The eighteenth century Bengal saw the gradual withering away of the Mughal authority and the emergence of the superiority of the English. It was here where the triumphant flag of British imperialism was hoisted over the ruins of the Mughal sovereignty. While Robert Clive was sowing the seeds of the new imperialism, the desolate tombs of Murshid Quli Khan and Alivardi Khan helplessly looked on. Ironically, Shah Alam II, the crippled Mughal Emperor, signed away the authority of the Mughals by the Dewani Grant of August 1765. Within a few years the Nawab of Bengal was virtually liquidated. Mughal political authority was ultimately eclipsed and the rule of the East India Company ushered in. The history of Bengal since 1765 is not a history of the independent Nawabs and their relationship with the East India Company. It is rather a history of the consolidation and extension of new imperialism. The Nawab of Bengal went into oblivion for ever and the destiny of the province was in the hands of the East India Company. Slowly the Company had started to build up an empire the initial fruits of which they had tasted. During the period of consolidation following the victory of Plassey, metropolitan Calcutta flourished in all respects. With its growth, people of different nationalities started to converge in Calcutta. The social profile of Calcutta is mirrored in contemporary writings, observations and accounts from and about Bengal.
One Mrs. Kindersley wrote a number of letters which threw lights on various sides of 1770 Calcutta life. Lady Kindersley's contemporary account bears testimony to the quick growth of Calcutta:

"The Town of Calcutta is daily increasing in size notwithstanding which, the English inhabitants multiply so fast, that houses are scarce." 1

The prevalent church based libraries were inadequate to meet the growing demands of the reading public. Though some men came to Calcutta with their own collections, yet they were inaccessible to others. In natural sequence the book trade stepped in, but in slow steps. One Mr. Bolts 2 wanted to start a press in Calcutta as he found that the wanting of a press in the city of Calcutta was a great disadvantage to the Calcuttans. In September 1768 he hung up the following notice in the Council Hall and other important places in Calcutta:

"TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Bolts takes this method of informing the public that the want of a printing press in this city being of great disadvantage in business, and making it extremely difficult to communicate such intelligence to the community as is of the utmost importance to every British subject, he is ready to give the best encouragement to any person or persons who are versed in the business of printing to manage a press, the types and utensils of which he can produce. In the meantime, he begs leave to inform the public that having in manuscript many things to communicate, which most intimately,
concern, every individual, any person who may be induced by
curiosity or other more laudable motives, will be permitted
at Mr. Bolts house to read or take copies of the same. A
person will give due attendance at the hours from ten to twelve
any morning." 3

But although Mr. Bolts so openly expressed the lacking
of media in the city, yet for more than eleven years his was
a cry in the wilderness. However credit goes to him for adopting
a novel method in inviting public attention to the absence of
media in Calcutta for ventilating the grievances of the people
against the tyranny of the Company's servants on the spot.

Calcutta offered ideal conditions for the growth of
journalism in India and it was elevated to the capital of British
Empire in India in 1773. This was the only presidency town
which had the largest concentration of Englishmen, engaged in
private trade and public service in 1780. 4 This was also the
only metropolis in India at that time capable of sustaining an
English newspaper on account of its extensive commerce, trade
and concentration of the elites of the English society.
Commercial printing in Calcutta was initiated by James Augustus
Hicky in 1777 who had received professional training in graphic
art. 5 Hicky's survey of the market potential for a newspaper
convinced him that the difficulties in launching one were not
insurmountable. Advertisement support was assured by the
business community and the readership was not wanting. The residential and commercial quarters of the European community were concentrated in and around Tank Square (= Dalhousie Square). The activities of the port, shipping and departments of Government were all concentrated in this heart of the city. Thus there was no difficulty in distributing a newspaper within a few minutes' time with the help of a handful of peons. Hicky's printing press was also located close by the Tank Square (= Dalhousie Square). Thus Hicky's Gazette saw the light of the day on January 29, 1780.

