LIBRARY NETWORKING: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF RURAL LIBRARY INFORMATION NETWOK SYSTEM FOR EASY ACCESS BY RURAL COMMUNITY OF MANIPUR

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Abstract

The paper discusses the term library network as an essential component in information society. The paper highlights the scenario of rural libraries in the state of Manipur. This paper further elaborates the conceptual ideas for setting up a proposed model of 'Rural Library Information Network System' for powering the masses for the construction of knowledge based society and importance of Information Communication Technologies(ICTs) which is key to bridging new digital connections in the rural areas of Manipur in this global digital information age.

Keywords: Library Network; Information Support System; Information and Communication Technology.

1. Introduction

Network is comparatively a recent addition to the technology of library and information science. When a group of libraries/information centres connected together for the purpose of specific requirements, which may be exchange of cataloguing, books etc is said to be within a library networks. Networking provides a means by which a number of institutions can share equipments, programme and database using communication lines. During present time, networking more accurately refer to those systems which contain elements of computerization with machine readable database capable of being accessed either offline or online. Use of communication between a number of computers and between different terminals in a computer is the result of library network. Networking of libraries is the best way to make resource sharing very effective in order to ensure equitable availability of required information.

The explosion in the amount of literature that available, increases among the number of users and their different needs, and the application of electronic media are forcing libraries to construct and participate in networks. Retrieval through telecommunications networks and access to national and international databases are available for searching for information on various subjects. With the advent of information networks, remote transmission of text and graphics, video clips and animated clips are also possible.

2. Definition

A library network is broadly describe as a group of libraries coming together with some agreement of understanding to help each other with a view to satisfying the information needs of their users.

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UNISIST II working document define Information Network as a set of inter-related information systems associated with communication facilities, which are cooperating through more or less format agreements in order to implement information handling operations to offer better services to the users.

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science in its National Programme Document (1975) defines a network as two or more libraries engaged in a common pattern of information exchange, through communications for the functional purpose.

3. Aims and Objectives

The basic aims and objectives of library networks are:

- To promote and support adoption of standards in library operations.
- To promote sharing of resources by inter library loan among the libraries through computerized networking for maximum use of resources and better facilities for researchers and users.
- To create databases for projects, specialist and institutions to provide online information services.
- To coordinate with other regional, national and international network for exchange of information and documents for the use of libraries and users.
- To generate new services and to improve the efficiency of existing ones.

4. Rural Library in Manipur

The scenario of rural libraries in Manipur is not very satisfactory. The Manipur Public Library Act, 1988 has no provision for library cess and the limited amount of grant–in–aid received by the rural libraries is never sufficient enough for survival. Manipur serves only district libraries and the rural libraries exist only for name sake and most of the rural libraries are run by the clubs and NGOs. Rural library is a basic sub set of the system called public library. In Manipur the development of public library has been traced back to 1930.

The establishment of a District Library and Children's Library-Cum-Museum at Imphal in 1958 was the first initiative taken up from the side of the Government of Manipur for the public library. Since 26th August 1970 both the libraries were merged and came to be known as the State Central Library (SCL) and the Children's Library became a section of it. The same is the only biggest public library of the state whose facilities/services (mainly reading room, book loan etc) are also made available to the rural people.

The government run public libraries of the state (specifying rural and urban) are given below:

Table - I, Government Run Public Libraries

Sl.No.	Name of the Library	Est. year	District	Rural/Urban
1	State Central Library (SCL)	1958	Imphal West	Urban
2	Branch Library of SCL (NIngthoukhong)	11/10/1999	Bishnupur	Urban
3	Netaji Memorial Library (Moirang)	1968	Bishnupur	Urban
4	District Library (Chandel)	1976	Chandel	Rural
5	District Library (Churachandpur)	1974	Churachandpur	Rural
6	District Library (Thoubal)	11/03/1997	Thoubal	Urban
7	District Library (Senapati)	1974	Senapati	Rural
8	District Library (Tamenglong)	1974	Tamenglong	Rural
9	District Library (Ukhrul)	1974	Ukhrul	Rural

The above table shows that of the 8 (eight) public libraries excluding SCL run by the State Government, 5 (five) are from the rural areas/districts of Manipur. There are no district libraries for the remaining two valley districts, i.e., Imphal West and Imphal East.

