Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

We live in an information age. The arrival of this age was heralded by popular writers on social change like Alvin Toffler, Bell and others. Toffler, for example, wrote of a revolution sweeping society into an 'info-sohere' which was transforming the work force from one that endures long hours of physical effort into one that is dependent on information\(^{(1)}\). For Bell "a post industrial society is basically an information society"\(^{(2)}\). Berkeley describes this phenomenon as "information revolution"\(^{(3)}\).

The important point to note, and relevant here, was that information was a very vital resource in all human enterprises as fundamental as resources in money, machine and other ingredients of development. Today this awareness was so great and conspicuous that it was now internationally recognised that information was a basic resource in all spheres of human activity whose generation consumed time and
energy, whose use conserved time and money and whose value and importance was immense in all human enterprises.

Historically, libraries have provided a meaningful structure for relating information in ways that facilitates accomplishment of all enterprises in which the societal beings were engaged worldwide. With the emergence of information technology, development of new formats for information packaging and mechanisms for information processing, storing and transfer, the libraries, in order to remain relevant to the changing societal needs, had been building new images and revamping their structures, operations and services.

However, certain developments have crippled the smooth functioning of libraries of all types a great deal. Flooding information, zooming prices, mounting information needs and their diversification, increased information consumption, all have brought tremendous pressures on libraries of all types everywhere. Magnitude and dimensions of the problems were so great that libraries now failed, and failed miserably, to deliver goods to any degree of satisfaction.

Fillip to education, its changed conceptualization and the resultant new pedagogy, and the rat race for research in all walks of life have brought many more responsibilities to academic libraries which have further compounded their maladies. There was a time, not long ago, when in academic institutions the provision of adequate library services used
to be a benign neglect, here and there, almost everywhere. But of late it has been appreciated that these services are vital in academic pursuits and in bringing about academic excellence essential in preparing young generations to work and live in the information age. It is now widely recognized that unless libraries are integrated into the curriculum and the focus of campuses shifts from faculty teaching to student learning no real change will occur in ailing educational systems. This is the special message to academics that is abundantly clear in the new Education Policy announced in 1986 in India(4).

In order to overcome the hurdles among libraries everywhere, resources sharing has been believed to be the positive force to enable them to accomplish their goals. This belief widespread in the developed world where modern cooperative activities originated and matured, is found particularly important in the planning of library and information services in developing and underdeveloped regions, where resources are limited and needs are great. For, these regions need well-qualified human resources for research and development to bring about progress and prosperity in all walks of life. To provide qualified human resources competent-enough to fulfil the needs of the society, it is not important to have well-trained and well-equipped faculties alone, but direct access to well-established information resources is equally significant.
The object of the present investigation is to study the prevailing library environment among university and college libraries in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, determine the extent of its effectiveness and develop a model for resources sharing among them that will bring about improvement in the operations and services of these libraries. There are guidelines available for such cooperation\(^5\) or we can adopt the models of those who have developed sharing programmes. But doing so is neither advisable nor possible.

The nature and forms of library cooperation in any society evolve historically and are shaped by several factors like social, political and technological. According to Esdaile, "the political and social traditions of one country will produce quite different type of library services from those of another"\(^6\).

The study attempts to identify these peculiar factors in J&K and highlight their impact on any library cooperative activity. Specifically, it examines the characteristics of a suitable cooperation; assesses the perceptions and attitudes of some groups of people who are in a position to determine or influence policy decisions concerning cooperation; and, finally examines the implications of these findings for state level planning which can be compatible with the national planning for a network which is much talked about, and, as and when it comes up.
The study, it is hoped, will help to create an awareness about resources sharing among those who know it not and help those who know it but for whom it is like weather --- they all talk about it, yet none of them seems able to do much about it --- so that they play their vital role in implementing the theory and practice of resources sharing among libraries in the State.

Need for the Study

Most of the literature on resources sharing among libraries in areas where no such cooperation existed commence by recounting successful cooperative activities in other parts of the world, and by proposing their adoption in more or less modified versions. This approach was normally justified on the grounds that developing countries should learn from the mistakes of the developed world, and regard and use their advances as the collective heritage of all mankind. There is, of course, a built-in pitfall in this approach. Experience revealed that the application to country B of lessons learned in country A may be as much a source of error as of wisdom. Consequently, there is no substitute for a direct study of the peculiarities of the country B.

