Chapter 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Problem Restated

This study had set out to examine the present university and college libraries environment in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, introspect it and purpose a model for establishment of a resources sharing programme as a solution to the maladies facing these libraries. Accordingly the study described the political and educational settings within which these libraries operated, assessed and evaluated the libraries to identify the areas where these libraries faced problems, examined the needs of the academics and the ways in use to meet academics' requirements; and, finally, ventured to propose how these libraries could evolve a resources sharing programme through cooperative collection development, centralized processing and expansion of service with mechanisms of common membership, joint sophisticated services and exchange of materials. A set of hypotheses was
Methodology

Different research designs were employed in the accumulation of data. Considerable reliance was made on documentary information and official records for assessment and evaluation. Questionnaires were designed for academics and the librarians to ascertain the pattern of the library needs and estimation of certain library activities by the academics, and to collect more information on libraries from the librarians. Several interviews were also conducted to determine how far a resources sharing programme would be supported by users of these libraries, those who control them and those who operate them. The data thus collected was analyzed, tabulated and interpreted to arrive at sure and certain conclusions.

Findings

The present plight of these libraries was found distressing and quite contrary to the letter and spirit of the profession. Almost all the libraries were found pining silently for the touch of the healing hand. The major findings are:

-- The collections of monographs and serials were inadequate, and despite regular additions every year involving huge expenditures, they were not becoming extensive enough to meet academics, mounting requirements for education and research.
An examination of the characteristics of patrons' needs as reflected in inter-library lending demonstrated that journals were the single most important material for which there were the most urgent needs; that the dominant language of the requested materials was English; and that an overwhelming majority of requests were for recent materials.

Lack of selection policies and absence of selection aids had compounded the problem and had resulted in staggering duplications and acquisition of materials not in keeping with the academic-ics requirements.

Operations were a major causality in several libraries affecting adversely the proper organization of collections and provision of services; most of the libraries including two University libraries had no up-to-date public catalogues.

Services' were lacking on several fronts and were limited to obsolete methods of circulation and conservative reference service; consequently the exploitation of library resources was quite limited.

In several cases the physical facilities were scarce; in degree colleges it was more acute as they had no proper accommodation to house the materials and provide physical facilities to their patrons.

The political and educational settings within which these libraries operated and the emerging national scene on the library horizon, both indicated that the environment in the state was conducive for initiating a resources sharing programme which would transform into a network in due course.

Evaluation of present resources and the expressed needs of the users made it abundantly clear that there was need and scope for initiating a resources sharing programme to remedy the present maladies facing these libraries over the years.

All these findings corroborated the statement of hypothesis formulated for this study in the beginning which stated that despite spending huge sums of money University and college libraries in Jammu and Kashmir were not offering services fully responsive to the patrons' needs; that the national and local environment was favourable for any
move towards resources sharing; and that cooperative rather than competitive development of resources was the only way to vitalize these libraries to contribute positively in the field of education and research.

Implications of the findings

The data on the holdings of University and college libraries in the state would suggest the establishment of coordinated schemes for collection development to avoid duplications, overlappings and irrelevant additions rampant among them. This would require the constitution of a collection development committee that will consider and formulate a cooperative collective development policy, guidelines for selection, acquisition for subject specialization on the basis of subject strengths and a set of guidelines for common selection, evaluation and planned programme for acquisition. A methodology for assessment of the adequacy of the present holdings will be developed by the committee to determine the strengths and weakness of the collections against the requirements of the programmes of the institutions. This plan would lead to the development of system that would eliminate the drawbacks in the present collection development activities in the individual institutions leading to savings for acquisitions of urgently needed and more relevant materials and improvement of services.

The finding that the journals were most sought after of all the materials implied common access to the journals
holdings of all the libraries. This facility is proposed to
be provided through a common membership and improvement and
expansion of inter library loan transactions. As it was
found that there was not much overlapping in journals sub-
scriptions a common access facility would ensure to the
patrons availability of a wide range of journals subscribed
to by all the libraries. College academics would benefit
from the facility the most as their libraries subscribed to
a negligible number of journals and thus lacked presently
the facility for keeping current with the literature of
their respective fields of interest.

The observation of academics regarding the inadequacy
of their library resources for education and research also
pointed to the necessity of developing coordinated scheme
for acquisition as referred to earlier. Planning for such
schemes may also require emphasis on assigning to each
library the geographical and subject areas in which the
institution was found to be having bibliographic strength.
Geographical factor becomes all the more important because
of the geographical location of the two divisions separated
by a rough and hilly distance of about 300 kilometers. To
improve further the climate for research, there is also a
need to organize the thesis submitted to the institutions of
higher education in the state at two places, one each in
Jammu and Srinagar., the two University libraries being the
best choice.
The orderly organization of materials and maintenance of public catalogues are the chief characteristics of libraries of all types because it is an established fact that they are the sine qua non for any library service. The study revealed that most of the libraries suffered severely on this front. It is, therefore, essential to develop a mechanism that will ensure taking maximum care of these activities. This implied the creation of a system that will provide for classifying and cataloguing of all the materials of the libraries at a central place by professionally matured and enthusiastic specialists. As common items in collections are inevitable, centralized processing will eliminate cataloging of such items at each library. Such an arrangement would lead to economy, efficiency and speedy processing. As most of the libraries processing the materials in the professional way use same scheme of classification and code of cataloging the centralized processing could easily be developed for the common benefit. It would also promote uniformity in processing. It has been proposed to establish two processing centers, one each in Jammu and Srinagar.