As an important component of the public library system of the state there are about 300 (three hundred) libraries (as estimated) run by the voluntary Organisations/NGOs. They are found to be scattered mostly in the four valley districts. Out of these 300 libraries 120 (one hundred and twenty) are benefited by Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Kolkata. The district wise distribution of the same is shown below:

Table-II, RRRLF Benefited Voluntary Organisational Libraries

Sl.No	**Name of the District**	**No. of Library**
1	Bishnupur	15
2	Chandel	03
3	Churachandpur	Nil
4	Imphal East	30
5	Imphal West	50
6	Senapati	Nil
7	Tamenglong	Nil
8	Thoubal	22
9	Ukhrul	Nil
	Total	120

As reported, about 85% of these libraries are located in rural areas. The table shows that not even a single such library from the hill districts viz, Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Ukhrul are benefited by the RRRLF presently. However, Tipaimukh Club and Nehru Mark Club of Churachandpur district and Tolloi Rising Youth Club of Ukhrul district were beneficiary libraries earlier. There names

have been deleted from the list of RRRLF beneficiary libraries maintained by the SCL on some technical ground At present about 300 organisations from all the districts of the state are applying for the same. In the near future about 30 out of these organizations are likely to be included in the list of the beneficiary libraries.

5. Plan Model of Rural Library Information Network in Manipur

Rural library/information centre is a community centre around which the cultural life of the rural community revolves. Now-a-days the rural library and information centre is becoming a potential force in the social. Economical and cultural life of the rural community and is playing a very significant role in building up a healthy and progressive rural community.

The Information Support System for Rural Development is a prerequisite for Integrated Rural Development in the State of Manipur and the necessary information support required for rural development as well as the community development, a proper information infrastructure has to be developed. In order to develop such rural development information there is an urgent need of establishing a Network of Rural Libraries and Information Centres dealing with rural development research and its allied subject at the first instance. There is also a general need of co-ordination between different government agencies/departments, institutions, NGOs, libraries and information centres, rural populace with Gram Panchayat as its hub. The rural development programme and policy makers in Manipur have so far virtually left rural libraries out of their scheme of things. Manipur is mainly a state of villages and 74.89% of populations are living in the rural areas. The government and NGOs are trying to develop rural areas in Manipur.

The rural scenario of the state are lack of proper information service centres at the village level, rural people are not getting the right information at the right time, and this will lead to the slow development of rural mass. In view of the failure of the present Rural Library System in the Villages of Manipur, it is suggested that one model, if the situation warrants in order to meet all the information requirements of village people and to uplift the socio-economical, political, cultural and all round development of the rural community for the construction of information oriented or knowledge based society in the state of Manipur.

The purpose model will facilitate for improving the existing system and services in building up a healthy and progressive rural community. It also help rural people to make use of information resources, acquire, store, assemble, retrieve, and disseminate the right information to the rural people and can access the information at local, regional, national and international level if the system or centre have extended its network facilities abroad.

On the basis of the existing infrastructure, and considering the needs and requirement of the rural communities, views and the suggestions of the user communities a model viz. "Rural Library Information Network System" (RLINS), along with the "Village Library Information Dissemination System" (VLIDS has been proposed, the designing programme, as proposed, will carried with the co-operative efforts of different and similar agencies who will be the participating members. In the proposed model of 'RLINS', Directorate of Library Services will act as the central hub, if the Manipur Public Library Act which was passed in 1988, may be implementing as soon as possible by the Government. The proposed model will have a phase wise manner for establishing, implementing,

maintaining and evaluating the usefulness, functions and services and feed back from the rural community/user community will be determined.

