CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
Introduction

The dawn of information age is clearly visible even in the underdeveloped countries. The human society has passed through labour intensive society to capital intensive society. But the post-industrial society is information dominated and hence information is rightly considered as power. More so, it is a vital source of power which is always flourishing and not perishing.

Information is a strange commodity, having complex attributes. It is difficult to place a fixed financial value on it, but the total value of the information supplied is greater than its cost and many times the return of the information service is unimaginable by its value and status. Such an important commodity was maintained in the different contexts by traditional libraries and now modern sophisticated on-line systems have opened a new era in information technology. Therefore, world at large and the super powers in particular are providing top priority to such information/knowledge industries in their policies and programmes.

In modern society, the libraries are considered both as the pilots and the lifeboats of the new information age. The libraries are meant to be all these things, exhaustive
sources of information and knowledge, places of entertainment, social service centres and last but not least, magic places, where children discover reading and where the assiduous scholar may find the truth he has looked for his life.

Libraries, the store of world knowledge, have a dual purpose: preserving the accumulated wisdom of the past, and gathering information of the present. Both tasks are endless. Due to enormous collection of knowledge, information, some of the big libraries are using electronic media, optical discs, compact discs, laser discs and all the gadgets of the modern age. The aim of the modern library is not to build up a comprehensive collection, but to provide "comprehensive access to knowledge" and "fast delivery of information". In other words, the libraries in the future may be not to provide, but to select, not to try to gather everything, but to sort out the items truly of value to the mankind, whether on book, or disc, or tape, or parchment, from those that are unnecessary. The chance of diverse, roaming, multilateral thinking is the great delight of libraries. In a way the developing technology has given a new dimension to library's organisation and control of information and they have emerged as knowledge/information banks.
Information based society of the present day has become more complex and its components simply need more and more new information to function. Business, government, education and individual life itself needs to know more skills and techniques to fulfil purposes in the environment that is continually being reshaped by new forces.

Library services available throughout the world vary so much in detail from country to country that it is impossible to present anything but the most general picture of their activities. The processes and services found in modern libraries are usually divided into major categories, technical services, comprising those processes directed at actively exploiting the stock in satisfying the information needs of the library users.

The library as an information system

The library is an example of a complex, interactive information system. As an open system, or one that is not isolated from the rest of the world, as a proprietary database might be, it is quite vulnerable to entropy from external events. The interactions of users, library materials and staff, and the environment as a whole make the library a typical, though somewhat more complex, example of how a retrieval-based information systems works.
At the core of any study of an information system is the concept of control, or how the system responds to various stimuli. Most libraries have at least five distinct internal types of controls or responses, viz., 1. Inquiry, 2. Retrieval, 3. Becoming informed, 4. Demand for the system and 5. Allocation of resources.

Information centres

Information centres differ from traditional special (technical) libraries in many aspects; demonstration of information-handling ideas could be easily noticed; they focus on narrow and specialized fields; they offer comprehensive coverage of a single subject; they have state-of-the-art reporting capabilities; and they obtain much unpublished information in their respective fields in order to maintain accurate, up to date coverage. This accumulated information is made available to the scientific community consisting of scientists, technologists, engineers, policy makers who are both the consumers as well as producers of information. The exponential growth of information has generated substantial increase in the demand for effective information. This has further paved the way for the establishment of Specialized Data Centres, Information Analysis Centres, Data Banks and Data Service Centres.
National information policy

Information is the essential ingredient in decision making. An effective information system is increasingly considered as an indispensable infrastructural facility for the national development of a country. In consonance with this general belief, UNESCO has been vigorously advocating the development of a national information system in the member countries, in accordance with the UNISIST and other global information programmes.

Scientific communities and national governments are becoming more and more cognisant of the pervasive role which scientific and technical information plays in social and economic development of a nation. Scientific and technical information is beginning to be regarded as a vital national resource. The tremendous growth in the output of scientific information and number of people who use information have brought about the need for an effective knowledge transfer. It is required to be assured that all available scientific and technical information is fully exploited by scientists, engineers, industrialists, policy makers and all others having a need for information. Scientific information services, capable of drawing on world sources of scientific and technical information.
If developed properly, it would serve to stimulate an information consciousness among political information users. Improved accessibility to externally generated information is capable of reducing a country's need to undertake its own time consuming research and development. It can aid in the transfer of technology.