As a union catalogue is one of the most fundamental requirements of a resources sharing programme, the centralized processing would also pave the way for the compilation of such a catalogue that would serve as a state-wide bibliographic data base for resources sharing. As the central processing centres would be processing the fresh arrivals compilation of union catalogue for such arrival is not
difficult. But inclusion of present holdings would require a serious exercise. For this purpose two alternatives have been describes. In the first place all the participating libraries may be required to prepare entries for their present holdings in accordance with the standards laid down for the union catalogue. This will require a great deal of involvement of all the libraries which they might find it difficult to do because of inadequate staff, professional deficiencies and lack of other resources. The alternative proposed here is to entrust this work to the two processing centres which will create master copies of their own holdings and of one or two other libraries and circulate them among all other libraries for indicating the status of possession or otherwise. The individual libraries would be required to prepare entries for their unique titles according to the standards used for master copies. The use of computers at the two proposed processing centres would be inevitable for economy and efficiency as well as for the future prospects of total automation and integration into a network.

The overall plan has been proposed to be entrusted to a State level committee with a membership comprising of experts on various activities involved in the plan. The committee will negotiate, determine and enforce standards and formats to be used. The plan further calls for designating two regional centres one each in Jammu and Kashmir divisions to undertake centralized processing and compile
the regional union catalogues and house the State union catalogue.

The findings indicated that the services were, by and large, obsolete and conservative, and thus implied total overhauling and gearing them up to provide modern sophisticated, liberal and responsive services. It was also observed that the problems of serving the patrons and making resources useful and available were caused by two hindrances:

1. Lack of knowledge of the literature of the subjects by the patrons;
2. Libraries failure to provide appropriate reference and bibliographical assistance.

To tackle these problems the plan included unified and cooperative bibliographic services and the compilation of a union catalogue and its availability in all the libraries. It has also been proposed to provide adequate qualified staff at the reference desks in these libraries so that adequate reference service is available in each library. It has also been emphasized to plan effective users education programmes to enhance exploitation of library resources. As acquisition and processing is proposed to be centralized, the individual libraries could spare staff and time for attending to these important facets of service.

The model also stressed the need for modern sophisticated information services like current awareness service and selective dissemination of information to be offered from selected libraries for the benefit of all the patrons.
of all the libraries. The selection of libraries for this service was proposed on the bases of journals subscription strength and the availability of qualified staff.

In order to develop qualified human resources well-trained to operate libraries in this new environment, it has been proposed to revamp the library and information science education programmes in the two universities of Jammu and Srinagar. It has also been proposed to do away with the practice of reserving seats for untrained library staff at Bachelors level to check the entry into the profession of academic refugees who willy-nilly manage to secure jobs without professional education despite the availability of professionally educated young men and women. The course contents in the programmes of these schools also needed 'weeding' to purge them of the obsolete and revitalize them with relevant, modern concepts of scientific management, cost effective services, automation, users education, outreach services, information dissemination and a host of modern sophisticated ideas that have moved the library world a great deal. For the working professionals a scheme of seminars and workshops has been proposed as a step towards their continuing professional development.

The analysis of the data also revealed that academics requested items in the form of photocopies. It was also found that reliance on libraries outside the state was also conditioned on their conviction that organizational and
infrastructural facilities, such as photocopying services, were better developed there than they were locally in the state. This calls for a need to improve the quality and reliability of photocopying facilities in the academic libraries and in the state. On this score, libraries might consider the standardization of such facilities and the design of a joint maintenance programme for xeroxing facilities.

The physical facilities, there can be no two opinions, have a strong impact on a library's overall performance. It was found in this study that such facilities were conspicuous by their scarcity in almost all the degree college libraries in the state. Even in University and professional college libraries these facilities were found not up to the mark. In most of the degree colleges, the libraries were housed in portions of the buildings not usable for classrooms or any other activity. The space was found inadequate; lighting and hygienic conditions were bad; stacks and stands essential for proper display or materials were lacking; and, sitting facilities for patrons and staff was less than scanty. Larger libraries encountered large problems. Iqbal Library had no elevator facility badly required to reach the upper floors. Moreover, the libraries in Kashmir need some central heating system because the winters here are chilly and the traditional heating tools were no more useful. The smoke filled the libraries that was detrimental to the health of both the materials and the humans.
It was, therefore, essential to take steps for improvement of physical facilities as a move towards improvement of services. A phase-wise programme might lead to better possibility or undertaking this business.

