accrue by analyzing the impact of PLs on community and social education. As indigenous knowledge repositories, PLs play a significant role as community information service providers by driving community literacy. The goal of this paper is to analyze the role played by PLs in driving community education and promoting information literacy in the society. PLs, being storehouses of knowledge, support user education by undertaking active part in community information services. The model helps in explaining and analyzing the efficiency of information search and retrieval process in PLs and how it affects user education and community literacy. The paper also discusses the relevance and value of PLs in this age of digital technology. The findings reinforce the claim that PLs are relevant even in this digital age, and they indeed support user education for the progressive improvement of the society.

Introduction

This paper attempts to study the positive role played by Public Libraries (PLs) in propagating and disseminating knowledge by analyzing how they support community education. A simple model using several variables of library operations has been developed to explain the functioning of a public library. The study upholds the theory that PLs are still relevant as a reliable source of information and knowledge of local and indigenous culture, customs, tradition and literature. PLs have adopted modern techniques unique to the Indian context to grow as social institutions. PLs function as a place of social enrichment which supports the growth of knowledge in a society. This could be ascertained by the real growth of PLs across each state in India for the past seven decades following independence. From just about 419 PLs in 1907, the number has grown to 51,758 (Majumdar *et al.*, 2003). While this study undertakes a

* Visiting Researcher, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.
E-mail: sidharta123@yahoo.com

** Visiting Researcher, Central Library, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India; and is the corresponding author. E-mail: mousumisamanta0@gmail.com

*** Assistant Librarian, Central Library, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.
E-mail: sujoyju2000@gmail.com
