

**Public Libraries:
Norms, Standards and Guidelines.**

1. Description of the Module

Subject Name	Library and Information Science
Paper Name	Public Libraries
Module ID	LIS/PL 18
Module Name/Title	Norms, Standards and Guidelines
Pre-requisites	Public libraries, Guidelines to be followed for developing Services as well as Standards /Norms to be adopted.
Objectives	To provide an overview of various guidelines, norms and standards that are normally followed for developing an effective public library system in the country.
Keywords	Public library Services, Public libraries: Guidelines, Library Standards, Library Technology Standards.

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2 Introduction to Guidelines/Standards

One can say that there are two sets of guidelines which are deemed relevant for public libraries in India. They are i) IFLA/UNESCO joint publication titled *The Public Library Service IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development (IFLA publication 97)* and ii) Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) publication titled *Public Library: Guidelines (IS 15339: 2003)*. The IFLA/UNESCO publication provides details of services and facilities to be provided by a public library where as BIS published guidelines is mostly concerned with the public library's administrative structure and governance within the country. The BIS guideline also has a detailed annexure containing a blueprint of Model Public Libraries Act. It also lists certain other Indian standards related to libraries. They are standards on design of library buildings, specifications for library furniture and fittings including metal shelving racks, wooden shelving cabinets and library lighting.

National Knowledge Commission's Working Group on Libraries (WGL) has also given certain guidelines for public libraries. They mostly relate to modernization of libraries and their services in the country. WGL also enumerated the basic purpose of a public library by stating that they have a recognized social function in 'making knowledge available to all.

In addition to this, the following are also reckoned as basic features of a public library i) They are normally funded by the local government, ii) The importance given to libraries is a significant indicator of a society commitment to information, ideas, creativity and knowledge, iii) They serve as local centre of information and learning, and are local gateways to national and global knowledge.

The guidelines released by UNESCO/IFLA also stipulate that public libraries are a community agency providing access at a local level to a range of information and knowledge for the benefit of individual and society as a whole. And for the purpose of maintaining the level of service required to fulfill their functions, public libraries should be supported by legislation and sustained funding. In India, only nineteen states have so far passed Library Acts. Only a few of them have implemented their library laws in a proper way.

3. Public Libraries: Guiding Principles and objectives.

According to BIS Standard (2003), public library is a social institution meant for overall development of all people. It is a basic instrument in promoting peace, understanding and is a vital source for education, information and culture.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto defines the public library as "gateway to knowledge (which) provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups." It also emphasizes that the public library services should be formulated with certain purposes in mind that relate to information, literacy, education and culture. They are:

- Creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age;
- Supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
- Providing opportunities for personal creative development;
- Stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
- Promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations;
- Providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
- Fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;
- Supporting the oral tradition;
- Ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
- Providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;
- Facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills; and
- Supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities, if necessary.

Prof. S.R. Ranganathan who drafted a model library development plan for thirty years formulated an integrated five-tier public library system comprising primary service library, secondary service library (city central and district central library), tertiary service library (State Central Library), national library and the futuristic world grid of public libraries. This largely acted as the basic norm in evolving the public library system in the country.

According to BIS standard, public library system consists of a state public library, regional public libraries, district public libraries, divisional public libraries, block libraries, village libraries, block deposit centres, mobile libraries and other connections and subsidiaries as may grow up in connection with it.

National Knowledge Commission Working Group (WGL) has also mentioned in its report that there should be a) State Central Library, b) District Library, c) Sub-divisional/Town Library and d) Rural Knowledge Centre/Community Information Centre

According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines, the public library must provide services based on an analysis of the library and information needs of the local community. At the planning stage, priorities must be established and a well defined strategy be developed for service provision for various target groups.

Such groups may include children, young adults, women, neo-literates etc. The service provision methods should take care of traditional cultures as well as new technologies. For instance, support for oral methods of communication as well as making use of modern ICT based services. Also, services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political, religious or commercial pressure.