In order to reduce the space problem in libraries, it has been proposed to establish a common storage facility for such materials which are not in frequent use. Because of the availability of space and personnel the common storage facility has been proposed to be established at the two University Libraries of Jammu and Srinagar.

The telecommunications, postal and transport facilities in the State are very poor and the academics and librarians could do little for their improvement. The transport services, both land and air, between the Jammu and Srinagar faced disruptions and even blockade because of the weather conditions. And the rail link between the two was a distant dream. Consequently, a pressing need would seem to be the establishment of a reliable and efficient courier service for carrying materials, inter library transactions and the like among the various libraries within and between the two divisions of the State.

For proper establishment and successful implementation of a resources sharing programme there is always need for a favourable political and educational set-up. For the state both local and national level set-up was found favourable. The state administration has evinced great interest in
improvement of library services and the provision of adequate library support to education and research. This was demonstrated by allocation of huge amounts of funds for these libraries and granting an academic status to the professionals. During the interviews the administrators had welcome the idea of the resources sharing programme and assured of total support provided a viable plan was developed by the professionals in consultation with the academics who were the ultimate beneficiaries of the plan.

Nationally, the UGC and the National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT) of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research were engaged in developing, promoting and supporting resources sharing programmes throughout the country. The UGC has the most ambitious programme of networking of University, college and other libraries in the country into what is called INFLIBNET. It has taken some strides in this direction and has sanctioned funds for several libraries for automation including the Jammu University in our state. Likewise, the NISSAT has been sponsoring and supporting programmes like CALIBNET, DELNET, MALIBNET, PUNENET, etc. The CALIBNET has become operational in December, 1993 with 1.5 crores investment by the NISSAT. Naturally, it should have no reservations to support a programme for the state.

It might be pertinent to highlight here that the resources sharing programme is further recommended because it
has the greatest potential for fulfilling mutual needs and ensuring maximum exploitation of resources by maximum number of clients. Even with the present limitations of tools, technology and other paraphernalia the resources sharing would be both possible and practical; it would greatly improve library services; and it will be the first important step towards the ultimate goal of designing a resources sharing network in the state. The last point needs some stress in the sense that for any renovation programme the starting point should be where we are, not the point where we would like to be. In a situation when even the University libraries lacked the basic tools, services and professional human resources talking in terms of networking with out doing the necessary spade work would tantamount to acquiring an aeroplane without the provisions of landing and take off facilities. Creation of the ground for networking has been the single main aim of this study. But it requires a collective endeavour of apical dimensions on the part of all those concerned to do the ground work, as proposed in this study, that will lead to remoulding of the libraries and reconstructing their texture.

In view of all these grim realities it has been proposed to conduct a feasibility study by assembling and assessing the relevant facts and figures about the present holdings, operations and services of the libraries. This has been proposed to be followed by a top decision by educational authorities, academics and the librarians in favour of a
resources, sharing programme. Once the agreement has been reached, the plan would set moving in the right direction.

It has been proposed to establish a resources sharing committee that will prepare a broad policy statement that will guide the planning for the resources sharing programme. The committee should comprise of educational administrators, academics and libraries to make it fully representative. It has been also proposed to constitute other committees and subcommittees for various activities like collection development, processing, servicing and the like.

Conclusion

The University and college libraries in Jammu and Kashmir are ailing. They pine in silence for the touch of the healing hand. These libraries are not able to build comprehensive collections that their patrons want and need because of knowledge explosion, zooming prices and mounting patrons requirements; they abound in materials that are remotely relevant to their patrons requirements because they lack adequate, planned selection policies; their services are feeble as they are not positioned to offer active, responsive and sophisticated services; they hold materials which patrons of other libraries could exploit to intellectualize as they needed them, but these other patrons had no access to them, nor did they know about them because there were no bibliographic tools to announce their presence in different libraries; they do not organize their collections
properly nor did they maintain up-to-date catalogues; and they do not organize their collections properly nor do they take measures to preserve them because they lacked proper housing and preservation facilities. These libraries do receive funds, buy materials and provide some service but those are quite insufficient to meet the requirements of their patrons to any satisfactory degree. It has been found that they are aging and seem to have outlived their utility and relevance to the modern academic community.

There is urgent need for their rejuvenation so that they are robust to market their services to the satisfaction of their patrons and of their own profession. The only panacea to cure the maladies facing tense libraries is found to be the adoption of the theory and practice of resources sharing which has worked wonders throughout the world and is, therefore, pleaded vehemently at international, national and other levels. There are no hurdles whatsoever in switching over to resources sharing in the state. Rather the incentives are available, particularly at national level. Moreover, it is no longer resources that limit decisions, it is the decision that makes the resources. What is needed, therefore, is to proceed in this direction with a strong will and professional commitment.

The study examined the present university and college libraries environment in the state and attempted to propose a resources sharing model -- first of its kind in the state, though no claim is made to regard it as complete and final.
More hard work might be required for further consideration of several aspects. The consultation with, and expert advice, of, the information technologists might be useful at one stage or the other. However, the study did the digging, laid the foundation and provided the building blocks. The most important point now is to begin.