

REPURPOSING PUBLIC LIBRARY SPACES: THE INDIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT (IPLM) WAY

V. K. Vinayaraj

Dr. V.K. Vinayaraj

Research Consultant,
Indian Public Library
Movement (IPLM), New Delhi
Email: tovinayaraj@gmail.com

The aim of this paper is to identify the transformation of public library spaces on the basis of community needs. The study focuses on new services plan through public libraries with the help of different stakeholders and provide required information to the community in problem solving and raising the quality of their lives. The research also looks at what public libraries were used for, other than conventional purposes, why they were needed, and why they become meaningful entities for the communities from which they emerge. The study evaluates the host of new services offered by Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM), supported by NAASCOM Foundation, in public libraries across the country and initiates efforts in recommending best practices that could help improve public library services across the country.

Keywords: Banking Services, Digital Library, Information Hub, New Services, Public Library, Resource Centres, Tele-Health services, Telemedicine

INTRODUCTION

Libraries serve as resource centres to a number of stakeholders, including children and adults, young and old, the educated and the illiterate. Libraries remain universally accessible to anyone and are positioned mainly in communities throughout every country. Public libraries are non-profit entities, maintained for public use and are supported by the government or the public sources. Public libraries fulfil knowledge and information needs of the general public from all walks of life by serving them with available information irrespective of their age, gender, religion, class, caste, language, economic and employment status, nationality, etc. established with the objective of raising literary standards, intellectual and moral development of individuals and societies, public libraries in the present form have transformed into community hubs that offer services and programmes focused on meeting the needs of local communities. Moreover, public libraries function as mass communication channels where stakeholders can share and communicate ideas, news and issues, and also as public forums where they can discuss their views.

Public libraries form an integral part of individual communities where they feel safe and they find it a pleasant, reliable place for accessing books, story hours, homework help, targeted information assistance and recreation. Technological advancement and the use of digital devices including computers and the Internet have rapidly changed the role of public libraries. The changes occurring at an accelerated pace have compelled public libraries to adjust their structures and support staff to meet the needs, and also become more active organizations to deal with it and accommodate the new demands of the public.

Libraries are changing organic entities that constantly adapt and become something else (Crawford, 2017, p.xvi). It is in this context that the Central government and the State governments have taken efforts in making public libraries an essential source of information for public. The Government of India in its first Five Year Plan proposed the scheme of 'Improvement of Library Services'. The government also set up the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation in 1972. The National Mission on libraries under the Ministry of Culture has further provided suggestions for improving libraries and information centers.

INDIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT (IPLM)

The Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM), a collective of key stakeholders including partner organizations, public librarians, library staff and community members, initiated efforts in reviving public libraries by offering new services and knowledge management programmes. Hosted by NASSCOM Foundation

and spread across 23 states covering 120 districts and more than 220 libraries at various levels, IPLM intends to develop a robust multi-stakeholder campaign around public libraries, re-visioning its role in the present times. The objective of IPLM is to create evidence-based advocacy for public libraries by building model libraries in different parts of the country working closely with State governments. Apart from this, they focus on research, training and capacity building, innovative services and knowledge management. IPLM introduced new services and programmes in the public libraries, like awareness and training on organic farming, spoken English courses, school education tutoring e-Content, digital library access, banking services, telemedicine and Tele-health services, etc.

IPLM has responded to the challenge of technological and electronic revolution and taken the opportunity to provide services in new ways. It is in this context that the initiatives taken by IPLM in upgrading public libraries and converting them into resource centres becomes relevant. IPLM positions public libraries as public institutions that ensure an enabling environment by addressing systemic changes through multi-stakeholder engagement and application of relevant technologies. IPLM intervention focuses on changing community needs with the potential to help the country in achieving its development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Improving public library functioning through capacity building and imparting services require proactive support and partnership from different stakeholders including departments/ institutions

with expertise in delivering such services. Moreover, the libraries require permission from the State Department/Directorates of Public Libraries for providing these services and carrying out various activities within their space. It is, therefore, important to study the existing IPLM initiatives and the possibilities of inducting new service delivery strategies in the public library sphere.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES : A REVIEW

Public libraries are the most popular form of libraries that play a vital role in extending services and welfare of the society. According to the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994, a public library is defined as ‘the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups’ (IFLA/UNESCO, 1994, p.2). The term public library is used to describe libraries which are accessible to the general public and are funded and supported from public sources. Public libraries are administered by a board to serve the public interest. ‘They are open to all, and every community member can access the collection; they are entirely voluntary in that no one is ever forced to use the services provided; and they provide basic services without charge’ (Rubin, 2010, p.58).