Since then there appeared no less than 27 other newspapers in Calcutta towards the close of the 18th century.6

The make-up, news contents, advertisements, and opinions expressed by the contributors through the columns of these newspapers reflected vividly the image, trends, morals and mores of the time and the society.7

The 'Bengal Gazette' (popularly known as Hicky's Gazette), the first newspaper printed and published in India was the brainchild of an Irishman, James Augustus Hicky. It described itself as 'a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties, but influenced by none.' It was a two sheet paper, about twelve inches by eight, three columns of printed matter on each side, much of which was meant for advertisements. Its contents mirrored contemporary society.
In Hicky's Gazette advertisements of books for sale contained information on author, title, size, price, quality of paper and binding. The following is an excerpt of advertisement for the sale of books that appeared in Hicky's Gazette in the 1780s:

"To be sold at the library by John Andrews and Anthony Bernard, English claret, Musick Books and Tutors for every instrument, choice collection of books for private gentlemen's libraries at a moderate price."^8

But the sale of books is not a substitute for a circulating library which was understood by the book traders who, to cater to the needs of the wider reading public established proprietary subscription circulating libraries side by side with the book trade and shopkeeping for other goods. During the two years of life span, the Gazette of Mr. Hicky, and afterwards for many years the Government Gazette and other newspapers of the time, published notices of such circulating libraries. The references above go to show that books had by the time formed a part of the diversions of city life and that proprietary subscription circulating libraries had come into vogue.^9

Hicky's Gazette and other newspapers of the time bears testimony to the fact that reading, both recreational and educational found a place in Calcutta. Many people brought personal collections of books with them, and ships sailing from England carried books along with other European goods. A book trade
flourished in Calcutta. Advertisements concerning the importation and sale of books appeared frequently in the new-found medium, the newspaper. Such advertisements were frequent in all the newspapers published at the time and continued to come out till the thirties of the nineteenth century.

From Hicky's Gazette, it appears that John Andrews was in all probability the first founder of a circulating library in Calcutta. The exact time is not known. Reverend James Long, a noted missionary and scholar spoke of a 'public library'—as such institutions were then known—in the Old Fort as early as 1770.

Another source informs that this library at the Old Fort was kept by one Mr. Johns, although no confirmation has been available that he kept his library there as early as 1770.

That John Andrews started a circulating library in Calcutta is well established. A well designed bookplate belonging to the circulating library of John Andrews with the year 1774 printed on it, is preserved in the British Museum. It is possible that this John Andrews was popularly known as John and Rev. Long while talking about the presence of a library at Old Fort in 1770 meant the library of John Andrews of our reference. As late as 1795, a Calcutta directory listed him as the 'Late Librarian', under the category of British European settlers not in the service of the East India Company.
The circulating library of John Andrews appears to have been widely used. But he had no smooth sailing. The lines below are from an advertisement appearing in the Bengal Gazette (Hicky's Gazette) of 1780:

"To the ladies and gentlemen, subscribers to the circulating library Andrews, humbly begs leave to acquaint those ladies and gentlemen who have honoured him with their subscriptions, that he has long laboured under many inconveniences from gentlemen not paying attention to the established rules, which met with the universal approbation of the subscribers at the first opening of the library, he therefore trusts that a renewal of these rules will not be disagreeable to the subscribers, and hopes for their ready concurrence in the undermentioned allotted time, for the perusal of the following sized books, viz:

1 set in Folio, 2 months
1 do. Quarto, 1 month
1 do. Octavo, 2 months
1 do. Duod, 1 month."¹⁴

In another advertisement in Bengal Gazette in 1780 Andrews lamented of the loss he sustained owing to some gentlemen going away, and in their hurry not clearing their dues to the library. The following lines are from an advertisement appearing in 1780:
"Mr. Andrews, Proprietor of the Library, begs leave to acquaint the gentlemen of the settlement that any of them becomes subscribers after the date of this advertisement will be requested to advance one gold mohur, and if they do not choose to continue subscribers for the space of four months their money shall be returned after deducting what is due to the library from the time they became subscribers. He is obliged to take this method on account of many losses he has sustained by gentlemen going away, and in the hurry of their affairs not recollecting, their being subscribers to the library; or any books belonging thereto."15

Announcements and notices about Andrews library began to appear in the local press from the inception of Bengal Gazette (Hicky's Gazette).