Public library supports lifelong learning, working with educational institutions and schools. The concept 'dual use library' has become popular by using school library building as a public library during afternoon or evening hours. Such an arrangement also provides an opportunity to libraries to interact and network with the teachers. The public library is also required to provide a wide range of material on topics which will allow the members of the local community to pursue their formal or informal education.

In India, distance learning has become popular and widespread due to the fact that a number of open universities have started courses in different streams. The students of distance learning programmes make use of local public library for their primary source material. Collection development policy in public libraries should take care of distance learners. They will also need Internet access to consult their course material. In future, public libraries will play an important role within the educational network by providing reading space and material to meet the demand.

Regarding collection development, National Knowledge Commission Working Group has made following suggestions for a public library i) The size and nature of the collection should reflect local requirement ii) Locally relevant language material should be available iii) Book Purchase should be a continuous process and at least 10% of the book collection should be less than five years old iv) At least 60% of the library's budget should be spent on collection development.

4. Public Libraries: Basic Norms

The Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development (2001) provides basic principles and policies to be followed for a successful public library system in a country. These have been grouped under six major heads ; i) role and purpose of public library ii) the legal and financial frame work iii) meeting the needs of the users iv) collection development v) human resource and vi) management and marketing of public libraries.

The public library is a locally based service meeting the needs of the local community and operating within the context of the community. Following Guidelines have been framed to provide assistance to librarians in any situations to develop an effective public library service related to the requirement of the local community.

4.1 Rural Libraries

As regards norms for rural public libraries in India, the following minimum configuration may be followed so that basic needs of the local community can be fulfilled.

Space - 1000 sq.ft.
Number of books - 6000

Periodicals and newspapers - 10
Reading seats – 25
Internet workstations - 5

The collection should include CDs and DVDs. Certain basic services based on local needs such as lending, reference, photocopying, skill development training programmes (e.g. personality development and communication), social events, children's section, training to users, etc. should be provided.

4.2 Urban Library

The size of an urban library in a municipal town or district headquarter should depend upon the size of the population. The following minimum configurations should be considered. They are:-

Space - 5000 sq.ft.
Number of books - 10,000
Periodicals and newspapers - 50
Reading seats - 50
Internet access points- 10

Apart from basic services, certain additional activities and services are to be designed keeping in view of the needs of the local community. It is important to give a facelift to all the existing library buildings, to make them "eye-catching" buildings are one way to increase the footfall. It is desirable to have a branded exterior, and to locate the library in an easily accessible location. All libraries should be provided with toilets, drinking water and parking (wherever possible) facilities. Ambience is becoming increasingly important. An inviting exterior, a smart interior with modern furniture and fitting, a friendly and imaginative layout with proper signage are essential for a public library.

According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines, library services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This needs well situated library building, good reading and study facilities as well as relevant technologies and suitable opening hours convenient to the users. The location of the public library and its service outlets is very important. They should be close to transport networks and centres of community activities such as cultural hubs, commercial centres and shopping complexes. Whenever possible a public library can share building with other public spaces such as art galleries, museums and community centres.

4.3 Library Services for Differently Abled

Although physical disabilities are carried in nature, the most commonly observed disabilities relate to speech, hearing, vision and movement. The following facilities should be available for differently abled groups:-

- Provision of books in Braille.
- Provision of services of Library staff to read out to visually - challenged readers;

- Audio-recordings on cassettes to be made available;
- Easy entry to the library by constructing ramps;
- Construction of special toilets;
- Provision of special space in the reading room where the reader on a wheelchair can read and work in a comfortable environment;
- Easy access to general readers reading room and reference collection.
- Easy access to halls/auditorium for cultural activities;
- Development of special collections through audio (for visually impaired) and visual (for those with impaired hearing) media. The collection so developed should be shared among different centres through networking, so as to enable these advantages to reach out to the largest number of readers with special needs.