This is easily understandable. Institutions are not established, nor do they exist, in vacuum. They are there in an environment and thus develop their own characteristics. There is always a need as well as a scope to spot these
characteristics before prescriptions are made to change them to a new setting. Suggesting measures with tools and devices elaborated elsewhere was thus unrewarding.

Thus, there was need to suggest schemes and solutions based on objective data originating from detailed investigations. There still existed an urgent need for studies which place their primary emphasis on an examination of the characteristics and peculiarities of librarianship in the state of J&K. The study must take into consideration the present holdings of university and college libraries in the state, the deficiencies in these holdings as seen by the libraries' primary users, and the views of relevant sections of the society about library cooperation. This study is designed, in part, to fill this gap.

Furthermore, Jammu and Kashmir had embarked upon a gigantic expansion of its educational system, involving, among other things, the establishment of an Agricultural university, an institute of medical sciences and a number of degree colleges besides expanding the existing institutions. These institutions in their initial growing stages will probably depend heavily on the already established institutions for many of their urgent library requirements. By providing information on the strengths and patterns of the libraries, this study might aid the newer libraries to plan to meet the needs which are most seriously felt by academics within the state milieu, and also to complement the older libraries in the joint use of resources.
Finally, it is expected that the study of the peculiarities and characteristics of resources sharing in the state might prove useful to other states, and even other countries, which are in similar stages of development, though not in toto.

The Problem

Libraries, university and college libraries in particular, in Jammu and Kashmir were facing serious crisis on all fronts over the years. Individually they were not able to offer responsive services. Information flood, skyrocketing prices of their stock-in-trade and of costs of their maintenance, mounting and diversifying patrons' requirements and a host of allied problems have diminished their ability to market their services to the least degree of satisfaction. They lacked adequate collections and the collections they have built over the years were infected with obsolete materials; they have no sufficient funds to acquire fresh materials to build balanced, well-rounded and responsive collections; and, they do not have adequate professional staff to organize their libraries on sound professional principles and offer services in tune with the professional ethics.

The academics, too, were frustrated. They do not have access to quality information that they needed to exploit and intellectualize in their academic pursuits, and to keep current with their subject of interest essential for profes-
sional maturity. They do not find their libraries coming to their help and were disappointed over the poor performance of their libraries.

And, the university authorities and educational administrators too were facing uneasy situations and agreed that all was not well in the sphere of provision of library support to the academics and their programmes. They are pumping funds according to their means into these ailing libraries but see no signs of improvement in their performance. They now brand these libraries as 'bottomless pits'.

In order that these libraries are able to overcome their difficulties and turn into real 'brain of the academic community' and 'workshop for research' they had to shun their individualism and frame a resources sharing programme to contend against all that have reduced them to naught. This would mean a major shift in their present philosophy --- a shift from possession to access. In other words they were required to pool their resources in men, money, materials, machines and services in the larger interests of the academic community in the State.

But doing so called for focussing the lenses of introspection on our academic libraries, identify the maladies that deprive them of their sustaining sap and plan in keeping with the local environment with an eye on the future. This is the real problem — the problem that this study sets out to deal with.
Scope of the study

The study's paramount aim was to examine the present conditions of the university and college libraries in the state, measure their effectiveness and propose how these libraries could share their resources for better performance and thus pave the way for an effective networking of these libraries suitable to local conditions. To this end the study sets out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent did the holding of these libraries and the expressed needs of the primary users stimulate the beginning of a resources sharing programme among them;

2. What pattern existed in the attitude of administrators, faculty members, students and librarians to certain forms of resources sharing and methods of implementing them;

3. What institutions and organizations existed for stimulating and effecting resources sharing among university and college libraries in the state; and

4. To what extent did the political and educational setting within which these universities and colleges and their libraries developed provide a background favourable to resources sharing.