Figure-I: Proposed Model for Rural Library Information Network System

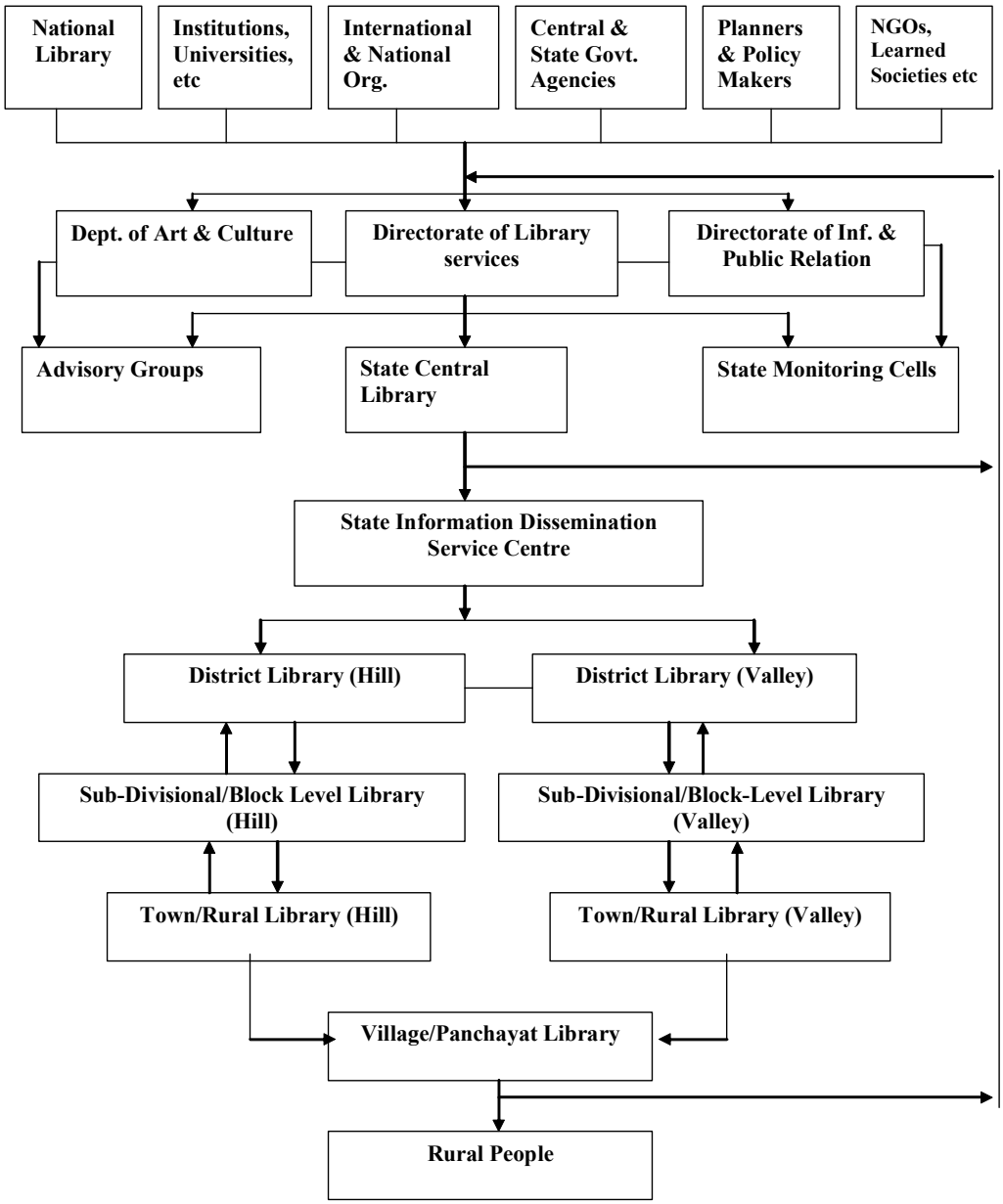


Figure:II: Proposed Village Library Information Dissemination System

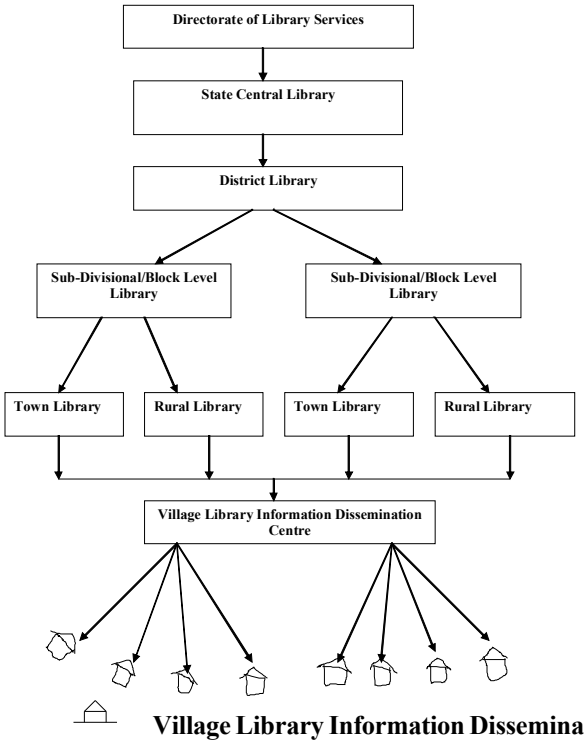
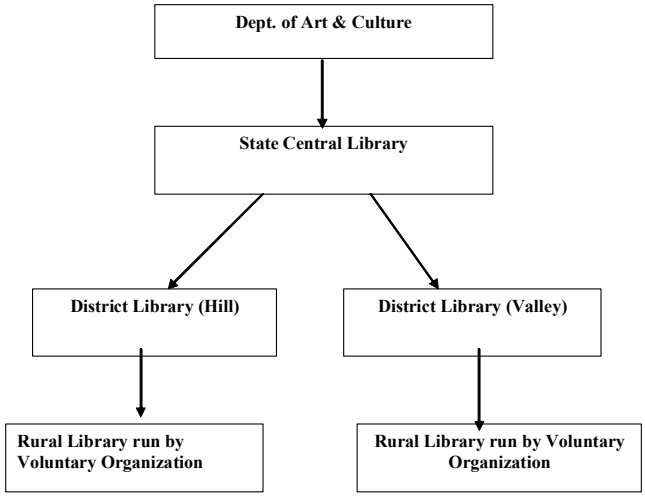


