Chapter-1

Library, Information and Society

Objectives of the Chapter

- *Development of the civilization*
- *Growth of Information and Knowledge*
- *Society and its informational needs*
- *Evolution of library*
- *Role of library in society*
- *Concept of trinity*

Content

1.1 Introduction

The information and knowledge are the driving factors in the development of a society. The human is considered the most intelligent species on the planet. It gathers the information and converts it into knowledge and further use it to improve the living standards of the people. Initially, the knowledge used to be preserved and transferred through oral traditions. When the volume of knowledge grew, people invented the mechanism of recording the knowledge through writings. The organised set of such records were called documents.

The society continued to develop and accordingly the volume of knowledge grew. Due to such developments, different civilizations emerged. With the advent of civilizations different educational, political, administrative, cultural, religious and social organisations. were established. This organisational approach of the society increased the intellectual activities of the human beings. The milestone was achieved in the history of preservation, and dissemination of information and knowledge with the invention of printing technology. Due to all these developments, quest for knowledge increased and the concept of library emerged and got institutionalized for the dissemination and presentation of knowledge so that it could be transferred to the future generations.

1.2 Definition of a Library

In English, the word "Library" means "a collection of books for study, research, reference and recreation". It is probably derived from a Latin word 'liber' which means 'a book'. The definition of library has changed functions over a period of time with the change in its. Let us see some of the definitions provided by different reference sources and the scholars of Library and Information Science.

The Oxford Dictionary defines library as "a building or room containing collections of books, periodicals, and sometimes films and recorded music for using or borrowing by the public or the members of an institution".

The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defined it as "a place in which literary, musical, artistic, or reference materials (as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) are kept for use but not for sale".

The Oxford Companion to the English Language says that the "library is a collection of books, periodicals and/or other materials, primarily written and printed".

The Harrold's Librarians' Glossary and Reference Book explains library as:

(a) A collection of books and other literary material kept for reading, studying and consultation

(b) A place, building, room or rooms set apart for keeping the books

(c) A number of books issued by one publisher under a comprehensive title such as 'Loeb Classical Library', and usually having some general characteristic, such as, subject, binding, or typography

(d) A collection of films, photographs and other non-book materials, plastic or metal tapes, disks and programs

The observation of definitions, provided above, make us understand a library as:

"A physical space such as a building, part of a building, room or rooms or such a place having collection or collections of intellectual or literary output of a society such as manuscripts, books, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, written or printed records, tape, artefacts or any literary and artistic materials for reading, reference, or lending purpose".

Initially, library was considered a storehouse of books. The main function of a library was to preserve the human thought and knowledge of a society. The 'use' or 'utilization' of the preserved knowledge was not evident. But, as the society advanced, the use of the knowledge preserved in the libraries became more evident. Hence, the definition given by S. R. Ranganathan, father of library science in India, is more appropriate from the perspective of use of library material and its preservation.

Ranganathan says "a library is a public institution or establishment charged with the care of collection of books and the duty of making them accessible to those who require to use them". Here, the term 'book' symbolizes the library collection which may be books, periodicals, or any other material kept in a library.

1.3 Purpose of a Library

The definition of a library, given by Ranganathan, helps us understand the status of a library in the society. He designates the library as a public institution. This status itself sets goals and objectives for a library. Being a public institution, it has the responsibility to serve the public without any reservation or biasness. Further, he says 'care of collection of books' which refers to the organization, maintenance and preservation aspects of the library materials so that it can serve the society or community for a longer period. The final and the most important factor in his definition is 'making them accessible'. This aspect of the definition sets an agenda to

provide service to the society. The library should be made available to the public for use or consultation.

Hence, the purpose of a library is to serve the society through the records of human thoughts, ideas and expressions by making them available as and when required by the members of the society, and preserving them for the coming generations, as these records are the intellectual wealth of the society.

1.4 Functions of a Library

As the society developed, the responsibilities of a library also increased. The functions of a library in the modern society fall under two categories, namely (i) preservation of the intellectual heritage of the society in the form of literary works which are being termed as information sources; and (ii) making these literary works accessible to the people of the society. On the parameters of these two categories, the functions of a library can be illustrated as to:

(a)   collect, maintain and make the information sources available to the people of a society to help them to make themselves aware of the available literature;

(b)   foster and promote the dissemination of information, and education and cultural heritage in order to promote enlightened citizenship and enrich their personal life;

(c)   provide opportunity and facility for formal and informal life-long self-education to the member of a community irrespective of their age, caste, creed, colour, gender or any other human characteristic;

(d)   preserve the intellectual, literary and cultural heritage of humanity for posterity as resources for research and development;

(e)   provide reliable information to all citizens without any bias and prejudice.