At the very beginning of 1781 Andrews declared that his library had been shifted from the Old Fort to a commodious house behind the Riding School. The announcement ran as follows:

**PUBLIC LIBRARY**

"John Andrews respectfully begs leave to inform the ladies and gentlemen of the settlement, that the circulating library kept hitherto in the Old Fort, is removed to a cool and commodious house formerly belonging
to Doctor Hamilton behind the Riding School between the
Houses of George livius Esqr. and Mr. Schultz, Jeweller.  

Hicky's Bengal Gazette lasted only for two years.
His Gazette ceased publication prematurely in 1782. In
February, 1784 appeared the Calcutta Gazette. The Calcutta
Gazette carried authentic news. Though a semi-official
newspaper, it had the widest coverage of news, gathered
from official and non-official sources. From the many
advertisements, notices and letters to the editors, we come
to know that the circulating library of John Andrews flou-
rished quite well.

However during the middle 1780s Andrews mainly
announced the sale of books at his library; one such
advertisement ran as follows:

"For sale at the Library, the following choice and
valuable collection of books. Mr. Andrews begs leave to
recommend them, as they are the best editions and newly
imported."  

Andrews seems to have closed his library by 1786,
but in the following year in the Calcutta Gazette, James
Shakell, a proprietor announced the opening of a 'New
Library' in Calcutta.
James Shakell became partner of the India Gazette after the sudden death of John Hay in March 1787 and also took over his predecessor's other business ventures i.e. the bookseller's and stationer's shop and the new circulating library.

In an announcement Shakell announced that his circulating library would render service superior to that attained to any other institution of this kind in the country.

The announcement ran as follows:

"Mr. Shakell having now arranged his late purchases by the last ships and completed his catalogue presumes to assure the public, that they will find his Circulating Library, well worthy of their patronage - catalogues will be delivered to all subscribers and every exertion used for their accommodation. Mr. Shakell will particularly take care that a copy of every new publication, which he has taken proper measures to be regularly supplied with, shall be returned for the use of the Library, and from the attention which will in future be paid in conducting it, he has no doubt, in a short time, of rendering it superior to anything of the kind before attempted in this country."

At the same time Shakell continued with his book trade and announced the sale of a valuable collection.
Like his predecessor, Shakell received good response from the public.

However, in August 1787 his brief stay at the India Gazette office ended when he was replaced by George Gordon, who had lately returned from Europe.²¹

During his five months at the India Gazette Press Shakell also printed a number of works, but of his subsequent printing career nothing at all has been found perhaps he never printed again. In December 1787 his circulating library was taken over, together with the library belonging to Messrs Macdonald and Arnott, which too had a very short life, by booksellers Messrs. Cock, Maxwell & Co.²²

In an advertisement in the Calcutta Gazette Messrs. Cock, Maxwell & Co. announced their new venture to the public:

"Calcutta Circulating Library

Messrs. Cock, Maxwell & Co. having purchased both the circulating libraries, opened in Calcutta, by Messrs. Macdonald & Arnott and Mr. Shakell, they take this opportunity of informing their friends and the public, that they are now united into one General Library to be kept for the present, at the house lately occupied by Messrs. Macdonald & Arnott."²³
The monthly subscription of eight sicca rupees was considered reasonable in light of the expenses involved. The firm also announced that catalogue of the new circulating library and also of the very extensive collection of books for sale was being printed and would very soon be distributed to the subscribers.24

They also declared that their books in the library would be arranged according to the catalogue and this arrangement having never been attempted in Calcutta before, would enable users to find any book quickly.

