

**Address Of Smt. D. Purandeswari MoS(HRD) In The National
Conference On Re-Orientation Of Library Services In India
At Vijayawada On 18th August, 2007.**

Sir,

It is a matter of great delight for me to inaugurate this National Conference on RE-ORIENTATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN INDIA organized by the Paturi Nagabhushanam Centenary Celebrations Committee in association with Andhra Pradesh Library Association on the occasion of Centenary Celebrations of Paturi Nagabhushanam. The Andhra Library Movement is one of the popular mass movements that arose in the wake of the national freedom struggle which was responsible for furthering education among masses. This movement was fortunate in finding an equally able and sincere worker in Paturi Nagabhushanam, who has been serving this cause for the past 38 years so, persistently and with such a spirit of self sacrifice, I offer my homage to this departed soul.

In its traditional sense, a library is a collection of books and periodicals. It can refer to an individual's private collection, but more often, it is a large collection that is funded and maintained by a city or institution, and is shared by many people who could not afford to purchase so many books by themselves. However, with the collection or invention of media other than books for storing information, many libraries are now also repositories and

access points for maps, prints or other artwork, microfilm, microfiche, audio tapes, CDs, LPs, video tapes and DVDs, and provide public facilities to access CD-ROM data bases and the Internet. Thus, modern libraries may be redefined as places to get access to information in any format, whether it is stored inside the building or not.

The word 'Library' is derived from Latin Liber, which means "book" Derivations from the Greek Bibliotheke are used in at least German, French, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish, Danish, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Dutch, and of course Modern Greek. Other languages such as Icelandic, Finnish, Estonian and Persian use words that derive from their own words for book (Bokasafn, Kirjasto, and Raamatukogu and Ketabkhanch, respectively). Some European languages use a cognate of library to mean bookshop.

Private or personal libraries made up of non-fiction and fiction books, (as opposed to the state or institutional records kept in archives) first appeared in classical Greece. The first ones appeared some time near the 5th century. They were filled with parchment scrolls and later on papyrus scrolls. There were a few institutional or royal libraries like the Library of Alexandria, which were open to an educated public but on the whole, collections were private. In those rare cases where it was

possible for a scholar to consult library books there seems to have been no direct access to the stacks.

The first public libraries in the west were established under the Roman Empire as each succeeding emperor strove to open one or many which outshone that of his predecessor. Unlike the Greek libraries readers had direct access to the scrolls, which were kept on shelves built into the walls of a large room. Reading or copy was normally done in the room itself. The records give only a few instances of lending features. As a rule Roman Public libraries were bilingual: They had a Latin room and a Greek room. Most of the large Roman baths were also cultural centers, built from the start with a library, with the usual two room arrangement for Greek and Latin texts.

The main function of a Library is to provide access to information: all other functions such selection, acquisition, cataloguing and preservation are derived from this basic function.

Libraries usually have nearly every item they own arranged in a specified order according to a library classification system, so that particular items may be located quickly and collections may be browsed efficiently. Libraries often feature a professional librarian working from a reference desk or other central location to help users find what they are looking for.

Libraries must inform the public of what materials are available in their collections, and the public must know how to access that information.

Information technology tools have changed the way libraries function. From electronic resource management to digital integration, licence information to automation, recent examples show that IT is essential for staying in syn with the best library practices in the world.

Electronic Resource Management is a tool for digital resource integration and licence management. Electronic Resource Management replaces the need for libraries to build separate databases, integrating the information with the Millennium system and enabling data to be conveniently accessed as needed. It effectively controls subscription and licensing information for licensed resources such as e-journals, Abstracting and indexing (A&I) databases, and full-text databases.

Electronic Resource Management builds on the strength of the existing integrated system which manages our bibliographics, holdings, and financial records. For the first time, we can store, manage and present to our staff and patrons the new information associated with electronic resources.

Licence information, relationships between publications and providers, and technical details can all be stored and accessed in one place. Electronic Resource Management allows one to eliminate many documents, spreadsheets, databases, and paper files now used to support electronic resources.

The National Knowledge Commission has made a crucial suggestion about the functioning of libraries across the country. These are institutions that play a pivotal role in the dissemination of knowledge, but have over the decades been largely neglected partly out of indifference and more importantly out of the government's obsessive concern over its political agenda, masquerading as quotas in institutions. The Prime Minister has been urged to constitute a National Library Commission with a corpus fund of Rs. 1,000 crore. This is arguably to be the first major attempt to streamline the functioning of public libraries and enable the citizen to gain easier access to the information system. Notable also is the Commission's suggestion to include libraries in the Concurrent List of the Constitution. For, as critical as toning up the working of the National Library is to establish a proper network of state libraries. This will help fulfill the recommendation that was made by the distinguished scholar, Professor R.K. Dasgupta, when he was the director of the National Library, Kolkata in the late seventies. Clearly, there was no follow-through on the part of successive governments at

the Centre. Happily, the Knowledge Commission's chairman Mr. Sam Pitroda, has now iterated that suggestion. And should the renewed recommendation be implemented by the Prime Minister, it is bound to relieve the pressure from all over the country on the institution at Belvedere. Ideally the National Library ought to be the library of the last resort and restricted to Honours and post-graduate students and researchers. It is not to be used as a reading room by all and sundry. But the National Library cannot be improved in isolation unless the base network across the country is strengthened. It is here that the proposed National Commission on Libraries will have a tremendous role to play as a statutory body to address all the information needs of the citizen. And coordinated development or networking to fall back on the terminology of globalization across the States can be ensured only if libraries are on the Concurrent list which makes an allocation in the Union and State budgets imperative. That certainly will be a better public investment on academics rather than an anniversary bonanza for universities, grants that may or may not be judiciously utilized.

The Central government is planning to set up a Library Mission with a view to modernize all the libraries in the country. This was revealed by Union culture minister Ambika Soni on Tuesday, when Knowledge Commission chairman Sam Pitroda came calling to finalize Knowledge Commission recommendations on Libraries.

A draft report, on library mission the Minister said has been finalized and likely to be published soon. It was also stated that so far as libraries were concerned, her ministry's stress was on better access, ambience and modernization of libraries and that the government has constituted a high powered committee for upgradation and moderation of libraries.

On the proposal of setting up of a National Commission on Libraries, as demanded by National Knowledge Commission Ms. Ambika Soni said that the recommendation will be duly considered.

I hope all these and other cognate issues will be considered in this Conference which will hopefully throw up meaningful suggestions for improvement of Library Services throughout the country. I may assure that the importance of role of libraries in creating a knowledge society is well recognized and it is felt that the libraries in India need to make a paradigm shift from their present strategy of collection or acquisition of knowledge to a strategy of knowledge access.

With these words, I am happy to inaugurate the Conference and convey my best wishes for its spectacular success.

Jai Hind.