5. **Public Libraries: Norms for Modernization**

National Knowledge Commission Working Group has recommended a Library Charter for each library to display their objectives. Four major objectives have been identified. They are: i) disseminate knowledge as widely as possible, ii) to serve as a major vehicle to facilitate creation of new knowledge, iii) to facilitate optimal use of knowledge by all sectors such as government, industry, rural sector and civil society, and iv) to ensure that people from all sectors and all parts of the country have easy access to knowledge relevant to their needs in their own language.

Internet access is essential for all public libraries. Higher possible bandwidth with Static IP is provided. Authentication mechanism and authorized access for off-campus users be ensured. Two to fifteen internet terminals particularly related to employment and educational opportunities should be provided depending upon the size of the staff and users in each public library. Virtual Reference Service be provided free of charge to the public. According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines, public libraries have an exciting opportunity to help to bring everyone into this global convention and to bridge what is often called 'the digital divide'. They can achieve this by providing information technology for public access, by teaching basic computer skills and by participating in programmes to combat illiteracy.

Implementation mechanism for the modernization of public libraries be outsourced or done through public private partnerships. Each public library should be given a photocopying machine. Computer workstations for users, repair of old books, maintenance of hardware etc. be taken care of. Access to online resources of interest to the public should be provided to libraries particularly in urban areas.

A consortium to ensure access to relevant journals for the public at reduced rates should be developed. Multimedia databases may be developed at State Central Libraries.

Selected copyright free materials including paintings, photographs, manuscript etc. available in public libraries be digitized and made available to the public. A National Repository of Digital Works may be compiled. A digital preservation policy for digitized works is to be developed by the newly established National Mission on Libraries in consultation with the National Digital Preservation Programme. As a

part of this a Disaster Recovery Programme should be established to safeguard the digitized and other materials in public libraries.

According to the recommendations made by the NKC's Working Group Networking of public libraries should be undertaken in a phased manners and the agency doing this project should ensure application of state of the art technology with open source platform which support multilingual environment with multi user and multimedia content creation. In addition, storage, dissemination and replication of the data through mirror sites, gateways, portals and inter library loan facilities have to be developed. The networking agency is required to conduct suitable training programmes for the staff so that above mentioned facilities are sustained.

6. Public Libraries: Setting Standards

In an information intensive workplace like a public library, one has to be sensitive to the need of applying standards so that practices and procedures followed can be shared with other libraries. Similarly, if a public library is aware of standards, it can make use of what others are doing. According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines, for the purpose of implementing a nationwide library coordination and cooperation plan, legislation and strategic plan must also define and promote a national library network based on agreed standard of service.

In the context of library and information science, standards mean a set of rules established by national and international bodies for the purpose of:-

- a. Bibliographic control (including unique identification of bibliographic items such as ISBN and ISSN).
- b. Exchange of bibliographic records (with the help of an exchange format like MARC), and
- c. Description of bibliographic items (i.e. ISBD).

In the present era of ICT, standards facilitate communication between library systems to enable access and sharing of resources across libraries. They are designed to achieve compatibility and interoperability between equipments, data, practices and procedures so that information can be made easily and universally available. Standardization has allowed libraries to aim for Universal Bibliographic Control which is based upon the principle that cataloguing or a work should be done only once in the source nation and that this record should be made available to libraries throughout the world.

The public libraries can do the following to maximize their effectiveness:-

- Share their library resources in print and electronic formats including books, journals, technical reports and databases.
- Pursue joint purchasing agreements for information services (web based services).

- Encourage cooperative development and development of information resources and technologies.

The newly established National Mission on Libraries should build awareness about information technology related standards and arrange training for librarians. These standards include: -

- Z39.50 (Resource sharing protocol); ODMA (Application to interface seamlessly with document management client);
- MARC 21 (Format for bibliographic data);
- ISO-ILL (Inter Library Loan);
- Dublin Core (metadata Scheme);
- OAI-PMH (The Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting); and
- OWL (standard for ontology).