The efforts of Messrs. Cock, Maxwell & Co. were highly enterprising. They were not satisfied with keeping only a circulating library in Calcutta alone; they expanded their activity. They decided to open new circulating libraries, for the first time, at some other places where the size of the European population was considerably high. For this they selected Berhampore (Bengal), Dinapore (Bihar) and Cawnpore (Uttar Pradesh). In two consecutive issues of the Calcutta Gazette, they announced:

"Calcutta Circulating Library

Messrs. Cock, Maxwell & Co., conceiving that a circulating library on the same plan with that at the Presidency would be found a great convenience to gentlemen at a distance who can not procure books otherwise than by purchase, and they
having now so large a collection on hand as to enable them
to divide the same, and yet retain a sufficient number for
the use of Calcutta, they propose establishing a library at
Berhampore, and also a correspondent at Dinapore and Cawnpore
with books for circulation at those stations, and their vicin­
ity, provided a sufficient number of subscribers shall be
found to defray expenses. And for the accommodation of the
gentlemen in the medical line, at the different stations
above mentioned, they will furnish a collection of the most
approved ancient and modern authors on Medicine, Surgery,
Anatomy, and Chemistry.

Should their plan meet with approbation, the subscri­
bbers may be assured that no pains or expenses will be spared
to render it useful. The subscriptions are to be the same as
in Calcutta, viz., 8 sicca rupees per month.

Public notice will soon be given of the person who will
receive subscriptions at the different stations. In the mean­
time such gentlemen as may approve the plan will be pleased to
signify the same to Messrs. Cock, Maxwell & Co. in Calcutta. 25

We, however, do not know whether this plan of Messrs.
Cock, Maxwell & Co. was at all implemented. All we learn is
that Calcutta Circulating Library was shifted sometimes in
February, 1788, from the house of Messrs. Macdonald & Arnott
to No. 13 in Court House Street. 26
In spite of the efforts of the proprietors, the Calcutta Circulating Library ceased operation in 1792. The sheriff of Calcutta later notified the public of an auction of the belonging of the Calcutta Circulating Library, including about thirty-seven book cases.\(^{27}\)

By 1792 Calcutta Circulating Library had ceased to function and Joseph Cooper in October that year opened his own circulating library,\(^{28}\) even printing one work with the imprint 'from the library press'. In April 1797 a Mr. P. Mathison started a New Calcutta Library\(^{29}\) in competition with Cooper and next moved its premises to Doctor Dinwiddie's late lecture room, in the upper apartments of Messrs. Thomson, Ferris and Greenway's Printing Office, No.1, Old Court House Street.\(^{30}\)

An idea of the size of the stock of the library may be gained from the sale of the New Calcutta Library in November 1800, the advertisement for which mentioned 'upwards of 3,500 volumes.'\(^{31}\)

During the first half of the nineteenth century there came in existence an important circulating library, which was not kept by any book-seller or any sales proprietor. The library was run by the Bengal Hurkaru,\(^{32}\) which deserves the honour of being the first daily newspaper in Calcutta. Like some other early newspapers of the 18th century the Bengal
Hurkaru (in the notice called 'Hircarrah') first appeared as a weekly and continued as a weekly until 1819, when it became a daily.

The proprietors of the Hurkaru managed to combine three functions simultaneously—publication of the newspaper, the sale of books and running of the circulating library. The entire organization was owned and run by Samuel Smith & Co. The Hurkaru Circulating Library had a good collection of books and an efficient management; its proprietors possibly had learned from the experiences of their many predecessors.

A very fair picture of the Hurkaru Circulating Library may be gained from the notices relating to terms of subscription and the rules governing the lending of books, which published in the Bengal Hurkaru from time to time:

"Subscribers in the first class, at a sicca rupees eight per mensem are entitled to three or more sets of books, not exceeding eight volumes at a time; also to all novels, plays, pamphlets and periodical publications, immediately on their arrival. Subscribers at the second class, at sicca rupees six per mensem, are entitled to two or more sets of books not exceeding six volumes a time; also the new novels, plays and pamphlets, on their arrival; and the periodical publications in the course of the month on which they are received in Calcutta."
"Subscribers in the third class, at sicca rupees four per mensem, are entitled equally with subscribers in the first and second classes, to all books in the library, published before 1st January, 1821, in the proportion of one set or not more than four volumes at a time; but not to the new novels, plays, pamphlets or periodical publications.