The libraries covered in the study include three universities -- the two universities of Jammu and Kashmir and University of Agriculture Science and Technology, four medical libraries, one Engineering College library, thirty degree college libraries and the RRL Jammu. The last one was added as it was found unavoidable because of the fact that this library was feeding all the libraries under study and thus had a strong influence on their performance.
Hypotheses

1. The political and educational environment in Jammu and Kashmir within which the universities and colleges and their libraries operated was conducive to any move towards developing a resources sharing network among these libraries.

2. National incentives and facilities were available to stimulate such activities in Jammu and Kashmir provided well-planned proposal were drawn in this direction.

3. The holdings of the University and College libraries and the expressed need of their users provide a basis for initiating measures to knit these libraries into a resources sharing programme.

4. The financial conditions of the State suggest that the money it spared for academic library services be pooled and utilized in ways that will mobilize adequate library support to education and research in the State.

5. There exists a discernible pattern in the attitudes of State education authorities, university and college faculty and students, and librarians to a form of library cooperation that will ensure for academics full and free access to all the academic libraries in the State.

6. Cooperative rather competitive development of the resources of university and college libraries should lead to a system that will equip each library to contribute positively to its institution's ability to fulfill its mission in the area of higher education it is dedicated to.

Methodology

Survey studies, as the one in hand, usually did not depend on a single method throughout. Specialists like Goode and Hatt(7), Babbie(8), and Best(9) have written extensively on various methods that could be employed in such research. All of them agree upon observation, interview and questionnaire methods. In this study, therefore, all the
three commonly-agreed methods were employed at various stages of investigation.

In the first instance a broad outline of the research design was developed on the basis of literature survey involving a study of primary and secondary sources relevant to, and available, on the subject. It includes a study of such materials as university calendars and reports, library committee minutes, inter-library loan files and several other records and materials available in universities and colleges, to collect some basic data relevant to the study.

This was followed by the construction of questionnaires designed to obtain relevant information about universities and colleges and their libraries, and also to investigate the attitude of concerned classes of people who might influence the policy decisions on resources sharing being pleaded for the State of Jammu and Kashmir through this study, and who would be the beneficiaries of the new arrangement in one way or the other. Accordingly two questionnaires were designed to be administrated to the following groups:

a) Faculty members;
b) Doctoral and post-graduate students;
c) Professional librarians in universities and colleges.

Following a letter of transmittal explaining the nature and purpose of the study and conveying the significance of the study, each of the questionnaire contained sections intended to elicit specific information from each
target group. The quality of a good questionnaire were kept in mind while constructing the body of the questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaires were designed as a mix of the questionnaire and opinionnaire. The questionnaires were pretested at the University of Kashmir to determine and improve the clarity of language and remove any ambiguities of thought and expression.

With the University of Kashmir as home base, visits were made to all the universities, medical colleges, Regional Engineering College. Regional Research Laboratory, most of the degree colleges and the State Department of Higher Education. At most of these places, the investigator conducted structured interviews with the help of the questionnaire. Notes were taken during interviews which were immediately amplified and transcribed. Various activities and operations were also observed on-spot on the occasion at several places. In-person interviewing was found very useful as it fetched more answers and resulted in fewer misunderstood questions. This approach has been recommended by Goudy and Moushey for library studies because of its advantages and they have specified the limitations of the questionnaire in these words:

"... questionnaire often has severe limitations as a method for obtaining information necessary to present a full view of the issue at hand. Checking answers that provide a brief and predefined statement often limits respondents in communicating any unique situations that are relevant to their situations\(^{10}\)."
With regards to the administration of the questionnaire, due care was taken to give a balanced coverage of all subject fields and of all classes of the concerned community.

The questionnaire distribution was both personal and postal. Earnest attempt was made to distribute the questionnaire personally but in certain cases this could not be done because of distance where these were sent by post. It was also observed that personal handing was more effective as it offered an opportunity to immediately clarify any ambiguities that were encountered by the respondents while filing them.

The questionnaires were collected according to the mode of distribution. Then followed their analysis details of which provided the building blocks for various chapters of the study that follow.
FOOTNOTES

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