Standards have always important role in IT applications. They were often proprietary. Now there is a visible change. For the first time, there are open standards that are not controlled by any vender. They allow inter-operability and they are popularly called as 'open standards'. Apart from 'protocols and interfaces', these are library operation software like KOHA that have become open source software. The gradual shift to open source is an important development in IT application. Most of the IT companies believed that they should 'lock their customers ' and make it expensive for them to switch from one brand of technology to another.

The utility of standards in libraries can be explained in a simple way. In India, public libraries work in isolation. In order to promote resource sharing and networking, adoption of standard is necessary. The ability to create and maintain effective, as well as widely based system of library resources that works so the mutual benefit of a large number of public libraries is an important issue. A network can achieve this objective as it is an inter-institutional arrangement and intended to break information isolation. The basic purpose of a network is to promote access to desired information rather than ownership of documents and other information sources. Most of the work in a network environment is done with the help of a standard and ICT infrastructure.

Standards are be developed for public libraries keeping in view the local needs with regard to different parameters like size of collection, services, staff, special services for categories like children, women, neo-literates extension activities etc.

7. Guidelines for Developing Management and Marketing public libraries.

According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines a library should have a written communication, marketing and promotions policy to enable it to undertake a planned promotion of its services to the public. The policy should include a marketing and communications strategy and methods of evaluating promotional programmes.

In order to promote libraries as social institutions, collegiums of eminent librarians and lovers of books (including avid users of libraries) is to be created in the states. The following activities can be taken up by the collegiums:-

- Establishing linkage with the people's representatives and the State Government to promote libraries/library services in the State.
- Distributing leaflets and brochures with details of libraries and organizing discussions/public lectures.
- Engaging corporate houses and public sector undertaking in library development, and
- Acting as "pressure group" and meeting the decision makers regularly.

Librarians are required to create a peer group that can meet public intellectuals and the media to support library advocacy. Public lectures, workshops and seminars to be organized to promote library use and library services. According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines, public libraries should develop a coherent marketing and promotion plan based on library's policy. It could inter-alia include

- Displays and exhibits.
- Regular publications and preparation of lists of library's resources and pamphlets.
- Book fairs.
- Library websites and links to and from related websites and portals.
- Annual library week celebrations and other collective promotional activities.
- Fund raising programmes and campaigns.
- Special library publications e.g. history of the library, history of the community/local history etc.

Another important factor is to ensure that the community is aware of the importance of the library service. Municipal, regional and national funding bodies should be made aware of the fact that public library occupies an important place in the community and they should support its development.

Similarly, public libraries should also have a close contact with informed local governance institution (ILGI) that is prevalent in most of the rural India in some form or other. They are also highly institutionalized embodying stable and recurring value patterns. ILGIs in India resolve dispute, keep peace in the society, support temples, organize religious and social festivals and also help to develop social infrastructure in the locality.

Public libraries need to spend at least 10% of their budget on above mentioned promotional activities which may also include advertising, customer relations oriented programmes (like quiz, storytelling etc.), interviews with readers and surveys of information needs and reading habits.

One of the foremost requirements is the training of staff in library service marketing strategies. Development of soft skills (better communication and behavioural pattern) to be paid due attention and short term training programmes for the LIS staff should be organized. Performance measurement is an important part of library management. It should be a planned process carried out in a consistent manner for a definite period time. One can get further details about library performance indicators in ISO 11620. *Information and Documentation: Library Performance Indicators:*

Another way of getting some useful indication regarding performance of a library is to compare the key input and output data with other libraries that are similar in nature. This is usually called benchmarking; a viable method of getting some additional indicators that may supplant internal performance measurement exercises.

A systematic and regular collection, compilation analysis and reporting of data about library activity and users' feedback can be a basis for developing a culture of assessment in a library. In fact, different users groups in a library can be a rich source of management information. They should be consulted on a regular basis for the purpose of redesigning of various services in a public library.