N.B.

Subscribers to the Hurkaru Circulating Library in addition to the above advantages, are entitled to the use of library reading room which intended expressly for their accommodation and furnished with all the Calcutta newspapers of the day; Directories; English, Bengal, Madras and Bombay. Army and Navy lists; pen, ink, paper and every requisite for general convenience of the subscribers."

"Subscribers to the Bengal Hurkaru newspaper are also entitled to use of the reading room where all the advantages they afford are at their service including the perusal of the newspapers of this Presidency and those of Madras, Bombay, Ceylon, Pennang, Mauritius, and Cape, etc. but the library stock of books, though large does not permit the proprietors with reference to prior claim of the subscribers, to offer the subscribers to the newspaper the privilege of taking books etc., away with them unless they be also subscribers to the library."
The terms relating to subscription and the added notes clearly spelled out the distinction among the library subscribers of different categories and the subscribers only to the Hurkaru newspaper and their privileges. This classifying was quite in tune with the practice of the time, and the proprietors were careful not to offend patrons of any category. As such, while the circulating library continued, the Hurkaru also continued with the sale of books at its library.34

The advertisement below in the Bengal Hurkaru is of much interest to us; it bears witness to the high quality of the collections of the Hurkaru Library, and also shows that there was a large demand for classics:

"For sale at the Hurkaru Library
Auctores classici, in 105 volumes, elegantly half bound, containing as follow:

- Ammianus Mercellinus
- Apuleius
- Julius Caesar
- Casimiri Carmina
- Catullus
- Tibullus and Propertius
- $C
- Celsus
- Curtius
- Ciceronis Opera Claudianus
- Valerivs Flaccus
- Flores and Ampelius
- Frontinus
- Anlus Gellius
- Horatius
- Jestinus
- Lactantius
- T. Livius
- Lucanus
- Lucretius
- Macrobius
- Martialis
- Corn. Nepos
- Ovidious
- Perisius and Juvenal Petronius
- Phaedrus
- Plinii Hist.
- Nat.
- Pilini Epistolae
- Plautus
- Quintilianus
- Sallustius
- Scriptores Historiae Aug
- Scriptores Rei Rustae
- Seneca Rhetor
- Seneca Philosophus
Although apparently successful, the impending closure of the library was announced by its proprietors in June 1832:

"Messrs. Samuel Smith and Co., proprietors of the Bengal Hurkaru Circulating Library having long since given up book selling as a branch of their business, and being desirous to relinquish also their circulating library will be happy to receive offers for its purchase."

From the frequent announcements about Hurkaru Library in the Calcutta Gazette, it appears that this Library flourished quite well. Nearly twenty eight years later, the closure of the Hurkaru Circulating Library was still being lamented. Referring to it in 1860, the author of the article 'Calcutta in the Olden Time - Its people', published in the Calcutta Review (1860) said:
"Old Libraries are few, one of them was the late Hurkaru one, but at an auction of books this year rare old volumes were sold for a few annas to sirkars, and thus a valuable collection has been scattered; it contained some of the Calcutta newspapers of last century which are not known to be had."36

However when the final curtain was drawn on the Hurkaru Circulating Library in 1832, the founding of the Calcutta Public Library was still nearly four years away.

The tradition of the proprietary subscription library continued in vogue until the mid - 1830s, before the establishment of the Calcutta Public Library. These libraries owed their growth and existence mainly to the expanding population of Englishmen in Calcutta and the popular demand for books as a means of amusement and relaxation.

Apart from proprietary libraries, some newer trends were reflected in the establishment of libraries, literary societies, academic libraries, reading rooms or clubs in Calcutta during this period.

