In tune with the culture, customs and heritage of India, Libraries also have a rich historical past covering more than six thousand years. Perhaps, the oldest Library system in the form of Ambulatory Library can be credited to India. Eventhough, the Libraries at Nalanda and Taxila gained international prominence as early as 600 B.C., modern Libraries have come to exist on account of the advent of the Britishers and their initiative. Libraries gained importance and prominence as means of science transformation on account of the efforts of social reformists and educationists. Consequently hundreds of Public Libraries were established in different communities, in the pre-Independence period.

In Independent India there were many efforts to strengthen and to streamline the Public Libraries. However due to lack of political will, red tapism of bureaucracy complasence of local leaders and population, the Public Libraries became stagnant. Even the researchers in Library science, somehow, paid very little attention to study the problems of Public Libraries. It is in this context with the background of social work and Library Science and with experience gained as Librarian, it is felt
that a study on Rural Public Library system has to be undertaken.

During the attempts of collecting literature on Public Libraries it was felt further that studies on Library vis-a-vis the community have been limited to one or two and thus the attempt became more concrete and the objective was finally confined to study the Rural Public Libraries in Anantapur district.

The focus of the current study is to explore for the first time about the historical development of Public Libraries in Anantapur district and to study the Library materials, services and user practices of Rural Public Libraries. The district at the time of study had 88 Public Libraries including 72 Rural Public Libraries. The limitations of time, resources and the needs of data are overcome and fulfilled with the active support, help and guidance of many people concerned with Libraries in Anantapur district. An opportunity is availed here to thank, if not all, at least a few of them.

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P.S. SOMAYAJULU