The development and progress of any country mainly depends upon the planning and policies followed by the government of that country. The policy may be towards social, economical, and scientific progress. Information in that case is not an exception. In developing countries, government have a major responsibility for providing information services. To achieve a truly national information system, governments shall have to formulate a general information policy to which all organizations in these activities can subscribe.

The primary object of an information policy is to provide research workers, scientists, engineers, technicians and managers and more generally all who have some part to play in scientific activity with access to information they need and this as economically as possible. The basic plan of action is to build a national information network on the existing infrastructure, by co-ordinating present
activities, articulating the various services; developing their strong points, encouraging private and public initiative and filling in the existing gaps. The government should clearly state its area of responsibility and the means it intends to employ such as specialized services incentives, co-ordinating machinery, financial arrangements etc.

Statement of the problem

The study of development of library and information services in a specific geographical proximity is gaining momentum. These studies will serve as pointers to assess the socio-economic, scientific and technological progress of the country, without regard to its type of government. Researcher being a information professional concerned mainly with industrial information handling, realised the need for such studies in the country and selected the topic "An in-depth Evaluation of Development of Libraries and Information Services in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), after its independence; possibilities, problems and current boundaries of building up an effective Library and Information Services System (LISS)", for the research study.
The purpose of this study is to review the development of library and information services in UAE and to survey the current status, problems of the principal types of libraries, so as to recommend to the authorities to solve the concerned problems. At the outset the factors like, limited collections, poor services, inadequate staff and financial allocation are visible. The possible reason for this kind of prevailing situation is not due to the lack of financial resources. In fact the country's per capita income exceeds that of many advanced countries. This study is a sincere attempt to bring out those factors which are not so much encouraging to the development of library and information services and to suggest workable solutions overcome them.

Review of the related literature

Being a third world country, the UAE is still to equip its information infrastructure. A general glance at the published literature and the research attempts in this regard, hardly reveals anything worth. At the most, the information regarding the library and information services is flashed in some leading local newspapers and very few periodicals at irregular intervals. In this direction the
Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information and Culture of UAE have played leading role.

A worth noting document (Ref.No.FMR/COM/DND/75/135) prepared by the UNESCO Expert reveals that the government of UAE has given a serious thought to the establishment of Documentation Centre and to promote the library and information services. This document contains a ten-year plan proposed with a programme of action in this regard. Further, it contains a series of recommendations to establish and operate the UAE information network.

Apart from the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar etc., have contributed to some extent to the field of library and information services. Here only few references have been identified as sample for the study. SHEARER [22] discusses the situation of librarianship and information services in the State of Kuwait in a paper entitled "The Arabian Gulf plans its library future", which implies a discussion of the states of the "Arabian" Gulf instead of concentrating on one "Arabian" Gulf state, Kuwait. The paper provides the reader with the personal views of the author about the situation of librarianship and some local personnel involved in the development of the profession. It provides less insight and
suggests no further implications. ZEHERY Mohammed [25] has submitted his Doctor of Philosophy thesis on "Library Service in Kuwait: A Survey and analysis with recommendations for Public Library Development (1975)". The purpose of this study was to review the development of library service in Kuwait, to survey the current status and problems of the principal types of libraries, and to consider recommendations for the improvement of public libraries since they are relatively less developed and their problems manifest greater immediate needs than other types of libraries. AMAN and KHALIFA [3] deal with libraries and librarianship in the state of Qatar. They attempt to deal with each type of libraries in separate headings, where they insert the major problems that each type suffers. One common problem stated by all types is the acute shortage of professional staff, a problem which is familiar to all the Gulf states where library positions are mostly held by non-library staff, in some instances, depend on their memory in locating materials. Consequently, this paper gives the impression that librarianship in Qatar and subsequently in all the Gulf states have a long way to go in the contemporary understanding of librarianship. NAMLAH, Ali Ibrahim [16] in his thesis on "Infrastructure of Information needs and resources in the country of Saudi Arabia : An assessment (1984)" is intended to provide a framework for the formulation of a national
information policy for Saudi Arabia based on the insight gained into the factors influencing the infrastructure of information in the country, also to determine the information situation of the country of Saudi Arabia as it is related to other development sectors of the country. CELLI [7] discusses special libraries of Saudi Arabia. He surveys fifteen special libraries including some academic libraries, which might be considered by the author as special libraries, such as the King Abdul Aziz University Library and the Library of the University of Petroleum and Minerals. The major problems are introduced as obstacles for library development in the country, library science education and staffing. The author attributes the staffing problem to the near exclusion of the female population from the work force. The author further states that in keeping with the Muslim prescription against integrating the sexes, all public libraries and most special libraries are for men only. DYAB [8] in a very recent paper surveys academic libraries rather than expanding his survey to include all academic libraries. The author discussed the collections, services, strengths and weaknesses of a number of Arab university libraries. The author concludes his survey by discussing the problem of the libraries he mentions and he is discouraged to be optimistic about the situation. He attributes his pessimism to the lack of co-ordination and co-operation between university
libraries within a country, let alone within the Arab coun-
tries. The article fails to include university libraries in
Saudi Arabia.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the existing overall situation of library and information services and evaluate the same in depth.