Public libraries serve the widest population possible and their role is to spread literacy, education and information dissemination. They are established under States through laws, rules and regulations in order to serve communities at district, sub-district, panchayat, village or regional

levels, that ensure: an organised collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof; paid staff; an established schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public; the facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule, and is supported in whole or in part with public funds (Marco, 2012, p.358).

Public libraries are considered to be people’s institutions. The government, both at the Centre and State levels, has taken efforts in making public libraries an important source of information for all types of people. The role of public libraries also becomes relevant because they improve literacy, stimulate imagination and expand personal horizons of individuals. Such libraries inform and empower citizens, facilitate access to a common cultural heritage and, moreover, support education at all levels. Public libraries create awareness through information support and motivate the local community to take responsibility for their development (Majumder, 2016, p.798).

The nature of public libraries within the community hub differs widely in the Indian context and it has been classified into: National libraries, State Central libraries, Panchayat libraries, village libraries, special libraries, etc. Dr. S.R. Ranganathan observes that public libraries are associated with their parent body, the community and their function is to satisfy the information and recreational needs of the community members. According to him, the major objectives of public libraries are:

1. To provide up-to-date and authentic information on all subjects;

2. To provide services free of cost or at nominal rates to each member of the society without any discrimination;
3. To provide a harmless and elevating use of leisure;
4. To be responsible for preservation and development of cultural and antiquarian heritage of the community.

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan also states that public libraries perform different functions in the society to achieve their objectives and work as:

- a. Information Dissemination Center
- b. Life Long Learning Center
- c. Community's Intellectual Center
- d. Recreation Center
- e. Community's Culture Preservation Center
- f. Instrument of Social Change
- g. Representative of Democracy (Sinha et. al, 2016, p.15).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public libraries are a universal phenomenon (Richards et al., 2015, p.37). They are organizations of basic learning that empower the lives of people through access to ideas, information, knowledge and recreation through books and a range of different resources. International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) defines public libraries as 'associations established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through other forms of community organizations' (Mabe & Ashley, 2017, p.53). They provide free and impartial services equally to all members of the society.

Though the public libraries in India are faced with various challenges as far as dissemination of information is concerned, they offer traditional library services with care and try to cope with the changes in order to serve the community. Census 2011 estimates that around 70 percent of Indians live in rural areas. The majority of the rural areas are not within the reach of new technologies and there exists a gap between the information rich and the information deprived. Public libraries help bridge the digital divide gap by providing information technology for public access, by teaching basic computer skills and by participating in programmes to combat illiteracy. They also offer services that provide information in different ways that ensure basic conditions for life learning and facilitate cultural development of the individual and communities.

STATE OF AFFAIRS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA

There are more than 50,000 public libraries in different States and Union Territories in India, among them, 31 are State Central libraries except in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Daman and Diu, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand, 11 are State Special libraries, 582 are District Central libraries, 531 are Regional, Divisional and Sub-Divisional libraries, 11154 are City/Town libraries, 12714 are Panchayat/Rural/Village libraries, apart from Mobile libraries, School Public libraries and Libraries run by NGOs, among others (http://rrrlf.nic.in/Docs/pdf/PUBLIC_LIBRARY_DATA.pdf).

Though there are several public libraries in India, hardly a few of them are providing

meaningful services to the beneficiary community. The majority of the public libraries in India disconnect themselves from the objective of connecting with masses and is in a state of abject neglect having neither quality resource materials nor infrastructural facilities. It is also worth noted that out of all States and Union Territories in India, not even half of them have passed library legislation, which allows the State Government to provide a public library system. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Calcutta, a central autonomous organization established and financed by the Ministry of Culture, is the nodal agency that supports the Public Library System and Services in India along with the concerned Departments and Directorates of State Governments and Union Territories. RRRLF has initiated efforts to take library services to small towns and villages with the support of different stakeholders. Though there are initiatives like RRRLF, the condition of public libraries in India is destined to remain minimal to the actual information requirements of people.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The activities taking place within the library space appear to be changing. These changes are expected to affect the organisation of the library. Libraries tend to become community resource centres through the delivery of new services and programmes. It is in this context that this study attempts to analyse the role of public libraries in providing services other than the traditional library services. The aim of this study is to identify the

transformation of public library spaces on the basis of community needs by offering new services with the help of different stakeholders. The research focuses on what libraries were used for, other than conventional purposes, why they were needed, and why they become meaningful entities for the communities from which they emerge. The study analyses various ways where convergence strategies can be used to improve and promote public libraries through existing and new library services. The study attempts to make effective library extension programs and services that could help the rural and urban communities, particularly the least privileged people.