(f)   facilitate advancement of culture in a community.

The above mentioned functions of a library make it an important institution for the development of a society.

1.5 Modern Society and Library

Library and society are inter-linked and inter-dependatnt. There is a strong perception that the development in a society is not possible without a library. The society we live in today has been termed as information society as maximum population is engaged in professions where information and technologies are both

raw as well as finished products of the human efforts. The present stage of our society is the result of collective intellectual human endeavours for centuries.

The close observations of the socio-economic and cultural development of our society may give us an idea about the role of information, knowledge and library in shaping the modern society. The society has been segmented in three different phases on the development graph. This segmentation is based on the vocation and profession of the population of the society.

The first phase is known as 'agrarian society'. In this phase, the main occupation of the people was agriculture. Maximum population of the society was engaged in cultivation, fishing and mining and was using their muscular energy. The living style of the mass was simple, hence, their needs were also limited. Gradually, the population of the society increased and accordingly their needs also increased. By this time, people had started accumulating and applying knowledge to improve the human lives.

The second phase is called 'industrial society' as maximum population of the society became occupationally dependant on industries. The invention of different machines and equipments took place in the society because of the application of information and knowledge with these inventions, people started using mechanical energy instead of muscular energy. Now, the society started producing goods and products with the help of raw materials produced during agrarian activity. This phenomenon brought the industrial revolution and changed the dynamics of the society. A large number of people got engaged in the production houses. People acquired information and starting using it to improve the production of goods. The society moved from agriculture-based occupations to industry-based occupations.

The third phase of the society is being termed as 'information society'. The quest for knowledge grew more and more in people and they started putting efforts in research and development. The information became the centre of economic, political and cultural activities. Maximum population of the society got engaged in the occupations in which creation, distribution, use, integration and manipulation of information was significant. The information became both raw as well as finished product of a large number of human activities.

While analysing the growth and development of a society from agrarian to information society, we find that information and knowledge have been extremely crucial in bringing about this change. In the process of development, many institutions came into existence. Out of these institutions, the most important are the educational institutions. Initially, the educational institutions used to impart and

transfer knowledge from one generation to another using oral traditions. As the volume of knowledge grew and the human activities started getting institutionalized, people invented recording mechanism through writing and further invented printing technology for preservation and dissemination of information and knowledge.

If we visualise the picture of development of a society, we find that the whole process has revolved around information and knowledge. When the society invented the writing mechanism, libraries came in existence. After that, the libraries became the backbone of the development process.

With the various changes taking place in the scoiety, the role of library has also changed dynamically. The library in modern society is being considered a service agency. It organises and facilitates the use of information and knowledge for the development of an individual as well as the society. Pierce Butler has stated in his *Introduction to Library Science* that "the basic elements of librarianship consist in the accumulation of knowledge by society and its continuous transmission to the living generation so far as these process are performed through the instrumentality of graphic records". Here, the graphic records refer to the recorded information and knowledge as, books, periodicals, audio-visual records, etc. Here, the concept of "continuous transmission to the living generation" gives library the status of a service agency.

1.6   Information and Library

Information has always been a dynamics force in the society from early civilizations to the modern society. It has played a crucial role in the evolution process. People from different fields of studies; have tried to understand information in the context of their own area of expertise. Hence, there is no universal definition of information. However, the meaning of information can be better understood when it is discussed with its associated terms which are data, information, knowledge and wisdom. Let's discuss the concept of data, information, knowledge and wisdom, their association with one another as well as their independent existence.

In the modern society, information is being considered a vital economic resource and backbone of the growth and development of a society. People with different subject areas require information on various subjects in different forms and with different emphasis, approaches and explanations. It is used in our day-to-day life in various ways, and is also used in research and studies. For researchers, it can be considered a thing, resource or a commodity that can be produced, purchased, replicated,

distributed and communicated. Ultimately, it becomes a factor in creating knowledge.