Figure-III: Existing Library System in the State



6. ICTs – Key to Bridging New Digital Connections in Rural Areas of Manipur

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are becoming the engines of human and economic development. The growth of information technology and its impact on all parts of the world from individual's households to organizational and economical, political and social levels is imminent. In the Indian context, particularly in Manipur, it is known and apparent that, disparities exist in formation access by the nature of income, geographical location, language, poverty, illiteracy, education, minority, status etc. This information gap is supposed to be overcome by successful implementation of Information Technology (IT), but it is widening even more for small social services organizations in the nonprofit sector where community services are in demand for workforce development and lifelong learning opportunities in global economy and changing world. It is recognized that ICT is a tool, which could be manipulated effectively for information resource development and key to bridging new information network/digital network connections in the information poor societies. The scenario in the developing world was quite different. Most countries had no national policy for the utilization of ICT. This had resulted in unplanned information infrastructure. Information systems and services had been introduced haphazardly according to the will and capability of individual organizations. Unplanned development of information systems has become obstacles rather than promoters of development.

The information network encompasses all ICTs which are the key innovation in computer networks ranging from Intranet to the Internet and it will create a wealth of new digital networks connections:

- Connections between State (S2S) – permitting better development and cooperation.
- Connections within and between government (G2G) – permitting 'joined-up thinking'.
- Connections between government and citizens (G2C) – strengthening accountability and responsibility.
- Connections between government and business/NGOs (G2B) – transforming service delivery.
- Connections within and between business (B2B) – supporting learning and concerted action.
- Connections within and between institutions and civil societies (I2S) – promoting learning and acquiring knowledge.
- Connections within and between citizens and communities (C2C) – building social and economic development.
- Connections within and between computer networks and community service centres (CNs2CSCs) – promoting awareness and development of IT knowledge among the communities.

7. Electronic Networks through Rural Libraries

Libraries are instruments of equal opportunity and must provide a safety net against alienation and social exclusion from technological advance by becoming the electronic doorway to information in the digital age. They should enable all citizens to have access to the information that will enable them to manage their lives at the local level, to acquire essential information about the democratic process and to participate positively in an increasingly global society.

The rural library should provide access to the resources of the library and to those of other libraries and information services through the creation and maintenance of and participation in effective electronic networks at all levels from local to international. This can include participation in community networks; programme to develop technologically advanced communities and electronic information networks linking two or more agencies. They should also be part of National Information Policy/ State Information Policy and concern government agencies, rural populace, NGOs, libraries and information centres, institutions, R & D organizations engaged in rural development, local self-government (i.e. Panchayat) should take active participation to meet the variety of requirement in this global information environment.

8. Conclusions

The Government of India, State Governments and NGOs have focused their men and resources to promote the rural development functions but the equation is still in infancy as far as the achievements are concerned. The focus should be on improving information exchange through better rural library/ community information systems and services so as to provide right information to the right people in the right format and at the right time by way of establishing pilot projects, support rural and agricultural, educational, health care sector etc provide community based rural library and information network services.

Presently libraries cannot function in isolation. Each of them should be a part of a system where group of libraries and information centres are extending services in full cooperation. Rural libraries should agree to share their resource with the members of other libraries. The needs and requirements of the Rural Library information Network System would work as a platform for distribution of rural information to right users.

The applications of ICTs are very important tools now-a-days for library networking and finally to conclude the fact that, there is a need for Rural Library Information Network System in villages of Manipur from where people can obtain information of interest and use to them. It can be a centre where people can take part in learning activities, discuss and share knowledge, information and concerns with extension and other community workers, planners and administrators, the proposed network will meet the information needs of the village people and all round development of the rural areas of the state.

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