Chapter 6

Suggested Model for the Integrated Role of Public Libraries and CICs

We are living in an information age where information plays a very vital role in the overall development of the society. The quality of life in an information society largely depends upon the information and its exploitation. Any country with adequate, up to date, accurate and extensive information can change its destiny. Information is a powerful tool which can transform the socio-economic status of any society, provided that it is used in an intelligent way and in a proper manner.

According to the Father of Nation 'Mahatma Gandhi', involvement of people from grass root level is of utmost importance in nation's growth and building. India is a developing country, having great diversity in language, culture, religion, geographic terrain and has a huge population where most of the people live in villages. Here, information delivery poses a big challenge because there is a huge gap between those who have access to information and those who do not have access to it. There is a dire need to overcome this gap by communicating with people and thus enable them to access the information that can be used for their well being. To solve the problems which are encountered by people in their day to day lives, community information is required and to fulfill these community information needs, Community Information Services (CISs) are needed.

Public libraries in India have a great potential to be local centres of information and learning for the deprived masses. These have the potential to make contributions to human capacity development, the spread of knowledge, preservation of local culture and indigenous traditions, literacy development, and so on. Public libraries have professionals, material/content and also these libraries are modernizing their services with changing times.

CICs are mainly setup to create strong IT base at grass root level. The establishment of CICs has been envisaged as a means to use the benefits of information technology to raise the socio-economic conditions of the people of India. These centres are equipped with IT infrastructure, professionals and satellite based links to provide IT based services
in the regions with difficult geographical terrain and where good communication is lacking. CICs with the use of ICT are providing services on the day to day needs of the people.

In this era of financial crunch, no organization is self sufficient. Therefore, it is very important to work in collaboration, so that maximum benefit can be drawn with the utilization of minimum resources. By working in collaboration, these two organizations can save money, time, and efforts. There is a great need to integrate the resources and services of both these organizations to provide optimum benefit to the people.

To utilize the infrastructure available at CICs effectively, suitable content is needed. The content should be relevant to the local needs of the people of the state. Public libraries can play a very vital role to make this idea truly beneficial by providing suitable content and information to the CICs by identifying the information needs of the people. Libraries can also help in channelizing the local youth and people towards these centres. Further, public libraries and CICs in collaboration, can initiate awareness among the people.

Keeping all these points in mind a plan for integration of public libraries and CICs is prepared by the researcher, with following objectives:

- To identify the needs of the people,
- To do comprehensive planning for providing services to the people,
- To create awareness among people at grass root level about CISs so that they can get maximum benefit out of these services,
- To create a strong content and service base with the help of ICT to provide CISs to the people,
- To provide access to community information to the people at their doorsteps and
- Collaboration and Cooperation of public libraries and CICs to fulfill the above said objectives by exploiting the strength of both the institutions.
6.1 Proposed Model for the Integration of Public Libraries and CICs: Community Information System

The researcher has proposed a model namely “Community Information System”, which shows the integrated role of public libraries and CICs. This model is worked out by keeping in mind the roles which can be played by the public libraries and CICs to provide better and effective community information services to the people. The success of the model depends upon the availability of adequate infrastructure and resources, adequate and fast internet connectivity, financial support, skilled manpower, and government support to implement the plan at grass root level.
Figure 6.1 Community Information System

- **Public Library**
  - Collaboration with Museums and Archives
  - Organisation of Exhibitions, Fairs, or Demos
  - Media
  - Content creation of Academic/Agricultural/Medical Libraries
  - Collection of material in all forms and formats
  - Creation of Who's Who Directories
  - Creation of Local Digital Content

- **PUBLIC**
  - Searching and maintaining data for employment opportunities, education, health & agriculture
  - Liaison with Rural Development Department
  - Liaison with Government Offices
  - Media
  - NGOs
  - Using Audiovisual tools for e-education
  - Educate people by inviting experts and through video conferencing
  - Train people through Distance Learning Institutes like IGNOU
  - NGOs educate people by inviting experts and through video conferencing
The model consists of two main components:

1. Public libraries
2. CICs

1. Public Libraries

Public Library is a social institution. It is an institution created and maintained by the society for its benefit and progress. It plays a vital role in the life of an individual and in enrichment of his community life. These are meant for general community and are known for identifying and satisfying the needs of the people. So, these can contribute a lot towards the betterment of the society by channelizing the people towards CICs for Community Information Services. Secondly, public libraries can collect, organize, store, preserve and disseminate information in a packaged form and desirable format. Here, public libraries can provide this packaged information to CICs, so that the required information should reach at the doorsteps of the people.