8. Legislation and Budget Provision

According to IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994, 'The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It must be supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments. It has to be an essential component of any long-term strategy for culture, information provision, literacy and education'.

There are different types of relationships between public libraries and government. Since public library is a service developed for the local community, the local government institutions such as municipalities/city Corporations are the appropriate agencies for funding of libraries. Nineteen states have passed library laws in India and library cess is levied in some states to run a library system within a state.

Another module is also suitable for a federal country like India where an organization i.e. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) has been set up by the Central Government primarily to provide financial assistance to public libraries. Under this system RRRLF provides matching grants to the State Governments and their public libraries for purchase of books, development of infrastructure like building, furniture, modernization etc.

On the basis of recommendation of National Knowledge Commission, a National Mission on Libraries has been set up by the Government of India in March 2012 for a period of three years. The commission has mentioned in its report that the National Mission must be set up for a period of three years with statutory back up and a regular budget. The Mission should be converted into a permanent National Commission on Libraries to become an important part of the library development process.

According to IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines, public libraries should be based on legislation which assures their continuity and long-time survival in the Government structure. However, public library legislation may take various forms. In certain countries the legislation is specific to public libraries whereas in others it is normally made a part of wider legislation which includes different types of libraries.

Regarding sources of funding a number of options are available for public libraries. The main sources are: a). Taxation at local region or central level, b) block grants from central region or local level, c). Donations from funding bodies or private individuals d). Revenue from activities such as book publishing, sales of books, sales of works of art and handicrafts, e). sponsorship from internal

organizations/business houses under corporate social responsibility, f). Revenue from individual services i.e. photocopying and printing facilities, fines etc.

According to IFLA/UNESCO public library manifesto, a public library should not charge fee from the readers. In other words charging users for services and membership should not be used as a source of revenue for public libraries.

9. Conclusion

The diversity of Indian public libraries is an important factor. India is a pluralist and hierarchical society with many religions, languages, customs, rituals and traditions. The Guidelines or principles to be followed for library development have to be suitably altered to meet the local needs. According to UNESCO/IFLA, long term success of a public library will depend on the factor how closely it is based on the culture of the country or locality on which it operates. It has been rightly said that Public Libraries are one of the few government institutions that the state has funded and provided free to the members of the public without expecting accountability for the benefit of being able to access information. The state has done this in the belief that an informed citizenry is essential for the functioning of the democracy.

The problems and constraints faced by the public library system to effectively disseminate knowledge are manifold in the country. They are essentially as a result of the following factors:

- A considerable percentage of the population is illiterate or functionally literate forcing library to be of minimal use to them.
- poor allocation for infrastructure improvement and collection development for public libraries;
- lack of enough sanctioned professional positions with requisite qualification/experience, forcing most of the services to be operated by voluntary non-professional staff, causing steady deterioration on information organization and servicing;
- There is also a problem of educated professionals preferring to work in special and academic libraries than public libraries.
- Less emphasis on adoption of Information Technology for public library systems and services.

An important challenge before the library sector is the change in the very nature of libraries and librarians i.e. the public libraries must change from collection oriented institutions to service oriented organizations and librarians have to change from custodians of books and documents to information managers and disseminators while taking advantage from the IT sector for qualitative improvement, public libraries will have to ensure the following:-

- I. Take stock of public libraries in the country and their users through a nationwide survey.
- II. Resource sharing and networking of libraries.
- III. Consider both preservation and access on vital components of library service.
- IV. Marketing and awareness campaign for the promotion of library and information service.

- V. Development of library professionals to cope with the new environment.
- VI. Utilization of management techniques for dealing with the new objectives.

However, the societal context in which public libraries operate is changing fast. The current economic slowdown in most part of the world has made it essential for local regional or national government to critically evaluate the amount of money spent on cultural institutions. In such a situation, public libraries are required to show their value and demonstrate their relevance to the citizens, governments and political masters.