The Asiatic Society was established in 1784 by Sir William Jones with the objective 'to enquire into the History, and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia.' From the beginning the society attained an esteemed position from learned individuals. Soon after its foundation
various kinds of library materials and museum objects namely books, papers, manuscripts, drawings, copperplates, and other articles were being presented to the society. These gifts formed the nucleus of an accumulating and expanding library, and of a museum later years. The society and its library was first located at the office of Sir William Jones. It was ultimately shifted to the present location of the society at the Park Street, Calcutta. Prior to 1830, Indians were debarred from the membership of this Society and the library attached to it.\(^{37}\)

The Asiatic Society has had a spectacular role through subsequent history, being the repository of rare and valuable resources. It provided encouragement and incentive to scholarly studies and investigation into Indian history, culture and tradition, among both Europeans and Indians.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the following educational institutions were established in undivided Bengal: Fort William College (1800), Hindu College (1817), Serampur College (1818), Oriental Seminary (1823), Sanskrit College (1824), General Assembly (1830). Gradually libraries were also developed in these institutions.\(^{38}\)

Though the Fort William College was established in 1800 A.D. to help the English civilians to learn Indian
languages, its library was open to the citizens of Calcutta. This library had a good collection of books and manuscripts on Indology. After the dissolution of the college in 1830, its rich collection was distributed to the libraries of London, the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and to the Calcutta Public Library.

In 1819 several gentlemen established Calcutta Library Society. Although a proprietary society, it was called a public library. Some proprietors invested money and lent books in exchange of subscription. It was a library, not an adjunct to any business unit, and had an independent existence. The documentary evidence regarding the library can be traced back to the Calcutta Journal of 1819.

The Society opened with a collection of 2,700 volumes and received almost every month an addition of select new publications from England. In a meeting of the proprietors on March 29 they decided:

- "No subscribers shall in future be admitted.
- Those who were already subscribers had the option of becoming proprietors by paying only 160 rupees according to the original terms of donation.
- The monthly subscription of proprietors be raised from 6 to 8 rupees, from the 1st of April, 1819.
- After the 1st of May, 1819 the donation of those wishing to become proprietors shall be 200 rupees."
Calcutta Library Society received a mixed reception from the Calcutta citizens. Several months after its opening, 'zeno' in a letter to the press exhorted the citizens about the noble intention of the institution and urged liberal support by the public. Further details about the society, the development of the library etc. were given in the letter published under the signature of 'zeno' in the Calcutta Journal of 1820.42

Evidence indicates that the Calcutta Library Society continued to operate until late 1831, after which the name of the Society did not appear in Bengal Directory, nor in any other contemporary directories or almanacs.

Although apparently successful, the impending closure of the Calcutta Library Society was announced in the Bengal Hurkaru at the beginning of 1832.43 The notice that appeared in the Bengal Hurkaru on January 6, 1832 said that a committee was appointed to adjust the affairs of the Society. The committee, however failed to procure a sufficient number of gentlemen as subscribers for the continuation of the institution and shareholders were notified that Messrs. Leyburn and Co. would dispose of the books at auction.

On January 16, 1832 Leyburn notified the public that on January 20, 1832, precisely at noon, they would put up and positively sell to the highest bidder in one lot, the
entire library in the great room of their auction premises in Lal Bazar. This was the end of the Calcutta Library Society after an existence of nearly thirteen years. However, the trend in founding institutions of a collective nature remained in vogue for sometime.\footnote{44}

In the early 30's of the nineteenth century there was a trend to establish reading rooms with daily newspapers and periodicals both local and foreign. The reading rooms were mainly designed to provide the members with light reading and current information and some games. The sponsors of one such Billiard and Reading Rooms (Bengal subscription Billiard and Reading Rooms) announced that their reading room was planned after those available in the West End of London.\footnote{45}

The place was illuminated with gaslight and provided with local and foreign newspapers, Navy and Army lists, directories, etc. The Reading Rooms, however, had a very brief existence. In 1832, Messrs. Leyburn and Co. announced the auction of the Bengal subscription Billiard and Reading Rooms.\footnote{46}