Public libraries should focus on the following areas:

a. **Creation of local digital content:** Local content is of utmost interest for government organizations and also for the people. Updated local content of different areas should be collected, digitized and maintained so that it should be provided to the user. This content should be maintained in local as well as in English language. The content help to address the problems of the people and accordingly planning can be done for the betterment of the people.

b. **Creation of Who’s Who Directories:** Public library should prepare who’s who directories on health, education, agriculture, transport, telecommunication, etc and also prepare list of different agencies, along with their activities.

c. **Collection of material in all forms and formats:** Depending on the local and trans-local community information needs, public library should acquire and disseminate material in all forms and formats. These materials should include audio tapes, videotapes, newspapers, pamphlets, pictures, leaflets, charts, etc. Besides, the libraries should deliver material in local as well as English language.
d. **Creation of databases on education, health and agriculture by data collected from academic, health and agricultural libraries:** Public library should maintain a close link with academic, agricultural and medical libraries to collect information. Library should also consult the respective experts in these fields to collect the data for general community information requirements and simultaneously also prepare databases on education, agriculture and health.

e. **Liaisoning of public libraries with museums and archives:** Libraries, archives and museums are often natural partners for collaboration and cooperation. They often serve the same community, in similar ways. Libraries, archives and museums all support and enhance lifelong learning opportunities, preserve community heritage, and protect and provide access to information. Public libraries, museums and archives play an important role in developing and sustaining cultural, social, educational and economic well-being. By collaborating, these, can support lifelong learning and community development.

f. **Organization of trade fairs, exhibitions, dramas, demos, etc:** To create awareness among people, products should be accessible to the people, so that they can know its pros and cons. For the desired results, public libraries should organize activities like film shows, dramas, exhibitions, fairs, puppet shows for adults (illiterates and neo literates also) and children to make them aware.

g. **Referral / Reference services:** One of the important service of public libraries is reference service, i.e., to help people in locating the required information. Library staff can use both documentary and non documentary sources to provide reference services to the people. Public libraries can also provide referral service by referring users to a particular source of information, individual or organization.

h. **Creating awareness through media:** Services and the functions of any organization have no meaning, if they do not reach the target audience. Proper marketing of services and products is needed for this and the best source for marketing and creating awareness among people is media (print and electronic) i.e. TV, Radio, Newspaper, etc. Latest media social networking sites (facebook, twitter, whatsapp, etc) can prove to be the best channel for promoting information.
2. Community Information Centres:

CICs have IT professionals and infrastructure. Their main aim is to provide IT based services particularly using internet as a tool. CICs should collect information available on internet and provide in a proper way to the people.

CICs should disseminate information in two ways

i. Through information provided by public libraries i.e., by acting as outreach centres for public libraries and

ii. By using its own resources and links

CICs should focus on the following areas:

a. Searching and maintaining data from different websites for employment, education, agriculture, health, etc: CIC staff should collect information from the websites of various employment agencies (private/ government) and made it available to people, especially students and unemployed youth. Besides, with the assistance of experts of the said department, CICs should also give counselling to unemployed youth for setting up their small scale business. These can also collect agricultural information like weather forecasting, agricultural rural products, advertisement & sales on internet, soil testing techniques, cropping patterns and crop combinations. They can also play an important role in providing health related information like tele-prescription, medical discussion for professionals, remote medical services, videos and information for doctors, information about epidemic, endemic & pandedemic diseases, information about health centres and health related schemes sponsored by centre and state government. Considering the fact that most of the doctors in the rural areas are often unavailable, CICs could become the reference point to obtain treatment from experts. Other information regarding educational material for students, government services & notifications, e- services (e- education, e- learning, e-commerce, e -ticketing, etc), information on aviation, railways, etc can also be provided by CICs using internet.
b. **Liaison with Government Offices:** CICs can act as a platform for e-governance. These can collect information from government offices and enable the citizens to know about government schemes and orders from time to time. This will help in maintaining direct contact of government with the people and hence provide easy passage of government services and products to the public directly.