The study focuses on improving the quality of new services and programmes offered by IPLM through public library spaces and ensuring the best possible results and hassle-free access to the library users. The output is expected to contribute to the development of a model for public libraries. The specific objective of the research includes analysis of the implementation of new services in a representative sample of public libraries supported by IPLM in the five states, including, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi NCR and Telangana that focus mainly on three types of services:

- 1) Paid services introduced by public libraries,
- 2) Free services offered by public libraries, and
- 3) Services provided through IPLM assistance

RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Public libraries and their new services are important in achieving all-round social development and improving the quality of social life. Though a majority of the public libraries

could not sustain for a longer period, IPLM supported libraries have not only sustained, but have also been able to create library awareness and demonstrated the importance of libraries in the society. Attempts have been made by IPLM with a futuristic vision of public libraries in ensuring new services and programmes.

Some of the key objectives that guided the research include:

- a. Understanding the scope for new services offered in public libraries, the rationale for introducing these services and its impact on the intended beneficiaries;
- b. Role of key stakeholders in rolling out these services;
- c. Community response towards these services – their views on these services;
- d. Potential legal, institutional, administrative, financial and operational challenges that were encountered or can be encountered in delivering such services;
- e. What needs to be done to address the challenges; and
- f. The way forward for making these services sustainable.

The study initiated a research in select libraries in identifying, examining and evaluating the new services rolled out in public library spaces in the five states– Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi NCR and Telangana. The analysis will throw light on success and failures of the initiative, causes of failures or the reasons for unsustainability, as far as services through public libraries in each of the programme implementation locations are concerned. This

learning has been used as the basis for developing recommendations which could be effective in implementing new services and programmes through other libraries in India.

IPLM'S INITIATIVES

IPLM has introduced new services with an objective to transform public libraries into vibrant and inclusive spaces. IPLM trained library staff and also offered a host of new services and programmes all over the country in tune with the local community needs. Some of them include:

1. ***Health Awareness Sessions:*** IPLM has partnered with Medanta Hospitals in conducting Live Health Awareness Sessions on topics of importance to communities. The sessions covered a wide range of issues and significant among them were the sessions on seasonal diseases like Dengue and Malaria, Breast Cancer, Heart Diseases and Cancer. While the risk of transmittable and seasonal diseases due to unhygienic conditions and not adhering to basic preventive measures were given preference, the other sessions focused more on lifestyle diseases that are linked with the way people live their life.
2. ***Spoken English Classes:*** IPLM partnered with AA Edutech and British Council to start the Basic Spoken English classes in intervention libraries. This service has been offered free through more than 65 intervention libraries.
3. ***Free Wi-Fi Service:*** IPLM's partners, Digital Empowerment Foundation and KEDES started offering free Wi-Fi services to its users on a pilot basis in one of their intervention libraries.

4. **Agricultural Services Training:** IPLM's partner, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation started the Plant Clinic Service in 4 of their intervention libraries. This provided essential knowledge to farmers in the seed, crop, forestry, fertilizer, bio fuel and other agricultural practices.
 5. **Digital Competitive Examination Preparation:** Digital learning for competitive exam preparation makes learning more engaging and one of the most preferred way of imparting education now-a-days. IPLM has partnered with Planceess Edu Solutions and started digital preparation materials for Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) and National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). The service has been enabled in more than 63 intervention libraries.
 6. **Career Counselling:** IPLM has partnered with Map My Career to start career counselling service in intervention libraries. This service has been introduced to attract school going students of Class 9 to 12 and started in one of the libraries on a pilot basis. It provided an online career assessment platform and suggests best fit jobs based on the Aptitude, Personality and Interests of the students. Career counselling program is being delivered through phone-in program in the libraries.
 7. **Animated School Education Content:** IPLM has partnered with Eduvantage Pro to start the Animated School Education Content. The service is offered in more than 70 intervention libraries and it is being introduced to 1500 school students from Class 1 to 12 on Science and Mathematics.
 8. **Workshops/Lectures:** IPLM partnered through the intervention libraries in conducting various awareness programmes, workshops and lecture series on topics of relevance to the community including GST, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, De-addiction programmes, international days, etc.
 9. **Other Services:** IPLM's partners and intervention libraries are also providing following services/organizing specific events depending on the needs of the communities: altogether 369 such events were organised through public library spaces covering 39 libraries in 3 states:
 - a. Special assistance for differently abled users in the form of ramp, magnifying glasses, braille section, wheel chair assistance, special assistance section, etc.
 - b. Health camps for the community in the library space
 - c. Theatre workshops for children and young persons
 - d. Literary forums inviting authors
 - e. Drawing workshops for children and young persons
 - f. Home delivery of books and periodicals for elderly
 - g. Mobile library- reaching out to far flung areas and to those who are unable to come to the library on regular basis
- Roll out of these services was preceded and constantly supported by regular capacity enhancement programs of librarians who are