2. To take stock of the professional welfare, training and educational facilities in the UAE.

3. To survey the information infrastructure and to study the adoption of modern technology for information processing and dissemination.

4. To examine the possibilities of resource sharing among the seven emirates of the UAE to maintain the integrity of the country as a whole for total progress.

5. To suggest possible and feasible ways and measures to develop national and international information ex-
change programme, keeping in view the growth of scientific and technological aspects in the entire UAE.

Methodology

The studies of this kind need an intensive investigation of the problem by applying various methods, tools and techniques. This is more so in the case of those studies where the lack of published literature is clearly visible. As a matter of fact, the investigator has tried all possible means to collect the relevant data suitable for the study.

Efforts are made to search thoroughly the available documents of all types to cull out the information. Books, periodicals and report literature covering the aspect directly or indirectly, gathered and necessary notes and plans were prepared.

In all possible situations, personal visits were made to observe the existing scene of library and information services. Appropriate authorities were interviewed so as to assess the problems and solutions.
Suitable structured questionnaires for libraries and library managers were prepared to collect the first hand data for the purpose of analysis. Out of seventyfive (75) questionnaires supplied, fiftynine (59) have responded. The information provided in those is tabulated and inferences are drawn on the basis of the statistical analysis.

Scope and limitations

The scope of this study is confined to the UAE and the time factor is specified i.e., from 1971 to 1990. Because of the limited resources, assessment in majority of cases is drawn on the basis of opinion expressed by the professionals, administrators and subject experts. This also includes personal experience of the researcher. The scientific, academic, administrative community is slowly and steadily understanding the essence of information and its flow. The government is coming forward to afford for modern information technology and providing facilities for its proper application in recent days. With these limitations in mind, this research is carried out.

The terms library, information centre, library and information services are quite frequently used in this thesis in order to avoid monotony. These terms indicate
their respective role in changing circumstances of the profession. Also the terms librarian, library head, library incharge and library manager have been used to connote the same designation in accordance with the prevailing practice. Regarding the style of English language in some of the cases, as far as possible, the translation from Arabic to English is made without loss of the originality.

Chapterization

The study is divided into seven chapters. The chapter one introduces the study with background information, objectives and methodology. In chapter two highlights the geomorphological feature of the UAE. Role of libraries and information services in the process of national development is dealt at length in chapter three. Libraries in UAE and manpower development programme is discussed precisely in chapter four. In this chapter all the existing libraries are systematically classified and an attempt is made to give a brief account of some important and popular libraries. With regard to manpower development in library and information science, in the light of the few available programmes, suggestions for improvement and continuing education programmes are given. Chapter five deals in detail the influence of science and technology in the development of
library and information services giving an emphasis on in-
formation technology and particularly computer application
to information processing. Keeping in view the country's
capability of affording for adopting the modern technology,
possible adoption of On-Line, CD-ROM and recent development
in micrographics facilities are highlighted. In chapter six
a detailed analysis of the data collected from the question-
naires and the information gathered from personal visit and
interview is made. The chapter seven includes the
conclusion which is the synthesis of the total study. On
the basis of the study and personal observation few feasible
suggestions have been listed in this chapter.
References


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