c. **Liaison with Rural Development Department:** CICs in liaison with Rural Development Department can provide the information of rural development programs to the people as these programmes are important to be communicated, especially at village level. CICs can also help in addressing the needs and problems of people to the department.

d. **Educate people by inviting experts and through video conferencing:** CICs can educate people, even illiterate and neo literates by inviting experts, who can give counselling and demonstration on different issues to them. Video conferencing is another way to connect people directly with experts. This will enable them to interact and get solutions of their problems and consultation on subject of their interest.

e. **Educate people using Audio visual tools:** CICs can use TVs and audio visual tools (especially provided by public libraries) for educating and entertaining people. This will help in easy understanding and learning.

f. **Train people about IT in liaison with other organizations:** CICs in liaison with organizations like IGNOU can train people especially youth in IT and also help the people to educate themselves through distance learning programme.

g. **Creating awareness among people with the help of NGOs:** NGOs can help CICs to create awareness among people about the services of CICs and their benefits. These NGOs can use their volunteers for this.

h. **Creating awareness through Media (print and electronic):** Media i.e. TV, Radio, Newspapers and social networking sites should be used to create awareness among people about the services of the CICs.

### 6.2 Working of the Model

Public libraries have a vast experience in working with community groups, so these should identify the information needs of the people and prepare suitable content
accordingly. Public libraries should collect, categorise and organize information and provide it to the CICs in desired form and format i.e., in the form of databases, directories, audio visual tools, pamphlets, leaflets, etc for further dissemination to the people. Secondly, these can also provide referral/reference services to the user to direct him/her to the right information source. On the other hand CICs can act as orientation centres for public libraries by disseminating information, using the material and content provided by libraries to them. This will make their job convenient and enable them to provide need based information to the users. CICs can also provide information by searching and maintaining the resources available on internet. These can also provide technical support to the public libraries by helping them to accumulate material with the help of ICT and can also help in digitization of the content. For this purpose, public library and CIC staff should meet from time to time and work in collaboration to provide maximum benefit to the people at their doorsteps. Simultaneously, in order to hit the target population, public libraries and CICs should create awareness among people with the help of media (electronic and print) including social networking sites like facebook, twitter, whatsapp, etc. These should also create awareness about CISs by organizing trade fairs, exhibitions, dramas, demos, etc. In this way the integration of these two organizations will benefit people by providing effective community information services.

6.3 Administration of the Model

The public libraries in J & K are functioning under the Directorate of Research and Libraries while CICs are functioning under the Department of Information and Technology, J & K. For integrated working of public libraries and CICs, the administration and management of these two organisations should jointly rely on Directorate of Research and Libraries and Department of Information and Technology, J & K.

To execute the model efficiently, support from Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology and state government is necessary. An adequate funding is also required to run the model. Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology and
Directorate of Research and Libraries should provide sufficient funds and human resources for this model to execute it at ground level.

6.4 Training of Professionals

Proper training from time to time is required to enhance the skills of the staff. Special training and deployment of skilled and professional staff, especially for public libraries is needed. Training should be focused on how to create databases, searching and evaluating information on web according to its relevance, designing easy and user friendly sites for easy search, counselling for different programs and schemes, etc. Regular meeting of the staff of these two organizations is necessary to exchange the information. Besides, training sessions, refresher courses and workshops can play an important role in enhancing the skills of staff.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a proposed model for integrated role of public libraries and CICs in dissemination of CISs to the people. These two organizations have been providing information to the people with their limited resources in their own ways. The main function of the public libraries is to collect, organize, store and preserve the information sources and make them available to the CICs for dissemination to the people. The other function of public libraries is to channelize people towards CICs to get required community information. On the other hand, CICs main function is to provide information using internet as a major tool. They can also disseminate information provided by the public library. The working of the model needs adequate infrastructure, funding, training of professionals and support from centre and state government in order to provide better services to the people at grass root level. The success of the model lies in the collaborative functioning of these two organizations.

References
