CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Information is power. It is all pervasive in modern society. It flows today in various media and in various forms. Its production is of such an immense nature that we are really confronting with the phenomenon of information explosion. The basic problems arising out of information explosion are to identify, collect, classify, store, retrieve and disseminate specialised information, especially of scientific and technological nature, and make it available to the right person at the right time in the right form. To meet these challenges of information explosion, some institutions have sprung up in almost all the countries of the world. These are known as Documentation Centres or Information Centres. They act as intermediary communication centres concerned with communication of ideas/information among the scientists and technologists. As a scientific middle-man, these institutions are expected to be aware of advances in scientific and technological ideas and disseminate the latest information to scientists and technologists to help them in every conceivable way and to integrate and consolidate the collective knowledge for the benefit of all.

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh appeared on the world map as an independent and sovereign state in December 16, 1971, following the victory at the war of liberation from March 25
to December 16, 1971. It lies in the north-eastern part of South Asia between 20° 34' and 26° 38' north latitude, and 88° 01' and 92° 41' east longitude. The country is bounded by India on the west, the north, and the north-east and Myanmar on the south-east and the Bay of Bengal on the south. The area of the country is 56,977 sq. miles or 1,47,570 sq.km. with 111.4 million population and 34.2 percent literacy rate in 1991 (BBS:1997).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As one of the least developed countries in the world, Bangladesh needs scientific and technological information to accelerate her economic as well as national development for the betterment of the people. Information is an essential prerequisite for research and development. On the other hand, an effective Documentation Centre makes link between researchers and their relevant information. Documentation Centres help to utilise national and international information sources and save the time of researchers. But there are a host of problems and difficulties existing in the communication and dissemination of scientific and technological ideas among the Documentation Centres and their users in Bangladesh. There is no effective and efficient linkage among the Documentation Centres, even though they do not have enough resources in terms of finance, personnel, collections, to function well alone. So, scientists and technologists suffer from the inadequacy of the relevant information. Further, in absence of linkages, co-operation and co-ordination among the Documentation Centres, they do not get access to national and international information sources. As a result, they tend to duplicate research or delay their tasks and the country sustains a loss of development. Therefore, it is essential to know the existing situation and the problems being confronted by the centres as well as their users. It is also necessary to build an effective network to speed up the communication and dissemination of
scientific and technological ideas. With the onset of INTERNET, networking has become very popular and essential communication tool between information and its users. Bangladesh has recently started joining this society by taking steps to create a Scientific and Technical Information Network. However, the progress is slow. A sense of helplessness and dissatisfaction is evident among the scientists and technologists. The study presented in this thesis is an attempt to probe into the problems being confronted by Documentation Centres as well as their users and suggest some remedial measures. Some earlier pieces of research have included suggestions on ways to improve the current condition of information communication and dissemination by creating information networks. However, they were more or less based on published information and have not been supported by any comprehensive investigation on the present situation of information handling and needs of scientists and technologists.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study would provide useful information concerning the prevailing conditions of Scientific and Technical Information Systems in Bangladesh. Further, it would help information scientists and policy-makers to know the information needs and information gathering habits of scientists and technologists. This study would also be of immense help in future information networks planning and development in Bangladesh.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of the terms used in this study are given below:

**Documentation Centre/Information Centre**

A place where information sources are identified, collected, organised,
analysed, synthesised, repackaged, stored, retrieved and disseminated.

**Idea**

An idea is the product of thinking, reflecting, imagining formed by the intellect by integrating, with the aid of logic, a selection from the apperception mass, and/or what is directly apprehended by intuition (Neelameghan:1975).

**Information**

This is taken to mean any idea, representation of reality, statement, or thought that determines practical action for the scientists and technologists (BANSDOC:1988) and it is interchangeable with idea.

**Communication of Information**

Communication of information is the transmission of information/ideas by a communicator to a communicatee.

**Dissemination of Information**

Distribution or transfer of information to individuals in an organisation by an information specialist (Kim:1990).

**Scientific and Technological Idea**

Information/ideas in the field of science and technology.

**Scientists and Technologists**

Those who are engaged in the scientific and technological research.

**ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

This study is organised in the following nine fine chapters with preliminaries, appendices and bibliography.

Chapter 1: Introduction containing Bangladesh, statement of the problem, significance of the study, definition of terms, organisation of the study;

Chapter 2: Review of related literature;
Chapter 3: Methodology containing objectives, hypotheses, methodology;
Chapter 4: Role of Documentation Centres in economic development;
Chapter 5: Current status of Documentation Centres in Bangladesh;
Chapter 6: Use of Documentation Centres
Chapter 7: Information needs and channels;
Chapter 8: Information communication and dissemination;
Chapter 9: Networking in Bangladesh;
Chapter 10: Findings and suggestions.

The next chapter presents the review of related literature.