Chapter IV
History of Librarianship and Library Science in India

Ancient libraries

India is famous for its huge libraries of the ancient world. There is reliable evidence to show that library was a common institution in the times of Buddha. These libraries, with valuable and rare collections, attracted scholars from far and near for their use (Bhatt, 1995; Munshi, 1998). Scholars and travelers came to India, the center of culture of those days, and visited the famous universities such as Taxila and Nalanda. The Chinese pilgrims came to the Buddhist monasteries and copied manuscripts from those libraries. The history of the early libraries in India can be found in these Chinese descriptions (Kumar, 1977). The accounts of Fa-hien, Hiuen-Tsang and I-Tsingh are the first hand evidences to show that these are authentic and original (Bhatt, 1995). For example, by Fa-hien's account, we can find out how large were the collection of Pataliputra. He has stated that in order to copy what he wanted from the library, he had to stay at Pataliputra for three long years. Similarly the copies of Buddhist literature consisting of about 657 sacred books, that Hiuen-Tsang took to his country, were carried on 20 horses. (Munshi, 1998; Mookerjee, 1969; Rama Rao, 1934; Thillainayagam, 1966).

It can be said that in ancient India, there existed various types of libraries. Almost all the universities and famous educational institutions, such as Taxila and Nalanda, had large libraries. Quasi-religious bodies like educational centers also had the libraries attached to them. Libraries were also attached to the monasteries, temples and the royal courts. Besides these, individual collections also existed but they were not meant for public use (Rama Rao, 1934). All universities possessed rich libraries with facilities for reading, writing, editing and translating manuscripts but they were open to the educated classes only (Bhatt, 1995).

Mookerjee (1969) has stated that though libraries were not unknown in India from the early days, the character of these libraries, both institutional and personal including those owned by the ruling chiefs, was that these were for the use of limited
few only, viz., the scholar, the teacher, the student, and the Brahmin. The interested learned men only were the main agents who had access to these treasure houses of knowledge. However, it can be said that ancient Indian libraries not only performed as an agency for preservation but also for the propagation of ancient Indian culture (Rama Rao, 1934).

Evidence shows that these libraries were organized, maintained and administered well (Munshi, 1998). The library of Nalanda, may be cited as an example. The rich collection of this library was on philosophy, religion, grammar, logic, literature, astronomy, astrology and medicine. Bhatt (1995, P.22) indicates “It may easily be inferred that some very effective arrangement either based on a system of classification according to subjects or otherwise, must have been in vogue in these libraries, for, otherwise, it would have been impossible to trace out the required manuscripts, whenever they were needed and it would have caused a chaos”. The situation was almost the same in other universities (Rama Rao, 1934).

According to Munshi (1998) in olden days libraries were enriched in the following ways:

1. Original works of various scholars were acquired.
2. Manuscripts were copied.
3. Copies of manuscripts were prepared from memorized texts.
4. Collections of deceased scholars were acquired.
5. Copies of manuscripts were acquired by purchase.

Ancient universities and their libraries flourished between 600 B.C. and 1200 A.D. (Rama Rao, 1934). The accounts of Muslim writers of the 12th and 13th century have more evidence of the existence of well equipped libraries in 11th and 12th century, before they were destroyed by the Sultans of Delhi (Rama Rao, 1934).

**Libraries in Sultanate period**

Based on Munshi’s (1998) idea, the Indian medieval libraries seemed to be more developed because of invention of paper. The other reason is more interaction with other civilizations. There were new ideas from the outside world and as Bhatt (1995) indicates “Scientific knowledge made major advances basing on the foundations laid in
ancient times. Spectacular success was, thus, achieved in the spheres of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, and was equally felt in their applications in such fields as arts, agriculture, construction work and healing. No doubt, the Muslim rulers encouraged the Arabic and Persian literatures in all branches of learning, but Persian writings on history, literature and religion influenced the Indian thought and introduced systematic historical writings in India. Several Sanskrit works on music, dancing, astronomy and romantic poetry were also translated into Persian. While this happened, the rulers patronized Sanskrit writings, and the Jains also made substantial literary contributions during this age. As a result of this cultural activity, innumerable manuscripts were written, and collections of these records were accumulated in different parts of the country” (Bhatt, 1995.P.28).