The libraries, described in the previous paragraphs were established with a motivation behind. The motivation was to increase the reading awareness. The immigrants who came to Calcutta in those days, had various tastes and diverse responsibilities, from administration to commercial activities. Apart from the scholars and academicians, the others cannot be expected to possess a taste for reading for reading's sake.
They had social lives in parties, meetings, week-end outings etc. It can be imagined how much foresight the early pioneers of library establishment possessed. Moreover, in those days of poor communication and lack of insufficient publicity media, how difficult it was to sell the ideas and needs of libraries. Books were few, local publications worth the name were almost unheard of, journal magazines, good newspapers etc. were not worth the name, only shipments of books from England, some local and foreign newspapers were the only source of a library. Whether the early pioneers had the experience of running a library is not known; at least our sources are silent in this regard. Under these circumstances, the efforts of the pioneers cannot be but amateurish.

But one thing cannot escape our notice - though the attempts were sporadic and amateurish in the beginning, the idea of the needs of library services gradually filtered down among the members of the European community. Inspite of the limitations; the attempts of these early pioneers were laudable enough. The attempts served two-fold purposes: a) general awareness for reading; b) formal organisation for the running of library services. From John Andrews to Calcutta Library Society is thus an onward journey, though not smooth, paved the way for new enterprises. Andrews' was an individual effort, Calcutta Library Society was a group enterprise. This was a silver lining. The beginning of
subscription circulating libraries set off a new phase in the growth and development of public libraries in Bengal. These libraries, although mainly originating with book trade and despite their proprietary and commercial nature, had the characteristics of public libraries. It offered reading rooms, extended lending facilities, displayed books, and facilitated direct contact with books. They created reading awareness and paved the ways for future library awareness. John Andrews, perhaps the pioneer, operated from 1770 and inspired others. Calcutta Library Society moved a step ahead to throw open its gates to the public initiating them to become proprietor as shareholders.

However, these libraries were the products of the period and hence were bound by the constraints of the period. Lacking the participation and widespread involvement of the local population forced all the proprietary libraries to become insular or closed. Mass literacy among the natives were not encouraging, so these libraries could not penetrate among the masses. But they sowed the seed, became the pioneers. Herein lies their contribution. Immensely valuable experience, however, was gained from the proprietary circulating libraries. It was realised that without adequate participation by people at all levels, a library could not be sustained for long. This awareness built up a momentum that demonstrated itself to the founding of the Calcutta Public Library in 1836.
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2. William (or William) Bolts was born in Holland in 1735 and went to England about the year 1749 where he served apprenticeship in a merchant office. He found his way to Calcutta in the summer of 1760 after getting an appointment as a Factor in the East India Company's service in November 1759. He had petitioned the Court of Directors of the Company in the usual mode for admission into service. There was a great dearth of civil servants in Bengal in 1759 following the sack of Siraj-ud-Daulah in 1757 during the course of which a number of Englishmen had died in Black-Hole prison. Bolts's appointment as a Factor, a grade next to that of a writer, was due to these circumstances.


This notice has been reproduced by H.E. Busteed, Echoes from Old Calcutta ... (London: Thacker, 1908), p.182.


15. Ibid., 21 October 1780.

16. Ibid., 31 January 1781.


18. India Gazette, 19 March 1787.


20. Ibid., 27 September 1787.
21. *India Gazette*, 13 August 1787.
22. Ibid., 17 December 1787.
24. Ibid., 7 February 1788.
25. Ibid., 14 and 21 February 1788.
28. Ibid., 13 September 1792.
29. Ibid., 2 March 1797.
30. Ibid., 5 July 1798.
31. Ibid., 6 November 1800.
38. Ibid., p.6.
39. Ibid., p. 5.
41. Ibid., p. 68.
42. *Appendix I*.
43. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 6 January 1832.
45. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 27 April 1830.
46. Ibid., 27 January 1832.