responsible for implementing these services in their respective libraries. IPLM also offered other programmes including:

(a) Technology Empowering Girls (TeG) Programme

Technology empowering girls (TeG) is an innovative programme that enables women and girls to have better access to knowledge through the usage of technology. TeG focuses on digital literacy and providing basic ICT skills for the unprivileged and marginalised women and girls. READ India is implementing this programme in partnership with IPLM. The programme was started in February 2018, targeted to reach out to 800 direct beneficiaries by making them digitally empowered. The programme is running in Delhi and NCR regions including Laxmi Bai Nagar, Kaka Nagar, Mandir Marg, READ India-Wazirabad Centre, District Library Gurgaon and READ India-Noida Centre. TeG is designed to provide 42 hours' basic ICT training. The course covers fundamentals of computer learning and the beneficiaries are provided with certificate on successful completion of the course.

(b) International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI) Initiative

The International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI) is a global initiative supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation aimed at supporting librarians in redesigning and redefining the face of public libraries across seven regions – ASEAN, Balkans, India and South Asia, Latin America, MENA (Middle East and North Africa), Sub Saharan Africa and Oceania. INELI is a library leadership

capacity building programme intended to build library workers as 'innovators and leaders to position libraries as critical community assets to drive community development through knowledge and information services.' INELI India is one amongst the seven regional INELIs that have been initiated in August 2015 for Indian public librarians.

The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) is associated with IPLM through its INELI-India programme. The programme opens up opportunities of change management for the selected innovators. These library innovators are changing their respective libraries and making it community oriented and inclusive. The design of the programme aims at enhancing knowledge, attitude and skills of innovators as leaders along with incorporating space from inception for encouraging exchange of innovative ideas for changing the face of the public library system in India.

SELECT LOCATIONS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Different set of respondents were covered for the research including librarians and library support staffs, library development committee members, users and non-users of the libraries, community members, other key stakeholders etc. Ten public libraries in five states have been selected and interviews and FGDs were conducted with 10 librarians, 14 assistant librarians, 22 library support staff, 8 library committee members, more than 60 library users and community members.

Public libraries including Central State Library, Thiruvananthapuram and Grama

Panchayat Library, Valapattanam, Kannur in Kerala; Branch Library Kanjickovil, Erode and Branch Library Thottiyam, Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu; Central State Library Allahabad and Government District Library, Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh; Ullas Bhawan, Lamxi Bai Nagar, Delhi and READ Wazirabad, Gurugram in Delhi NCR; Public Library in Khammam, and Warangal Public Library, Warangal in Telangana were studied as part of mapping the public libraries and stakeholders. Emphasis was given in understanding the functioning of each library and the support they receive through IPLM and implementing partner's initiatives. A random sampling method has been taken into account to facilitate initial phase of the research. Emphasis was given to new services and programmes offered by the library through their spaces supporting marginalised and underprivileged communities.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

Key stakeholder analysis has been conducted to study the impact of the new services and programmes offered by IPLM. The horizontal analysis of the research validated the role played by public libraries in extending services. The nature and functions of the libraries studied varies in each location. The study found that IPLM support encouraged each library to engage meaningfully with the community. The majority of participants in one-to-one and focus group interviews felt strongly that basic infrastructural facilities to be improved, core public library services should be made free and more quality services to be introduced based on user and

community needs. Some of the members are willing to pay for certain aspects of the library service. Charging the needy a nominal fee for non-core activities in libraries is common amongst libraries.

Majority of the respondents are satisfied with the overall service of the libraries. However, the lack of basic and infrastructural facilities in some libraries remains a major challenge. The study also found that when public libraries get the following things right, they satisfy the need of the users which include: a range of quality books and documents, including resource materials for competitive exam aspirants; cordial, supportive and knowledgeable librarians and staff and good customer service; convenient library timings; sufficient work areas organised well to meet the needs of various users, basic facilities including provisions for safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, among others.