During 13th and 14th century, through the direct patronage of the Sultans, Delhi became a place of learning. Sultan Jalal-al Din Khilji (1290-1296), himself being a poet, was surrounded by eminent learned people like Amir Khusro. He had established the Imperial Library at Delhi and appointed Amir Khusro as the librarian. By this, it is said that he selected the right person for the right job. It shows that the post of a librarian of the Imperial Library was very exalted and important (Thillainaygam, 1966).

Up to 14th century we do not see any trace of public libraries. It is only after this we witness establishment of a public library, when the learned poet and philosopher, Saint Nizam-ud-din Auliya, established a library in 14th century, by raising public donations. It was a big library with a large collection of manuscripts, and the public had access to it (Bhatt, 1995).

As Marshall (1983) has indicated, evidence also exists that, in addition to subject classification, books were also sometimes catalogued and numbered. For example in Faizi's private library, the books were classified, catalogued and numbered in three different sections. The first section included poetry, medicine, astrology and music; the second, philosophy, philology, Sufism, astronomy and geometry; and the third, comprised of theology and law. He had done the same when he amalgamated his library with the Imperial library. Books were catalogued by catalogue officer. According to Thillainaygam, (1966, P.16), “The library buildings were commodious,
properly ventilated with sufficient light and free from damp and moisture. Books were kept in almirahs and boxes.”

**Librarianship in Sultanate period**

Akbar the great was a highly cultured emperor (1605-1627), with strong desire for education and development of libraries. He was not only dissatisfied, with the collection development limitations, but was also interested in developing the art and science of librarianship. He had applied his mind on the methods of storage, classification and management of books in a library. He himself was the chief patron in the technical processing of books and issued instructions for the proper classification, preservation and management of books in the library (Thillainaygam, 1966). He appointed Faizi, the great Persian scholar, as the librarian of the Imperial library and Mulla Pir Mohammad as the librarian of his personal library. A separate department was created to administer the state library and the public libraries of the capital. The Emperor himself was the chief patron but a director or superintendent, called Nazim, was made in charge of this department. Nazim was considered a scholar of great dignity and was directly responsible to the emperor. His deputy was called Daroughaie-kitabkhana, who was usually a man of high administrative ability. The Darougha selected and purchased books, and was also responsible for their processing and maintenance. He was assisted by a number of staff members of junior ranks, like copyists or warraqs, bookbinders or sahhafs, translators, calligraphers or khattats, gilders, line drawers, cleaners, etc.

**Libraries in the British period**

19th century is important in the history of India because of intellectual development and modern outlook. A new era of higher education and academic libraries began with the establishment, in January 1857, of the Calcutta University. On the completion of the building and adequate collection of materials, the first modern university library fully functioned from 1872 (Bhatt, 1995).

In 1857, two more universities were established at Bombay and Madras. All these universities were more or less examining bodies for the award of degrees and had no role to play in teaching or research. Libraries were not attached to them initially.
The libraries of these universities were established at a much later date. Indian universities commission of 1902 recommended that universities and colleges should have good reference libraries. As a result of the recommendation of the commission, the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904, with a statutory provision for the universities and affiliated colleges to maintain well-equipped libraries (Srivastava, 1995).

According to Thillainayagam (1966) the first true public library, the Connemara Public Library, Madras was opened on December 5, 1896, with the object of providing a free public library open to all classes and nationalities.

The Calcutta Public Library was established in 1835. The Imperial Library at Calcutta was established in 1891. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, promulgated the Imperial Library Act, 1902, amalgamating the Calcutta Public Library with Imperial Library. On 30, 1903 Imperial Library was opened to the public. Soon after Independence, the Government of India renamed Imperial Library as the National Library of India in 1948 (Krishan Kumar, 1987).