Information is a related concept. It gets created through processing and/or analysing data and further creates knowledge. Hence, data creates information, information creates knowledge and knowledge creates wisdom

We may define Information as "the factual data, ideas and other knowledge emanating from any segment of society that are identified as being of value, sometimes gathered on a regular basis, organized in some fashion, transmitted to others and used in some meaningful manner". In other words, we can say that information is a core value or entity; gathered on a regular basis and collected in an organized manner, has some value and is a part of distribution or transmission of values. These values can be used for decision making.

Information gets generated as a result of processing data of various human or cosmic activities, events or incidents taking place purposefully or naturally. Human factor involves both individuals and corporate bodies. The Knowledge is an organised statement of facts or ideas, presenting a reasoned judgement or an experimental result, which is transmitted to others though communication in some systematic form. Information becomes knowledge when it is assimilated and shared with others. As we have studied above, data included just raw facts and figures; information assimilates the data and organize it in a meaningful manner and when this information is distributed or shared among people though communication it becomes knowledge.

Knowledge can be viewed in different ways and can be categorised broadly as personal and public knowledge. The personal knowledge is the knowledge of an individual which may be communicated to others by that individual only. The public knowledge is possessed collectively by the society. It is available to everybody in the society in the form of information products and services.

Michael Polayani has given two categories of knowledge: tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is the knowledge of an individual which may or may not be expressed or shared while, explicit knowledge is that knowledge which is expressed to others orally, in a recorded form or through other communication channels.

Wisdom is the highest form of knowledge which can be acquired but not transferred. It is an individual trait or expertise acquired through the application of sound knowledge, ability to see far ahead in future and capability of selecting right things from the alternatives and taking the right decision.

After analysis of data, information, knowledge and wisdom, we can say that these concepts have well-established relationship. In this series, the data possesses the least value while wisdom the highest.

1.7 Role of Library in Society

Over the centuries, library has also developed different models to serve the society. Presently, we have different types of libraries to cater the wide range of informational needs of the society. Broadly, we have three models of libraries namely (a) Academic library (b) Public library and (c) Special library. Apart from these three models or types of library, we have one unique type that is National Library. We will discuss these types of libraries in detail in Chapter-2. But altogether, the libraries play a vital role in socio-economic, political and cultural development of a community and society.

1.7.1 Role of Library in Education

Library and educational institutions are two faces of the same coin, one cannot survive without the other. The purpose of education cannot be fulfilled without a library. Library is often called a hub of educational activities and heart of educational institutions with which it is attached. The main objectives of education are imparting knowledge, inculcation of values and creation of vocational skills. These three aims are being achieved by different models of education. In modern society, there are three models of education known as: a) Formal education b) Non Formal education and c) Informal education

(a) Formal Education

The formal education system is such a system in which education is imparted through the contact of teacher and student in a school, college and university. In this system, the students are to be educated or trained on the basis of a certain curriculum for a certain period of time. After the completion of the program, within stipulated time, students are assessed and accordingly a degree or diploma is awarded to them. In the system of education, the institutions are supported by the library which provides knowledge on the subject as well as related subjects of the students' choice. In this context, library plays the following roles:

(i) Library supports the teaching and learning process at all levels of education (school, college , universities, technical or professional)

(ii) It inculcates reading habits in students and provides knowledge in the subjects of pursuits.

(iii) It helps in developing critical and analytical thinking, and develops habits of self-study.

(iv) It helps in the intellectual development of a student.

(b) Non-formal Education

Non-formal education is such a system in which a person gets educated without the help of a teacher or formal classes. In this system, students get enrolled to an academic institution for a certain educational program and complete it through self studies.

The library plays a major role in supporting the educational pursuits of such students who are getting education through this model. The public library plays a major role in supporting non-formal education system and provides the required sources as books, periodicals, etc. to these students. Everyday in the society has the right to use the library services provided by the public library. Hence, a student of non formal education completes his/her study easily with the help of a public library. Sometimes, the institutions providing non-formal education also provide library services to support the students enrolled for such educational programmes.

A library plays the following roles in non-formal education:

(i) Fulfils the informational needs of the students for completing such educational program.

(ii) Helps in self-learning and turns a students into a research.

