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## AN INFORMATION NETWORK OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NORTHEAST: A NECESSITY

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### Abstract

*This paper highlights the problem faced by the readers in the north-east due to lack of reading materials. The paper proposes to establish a library network of the university libraries of the north-east. Modalities to initiate the Network are dealt with in the paper and methods to mobilize funds are explained in detail. The roles which may be played by N.E.C., INFLIBNET and participating universities are outlined. The paper initiates that network should be a combination of library cooperation of the past and a network of present days.*

**Keywords:** Library Network; Library Cooperation; Resource Sharing Network; Library personnel

### 1. Introduction

North-Eastern region is located geographically away from the main stream of the country. No state in the north-east has a sufficiently strong library which can meet the requirement of its readers. In the recent past, the center has started financing the universities of the north-east which indirectly benefits the libraries of these universities. The libraries which are of the Central Universities are in a more privileged position than those of the state universities. However, the scenario in comparison with those university libraries in the metropolitan cities of the country, the libraries in the north-east are lagging much behind and yet to wait another decade to give the minimum satisfaction to the readers of the north-east in their own states.

The states in the north-east have been distanced topographically by the nature. Except Assam because of Guwahati and Meghalaya because of Shillong the remaining states were less known and not in the priorities of the government in the past. As a result, it gave birth movements of dissatisfaction almost in all the states of north-east. The condition in the universities and their libraries were the same.

Though the youths of the north-east are highly unprivileged in respect of the collection of the libraries, library hours, environment in which they live and the facilities provided in the institutions. They have to compete with their counterparts who are highly privileged and backed up with full financial support both by the government and their able parents.

Therefore, it is high time for the librarians in the north-east to attempt to support the youths at par with these who are in the privileged metropolitan institutions of the country. Till today, the university

libraries of the north-east cannot satisfy the needs of the readers which maybe partially solved in case all the university libraries of the north-east efficiently develop a Resource Sharing Network plus library co-operation of the past. It is not difficult to reach any of these states from any part of the north-east. All the libraries in the north-eastern states are within the reachable distance.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the North-Eastern University Library Network can be enumerated as follows:

- To establish a common standard /norm for all the universities libraries
- To develop a regional union database of the north-east
- To share the Resources available in the region
- To establish communication facilities to support academic and research
- To establish a common platform of the professionals of the north-east
- To jointly ventilate the professional grievances when ever necessary
- To provide standard guidelines to the authorities
- To establish regional Integration among the readers of different communities, etc

## 3. Existing Infrastructure

The existing infrastructure consists of the following university libraries:

These libraries can be grouped under three categories such as large, medium and small size libraries according to their collection.

Sl. No.	Large Size Library	Medium Size Library	Small Size Library
1	K.K. Handique Library, Guwahati University, Guwahati	Assam Agricultural University Library, Jorhat	Arunachal Pradesh University Library, Arunachal Pradesh
2	North-Eastern Hill University Library, Shillong	Dibrugarh University Library, Dibrugarh	Assam University Library, Silchar
3	-	-	Tejpur University Library, Tejpur
4		Manipur University Library, Imphal	Nagaland University Library, Nagaland
5	-	-	Central Agricultural Univ.Library,Imphal
6	-	-	Mizoram University Library, Mizoram
7	-	-	Sikkim Manipal Univ. Library, Sikkim
8	-	-	Tripura University Library, Tripura

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Table indicating the size of the university libraries of the north-east (small size library below one lakh collection, medium size library above a lakh but below two lakhs and large size library two lakhs and above).

Though there are a number of university libraries in the north-east most of them are of small size. According to the above table there are only two large size university libraries, three medium size libraries and seven small libraries meaning that the available infrastructure is extremely poor in comparison the size of reading population. The total collection of the entire north-eastern universities is almost the size of a large library of a university of the metropolitan city. Therefore there is no other option except establishing a Resource Sharing Network of the north-east in case the readers are to be attended to their satisfaction.

#### **4. Role of North Eastern Council (N.E.C)**

The North Eastern Council, which was established in 1972 with an object of bringing about coordinated development of the region by sponsoring a series of regional and pilot projects, has imparted a new dimension in the sphere of a closer understanding of people within the region and consolidation of their links with the main stream. N.E.C attempted to bring the standard of the libraries of the north-eastern states by organizing seminars and bringing the professionals of the north-east together. The N.E.C Seminars On Planning of Libraries, 1979 and Improvement of Information System 1986 may be noted. Among the other topics the seminars discussed on the following functions of university and specialized libraries of the north-eastern region: -

- The role of university libraries in the society
- The university libraries and research
- Co-ordination among university libraries and specialized libraries
- Problem of Regional Co-ordination and co-operation and the role of N.E.C
- Role of new communication technology.