Vertical Analysis: The major observation of the vertical analysis establishes the fact that public libraries are dependent on higher officials and departments concerned in each State. The research reveals the existence of hierarchy of power in the library functions, whether it entails purchase and procurement of books and materials, permissions for organizing activities at library spaces, etc. The hierarchy in the chain shows a greater degree of vertical integration in which the State Departments and higher officials form the most powerful actors, while the librarians of each library form the weakest link. Libraries have always strived hard to meet the expectations of their members, but there has not been any uniformity or symmetry in procurement

processes of public libraries. This, in turn, affects the efficiency, utility and services of libraries. The decisions on annual purchase of books and documents are taken at the higher levels. Even in states like Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the type of books and study materials to be procured are all decided by the State Departments and the libraries concerned have no role in this process. There are no institutional mechanisms or governmental policies to check or to ensure need/user-based resource procurements.

Analysis of Push and Pull Factors: There are various push and pull factors that directly influence communities' participation in the library activities. An analysis of the learning experiences shows a correlation between different factors. Women and children are pushed out of library participation and are not allowed to go out by families because of conventional practices and beliefs followed by communities such as Muslims and marginalised sections of the society. The caste, class, gender differences are very much present in some of the communities studied. Ignorance, illiteracy and lack of knowledge regarding the significance of learning and education among parents and community are other reasons that restrict children and women entry in public spaces including libraries.

Interventions made by libraries: Public libraries, especially the branch libraries in Tamil Nadu and Grama Panchayat Library Valapattanam, Kerala work as resource centres for community services. While they empower and offer services that provide learning opportunities for underprivileged, women and children, they also work as helping hands for marginalised and the

lower strata of society by offering awareness campaigns and services. Some of the local NGOs and other stakeholders also support the library initiatives in order to reach out to the communities in the programme implementation locations of the study. Some of the libraries also offer coaching classes for students, competitive exam orientation classes, vocational training programmes and general awareness programmes of different natures. Tele-health, Tele-medicine, organic farming, computer programmes, etc. are some other programmes that the public libraries offer.

Through an analysis of the data (data has been limited and therefore conclusions can also be tentative) on IPLM interventions through public libraries, certain elements are identified that could be taken into consideration while making the implementation strategies effective through public libraries which include:

- o Improving access to basic facilities in each library
- o Providing relevant, vibrant and user-friendly library services
- o Ensuring easy and hassle-free access to libraries for all sections of the community
- o Providing opportunity for reading and learning to everyone
- o Conducting programmes and services in a pleasant and cordial environment
- o Providing easy and impartial access to library's resources and services
- o Identifying community needs and provide support to meet their requirements

- o Catering the informational, educational and recreational needs of library users
- o Contributing and serving all groups of the society
- o Promoting lifelong learning and the reading habit in all groups of society
- o Sustaining regular functions and activities of the library
- o Transparency in relationship between library, library staff and its members
- o Ensuring quality and affordable library facilities
- o Building awareness among the members, including children, youth, women, elderly community members, and other stakeholders
- o Child and women friendly approaches in encouraging them to attend libraries
- o Ensuring availability of relevant, curriculum, career and competitive exams-oriented study materials in libraries
- o Improving guidance and quality services through trained experts, teachers and quality teaching and training methods
- o Supporting existing resources with improved infrastructural facilities
- o Providing easy access of knowledge and information resources through library networks
- o Providing incentives that encourages members to use libraries more regularly
- o Ensuring parents, community and key stakeholder participation in libraries and its activities
- o Ensuring meaningful role of NGOs, civil societies, trade unions and other stakeholders in addressing library issues
- o Monitoring mechanisms for evaluating library functions, especially the new service and programmes and its impact

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Library movements aimed at improvement, growth and development of public libraries undoubtedly transform the image of libraries into dependable and growing organizations. The case studies provide important insights into the nature and aspects of public libraries and its role in ensuring quality services to the people from all walks of life. The study reveals the need to identify and reduce the work pressure of librarian and staffs by appointing adequate staff in the day-to-day functions of each library. Increasing staff strength becomes important because the public libraries are taking a step further in rolling out the new services and programmes through their spaces which comes as an additional, non-remunerative work for the existing support staffs in these libraries. Continual professional development training has to be provided to the librarian and staff in raising standards of professional competence of each library. It is also essential that the trained librarian/staff members train each other in essential skills including systems or software usage and interactions with library users and community. Though the libraries studied are doing their best in offering user and community beneficiary services with the help of IPLM and local implementing partners, they could perform better with improved infrastructural and

added human resources support. Moreover, public libraries can offer themselves as gateways to other services as:

1. 'Model service institutions': New services and activities that will provide a visible, identifiable and physical image of libraries. These attract more community participation in libraries and make libraries a dependable institution.
2. 'Information hubs': Public libraries should change their outlook in tune with the changing times to resource, knowledge and information hubs and should initiate a new role to support community and members through host of need based services.
3. 'Personal and professional development centres': New services oriented at career guidance that offers opportunities for personal and professional development of individuals. The new image of the library encourages more participation and ownership among community members. The library staff needs to be trained or re-trained in tune with the changes in the library functions.
4. 'Reliable institutions': New services add more responsibility on libraries in meeting the needs of its beneficiaries. Public libraries should act more as dependable sources of knowledge management, a one-stop-shop for learning and information and establish a network which ensure collaboration with other libraries from the region and offer a combined library service.

Public libraries are for everyone to have access to knowledge and information. Changes

to public services should be designed around the shifting needs of its users and community needs and also with the development in technology. Internet and social media platforms should not only be used as communicative platform for sharing information on events alone, rather it should use more in promoting information on library services including books and collections, teaching, training and learning services. Public libraries could also act as resource and information centres and introduce services including public and information, citizen's advice, etc. IPLM initiatives have helped public libraries to transform themselves into spaces for motivational workshops, English-speaking classes, career counselling sessions, plant clinics, Tele-medicine and Tele-health centres which has not only improved the reducing footfalls in the public libraries, but also made public libraries reliable institutions. However, more activities and ideas through participation from various stakeholders and community engagement are needed to usher and change the fortunes of public libraries in India.

THE WAY FORWARD

Though libraries offer conventional services, some of the libraries, with sustainable support, are constantly adapting and flexing their spaces to accommodate new users and services. There exist a number of libraries, however, bringing people to use the library's services is a real challenge now-a-days because of the development of information and technology. To address this challenge, libraries should act proactively and transform themselves into community spaces where people gather to find information based on

their needs. Some of the recommendations based on the research and best practices to improve library services include, among others:

- * Public libraries in each location have to identify the needs of the community it caters.
- * Public libraries should implement creative and innovative services and delivery mechanisms which are very responsive to the community needs.
- * Public libraries should ensure conducive environment in the library in order to develop the culture of wider reading, motivated readers and learners for life.
- * Public libraries should be made into a social space for interaction and knowledge exchange.
- * Public libraries should offer services through expanded outreach partnerships and community ownership.
- * Public libraries should share responsibility and engage in partnership with agencies and other stakeholders in extending and enhancing library services.

- *Partnerships:*

- o With *individuals/resource persons* in mentoring, guiding and sharing information and opinion to the library users and participants, especially students, youth and women in the community.
- o With *agencies/institutions* providing staff training to ensure continuous professional development of library staff.
- o With *schools/colleges* to promote reading, educational success, to order and process texts, etc.

- o With *health centres and hospitals* to promote literacy, health and wellness of families and community.
- o With *parks, recreational centres* to promote leisure, skill, knowledge and extra-curricular activities of children and youth.
- o With *CSOs/voluntary organizations* to ensure effective general and specific awareness programmes and events.
 - Public libraries should improve existing facilities including infrastructure and resource management.
 - Public libraries should support professional development of staff.
 - Librarian and the staff of the libraries should work with new members on an individual basis to provide specialized instruction in using library resources.
 - Libraries should enhance collection services and procure relevant materials of high-demand.
 - Public libraries should offer regular general awareness programmes, programmes of contemporary relevance, career guidance and orientation programmes, and focused events for children, including school-age children and families.
 - Public libraries should introduce, train and empower members and community about online and web-based services.
 - Public libraries should incorporate technology and Internet training classes tailored to library users.

- Public libraries should make available printouts and photocopies of documents for library users on demand on nominal charges.
- Public libraries should be made available with interlibrary loan facilities.
- New services through public libraries should strengthen and integrate the library's existing teaching support activities.
- Library services should establish relevant and updated print and electronic course materials that deliver documents to students/youths.
- Public libraries should review the impact of new services frequently and the support/funding of the service and consider alternative support mechanisms.

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