The foundation of some scientific organizations also provided for the growth of special libraries in this period. In spite of certain snags, the growth and development of libraries continued. According to Bhatt (1995), we can say that the first three university libraries had been well established by the second half of the century, and the end of the century saw two more. Some growth was evident from the beginning of the 20th century but only twenty universities existed in India at the time of partition in 1947.

**Growth of libraries in Post-Independence era**

After Independence, India started its development program to achieve the new educational, cultural and economic objectives at the national level. Such developments at these institutions contributed to the development of more libraries, which in turn had to accept new responsibilities to meet society's changing needs and demands (Neelameghan, 1974). According to Singh (1998c, P. 172), “the libraries had to change their earlier concept of service to a few scholars to become a social agency for

- Harnessing leisure time for fruitful purposes
- Promoting universal education

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• Promoting self-education
• Fostering national integration
• Promoting cultural contact and mutual understanding
• Supporting the conservation of research, production, and managerial potential

Not only were libraries set up at the various educational institutions, but public libraries, special and research libraries, and scientific and technical libraries also arose to cater to the growing information needs of scientists, engineers, technologists, scholars, teachers, researchers, decision makers, the public in general and so on.

About the growth and development of librarianship and its formal education in Post-Independence era, Bansal and Tikku (1977) have pointed that the growth of Library Schools in India has been spectacular after the dawn of Independence.

Role of Ranganathan in development of library science in India

Library science education at the university level was instituted by Dr. Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganthan, “who, with his towering intellect, uncanny insights and ceaseless industry, revived the tradition of ancient India to attract scholars from far and wide to learn from Indian savants.” (Satija, 1992, p.23). In fact one cannot but acknowledge the single contributions of this erudite scholar and able administrator. He was one of those renowned librarians who contributed substantially, through their theoretical investigations to the recognition of library and information science as a scientific discipline (Lazer, 1984). “Perhaps the most far-reaching effect of Ranganathan’s contribution flows from his formulation of the Five Laws of Library Science, viz., Books are for use; Every reader his book; Every book, its reader; Save the time of the reader; and A library is a growing organism.” (Gopinath, 1978, p.66). These laws were enunciated by him as early as 1928 and have evaluated librarianship to the level of a discipline in all its branches and secured recognition as a science as to be rightly called Five Laws of Library Science.

The impacts of his role as a librarian, a professor in library science, national professor and chairman of library committees would last as a glory for librarians (Agrawal, 1996).
Library science education

One of the most important factors influencing librarianship is the manpower that has been manning these libraries. It has a history of its own. Libraries have been manned by scholars, administrative officials of various ranks, and heads of educational institutions, religious leaders and even heads of states. Initially no formal training or technical education was imparted to the would be librarians. Number of libraries increased day by day, needing more and more trained library professionals. Library science departments were established and library science developed into a distinct field of specialization. According to Singh (1998c), Library Science education, as such, started in 1911 with the setting up of Baroda School by an American, William Alanson Bordon, who was a student of Melville Dewey. Punjab was the next state to start a library course in 1915 at the Punjab University, Lahore (now in Pakistan), by another American; Asa Don Dickinson. However, no more departments were set up to impart library training until S.R.Ranganathan came back in 1925 from his training in London. He instituted library science education at the University level in Madras, a program that continues to date. Gradually other universities started library science education. The Andhra University in 1935, the Banaras Hindu University in 1941, the University of Bombay in 1944, and Calcutta University in 1946 commenced the library science education. Thus on the eve of Independence there existed only six departments offering diploma courses (later recognized as equivalent to degree courses).

Bansal and Tikku (1977) indicate that though practically no new schools were established between 1947 and 1956 yet by 1967, India had 24 schools of library science and the number further rose to 32 in 1970 and more than 40 by 1975. As Singh (1998c) indicates, in 1996, 80 universities were running library and information science programs. According to Agrawal (1996) all of these universities run bachelor program, about 40 universities are offering master program and about 26 universities undertake registration to PhD in library and information science program.

The detailed discussion on Library Science education will appear in the next chapter.