The agenda for discussion at the seminar on the improvement of Library and Information System in the north-east held on 29.5.1986 recommended that a scheme should be evolved for greater co-operation and coordination among the university and specialized libraries of the region in respect of mutual lending and extension of the service facilities.

Students, Research scholars and Faculties registered in any one of the university should be allowed to have access to the reading materials of other universities of the region. To make the project successful, it requires to establish a Regional Information Center in one of the universities which can easily be accessed from any part of the north-east. This Regional Information Center will act as the coordinator for the North-Eastern University Library Network.

#### **5. The Centre for North Eastern Universities Library Network**

To initiate establishment of the center for North –Eastern Universities Library Network, the professionals of the region should make an occasion to meet together, which can be arranged at one of the conventions of PLANNER or may be by a separate initiation. The function of the center should be

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decided in a joint meeting of the professionals of the university libraries. The modalities for the running the center may be spelt out. The tentative function of the center will be: -

Mobilizing funds from all the participating institutions of the north-east, seeking grants from respective governments of the north-eastern states, North-Eastern Council, University Grants Commission etc.

- To coordinate among the participating university libraries
- To impart training courses to make aware the existence and benefit of the network/cooperation
- To establish a Regional Deposit Center of all the research material like reports, seminar papers, records, etc of the region
- To establish physical i.e., in the form of library co-operation and communication network
- To establish contacts with other networks like INFLIBNET, INDEST, Etc.

In case the library cooperation or the network which ever we term comes into existence, there is scope for greater cooperation and coordination among the university libraries of the region. Appropriate committees may be formed for various functions and in the latter stage it may be come a joint venture of all the participating universities or of N.E.C. or of INFLIBNET.

## **6. Role of INFLIBNET**

The abbreviation INFLIBNET has become the most popular word among the Informational Personnel and rapidly spreading towards the learning and teaching community. INFLIBNET has helped the universities of the north-east to get grants from the U.G.C for buying computers, data entry, telephone connection and V-sat connection, etc. The center has been imparting training courses on soft wares like CDS/ISIS, SOUL, etc and on library automation. The center has also been organizing professional Annual Seminars such as CALIBER, PLANNER and other regional programmes from time to time. The center has become practically a school for training the library and information personnels. The center has to continue to provide its services to the university libraries of the north-east as per their programme.

The government of India has adopted a policy called "Look to East" and has been providing funds for the developmental project of the north-east. The center has also been providing fund to the universities from Non-Lapsable Central Pool under the policy "Look to East". INFLIBNET has been provided with funds for providing the networking facility in the north-east. This is for the expert opinion of INFLIBNET how the Library Information Network and its benefits can be made available to the reading community of the north-east.

## **7. Regional Network : A Necessity**

The establishment of a center for the Library Network was one of the recommendations of the seminar organized by N.E.C. in 1986. On the other hand there is strong opinion among the professionals that services of INFLIBNET do not reach a large population of the scholars and teachers who are in the colleges and engaging in research. For example Manipur University has seventy-three affiliating college whereas services of INFLIBNET concentrates only in the university level. The programmes stress the development of university libraries and as such a large number of colleges, teachers, students and scholars are excluded from the benefit of INFLIBNET. Under these circumstances, it is

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economically and technically feasible to evolve some regional understanding and resource sharing arrangement to provide information services under INFLIBNET programme. In case INFLIBNET considers to establish a center in the north-east, it may also act as the center for North-Eastern University Libraries Network, which may be a center for training and research. The center may also collaborate with other agencies like CSIR, ICAR, ICSSR and other universities.

## **8. Conclusion**

Since the establishment of a Network of university library of the north-east is a concern of the universities, which are autonomous in nature, the role of state governments may not be so important. The responsibility of the institution will lay mostly in the participating universities and other agents like N.E.C, INFLIBNET, etc on its recognition.

The concept of establishing a Library Cooperation/Network of the university libraries of the north-east has been propounded by number professionals from time to time. This is for the professionals particularly who are in the university libraries of the north-east to translate the idea into practice. They should take advantage when they meet together preferably at one of the convention of PLANNER, as they cannot be so free to meet together in a separate meeting. The N.E.C may play the same role which they played in case of public libraries and initiate to bring together all the university libraries of the north-east in the form of a cooperation / network with an aim to share the available resources and even may consider to provide travel expenses to the scholars for visit of the libraries within north-east. It is no doubt that the N.E.C is providing funds to the universities for the development of the university libraries but a project like the North-Eastern Libraries Network will be of a distinct character.

It is imminent that INFLIBNET is going to take up programmes for the north-east in view of the funds provided by the center. In case there is such a cooperation/network as proposed, it may act as a link between the university libraries of the north-east and any other agent.

Now, it is time to give a serious thought whether the existence of such a coordinating body like University Library Network/Library Cooperation will help the readers of the north-east and if so which are the agents to be approached to translate the idea into practice.

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