These days, almost all the institutions of higher studies offer distance- education programmes. In such programmes, a library plays the role of both teachers as well as information resources. In this direction, public library is more important in this mode of education as the library itself becomes the teacher, guide and mentor to the students who are getting education through non-formal mode of education.

(c) Informal Education

Informal education system is such a mode of education in which a person gets information and knowledge as per his/her requirements. It doesn't have a course curriculum or structured education programme as offered in formal and non-formal education. The informal education system can be for anyone for instance, as an illiterate learns reading-writing skills and becomes can literate. Another example of informal education is a professional getting knowledge and

learning skills from other professionals in order to complete their task / project. Hence, informal education has a wide range of coverage. The library satisfies the knowledge quest of an individual for professional, spiritual or recreational purposes. It provides the opportunity of lifelong self-learning to the member of the society.

The role of library in the informal education can be listed as:

(i) Satisfying the knowledge requirement of an individual needed for personal, professional and educational development

(ii) Creating reading habits among people

(iii) Making semi-literate or illiterate person educated through library services

1.7.2 Role of Library in Research and Development

The human activities in the modern society are based on creating and utilizing information and further converting it into economic resources. Hundreds and thousands of individuals, corporative houses and government institutions are conducting researches on science and technology as well as in social science and humanities. All these researchers need information to obtain effective and fruitful results. Hence, the library provides support to the research and development work of an individual as well as institutions.

The role of a library in research and development may be listed as follows. A library:

(i) Keeps the researchers up to date with the latest development in their field of research.

(ii) Helps in selecting the research topic and assisting in the completion of their research work.

(iii) Organises programmes to make the researchers aware of the process and procedure of research and research methodology.

(iv) Provides information to avoid duplication of research.

(v) Provides bibliographical service for collecting and selecting study material.

(vi) Bridges the gap between the researchers and the experts of the research field.

The library in the institutions, which are conducting research programmes, are well equipped and full of information resources needed for research programmes of the institution.

1.7.3 Role of Library in Information Dissemination

Every individual of the society approaches a library for satisfying his/her

informational needs. For this purpose the library collects the information materials required by the various sections of the society. With the help of library services, the library disseminates the information among the individual of the society. Apart from this, the library organises seminars, workshops, exhibitions and a lot of other programs which helps people in acquiring knowledge and skills. With the help of formal and informal library services, the library disseminates information in the society either through books, journals, Periodicals etc. or by organizing programs with the help of experts of different field. The library not only disseminates information in the present society but also preserves it to disseminate it even in the future.

1.7.4 Role of Library in Promotion and Development of Culture

The library is one of the institutions which has the responsibility to preserve the cultural heritage of the society. It also preserves the artefacts, traditions, customs and history of the society and knowledge about own as well as other cultures.

Role of a library in promotion and development of culture may be listed as:

(i)   It promotes reading and thinking that widens the intellectual horizons of people and develops creativity in an individual

(ii)   The library enriches the culture of a society through its activities, lectures, seminars, workshops, cultural programs, exhibition, etc.

(iii)   It preserves the cultural heritage of a nation, state, city, town even village or panchyat.

(iv)   It educates people about local history as well as traditions.

(v)   It organises different cultural programs such as exhibitions, dance, drama, concerts and different types of competitions to preserve the cultural values and traditions. For example, activities like puppet show, poetry show, exhibition of craft and art helps in promoting the tradition and culture of the society.

1.7.5 Role of Library in Recreation and Leisure

The library provides opportunity to the people of the society to utilize their leisure time in the positive manner and in creative direction. If a person has leisure time without any positive work, he/she may develop negative thinking and may even become destructive to the society, in some cases. Hence, the library plays an important role in providing positive directions to such people through books, periodicals, and popular magazines and by organising various programms. For this purpose, the library stocks, novels, other forms of literature, work of the art and other

materials which have recreational values. The cultural programs organized by the library also keeps such people engaged.

1.7.6 Role of Library in Moral, Ideological and Spiritual Development

The contents of the book have been divided into three broad categories:-

a.   Inspiratory
b.   Informatory
c.   Recreatory

Books pertaining to religions, philosophy and related fields, which lifts the human spirit, fall under the inspiratory category.

Books pertaining to biography, history, travel, science, useful arts and sociology fall under informatory category.

Books related to fiction, drama, poetry, humour and essays are considered recreatory books.

Hence, a library plays positive roles in shaping the moral values, ideology and spiritual value of an individual through inspiratory materials.

1.8   Concept of Trinity and Library

S R Ranganathan, the father of Library and Information Science in India, introduced the concept of "trinity in library". He says that "a library is a trinity made up of books, reader and staff". According to this concept, the library has three inter-dependent components which make it a social institution. These components are books, reader and staff. The 'book' is the representative of all the materials which provide information and knowledge to people. These materials may be books, magazines, journals/periodicals, maps, charts, artefacts, audio-visual materials, etc.

The 'reader' refers to the member of the community or society who are directly or indirectly dependant on a library for their quest for knowledge. The reader group depends upon the nature of the community a library is serving. For example, the students, teachers, researches are the readers for an academic library. But for a public library, reader may be any person of the society. The researchers and scholars are the readers for a special library. Hence, for the library, reader is the client.

The staff of a library is the link between the reader and the book. They play a decisive role in establishing a contact between the information source and the reader. Without the effort of the staff, it is very difficult for the reader to get the right information at the right time.

1.9 Summary

Information and knowledge has been the driving force in the development of a society. Society has passed through three different phases namely agrarian society, industrial society and post-industrial/information society. Human being understood the power of knowledge, hence, they invented the mechanism of writing to record and document the information and knowledge they acquired. Further, they invented paper and printing technology which proved to be milestone in the human history.

Growth in information and knowledge, and birth of several institutions in the society created an institution called library. Initially, a library had the role of preserving the knowledge of the society but gradually it become a service agency and started to serve the society with its resources namely books, periodicals, etc. The role of library grew manyfold as society developed educationally, socially, economically, culturally and politically. Library has become the backbone of the modern society as it provides the means to the development process of each and every segment of the society.

1.10 Glossary

Agrarian society: A society that depends on agriculture, fishing and mining as its primary means for support and sustenance

Civilization: An advanced state of intellectual, cultural, and material development in human society, marked by progress in the arts and sciences, the extensive use of record-keeping, including writing, and the appearance of complex political and social institutions

Industrial society: A society driven by the use of technology to enable mass production, supporting a large population with a high capacity for division of labour

Information society: A society where the creation, distribution, use, integration and manipulation of information is a significant economic, political, and cultural activity

Institution: An organization founded for a religious, educational, professional, or social purpose

Intellectual heritage: Recorded and unrecorded skills, information and knowledge of the society

Knowledge society: A society which generates, processes, shares knowledge and makes it available to all the its members that may be used to improve the human condition; or serves to transform information into resources that allow the society to take effective action

Literary work: Information and knowledge in written or recorded form for preservation and dissemination

Organization: An organized group of people with a particular purpose, such as a business or government department

Post-industrial Society: The stage of a society's development when the service sector generates more wealth than the manufacturing sector of the economy

Preservation: Carefully maintaining something for longer use or to be used in future

Society: Group of people living together, sharing the same social, economic, political, cultural and geographical territory

1.11 Exercise

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. What are the driving factors for the development of a society?
2. How were information and knowledge preserved and transmitted in the primitive society?
3. What kinds of institutions came into existence due to the development of civilizations?
4. Why did the concept of library emerge?
5. Name the three different phases of society on the basis of the vocation of people.

Short Answer Type questions

1. Define a library.
2. What is the purpose of a library?
3. Define the agrarian society.
4. Define the industrial society.
5. Define post-industrial society or information society.
6. How did the concept of library emerge?
7. Define data.
8. Define information.
9. Define knowledge.
10. Define wisdom.
11. What do you mean by tacit knowledge?

12. What do you mean by explicit knowledge?

13. How are data, information and knowledge inter-linked?

14. What do you mean by inspiratory materials?

15. What do you mean by informatory materials?

16. What do you mean by recreatory materials?

17. Define formal education?

18. What do you mean by non-formal education?

19. What do you mean by informal education?

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What are the different functions of a library?

2. How does a library play an important role in education?

3. How does a library shape the moral, ideological and spiritual aspects of a community?

4. How does a library disseminate information and knowledge in the society?

5. How does a library play an important role in research and development?

6. What do you mean by the theory of trinity? Elaborate its three components with suitable examples.

7. What is the role of a library in the promotion and development of a culture?