DIGITISATION OF LIBRARIES AND MANPOWER ISSUES IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

By

H. P. S. Kalra*

<u>ABSTRACT</u>

ICTs have been adopted by libraries in India as and when they are evolved. The transformation of some traditional libraries into hybrid libraries has been gradual, but with little jerks as well. The paper stresses that ICTs are inevitable for a modern library in a networked global information society. This paper also raises some issues, particularly the ones concerning human resources, faced by Indian libraries in various stages of transformation. Libraries in India are now faced with issues concerning the most critical resource in management, viz. the human resource. From poorly organised collections managed by non-professionals to modern networked libraries managed by professionals, and libraries falling somewhere between the two extremes, India has all types and levels of libraries. With a large number of libraries still traditional, some automated, and only a few having digital collections, manpower issues in case of Indian libraries are diverse and complex.

Many university and special libraries have completed to a larger extent their automation processes, and are also networked. This paper highlights the problems faced by librarians in modernising their libraries and digitizing their collections. Public libraries seem to have been left behind as far as adoption of ICTs and modernisation of libraries is concerned. In the absence of clear-cut policy and guidelines for networking, and digitization of libraries, and the provision of electronic library services, library authorities and professionals are facing a lot of problems. The paper points out that in India there is also a contradiction regarding employment scenario in libraries. On the one hand there are many libraries which don't have a qualified professional librarian, and on the other there are inadequate employment opportunities for the very large number of qualified bachelors' and masters' degree holders in library and information science. This situation has implications for teachers in library & information science for updating the syllabi of existing courses and introducing new need based short-term courses to strengthen the existing professionally qualified staff.

The paper lays emphasis on developing policy drafts for library and information services in the country in the context of digitization and global electronic village. Particular emphasis must be laid down in the policy on issues concerning manpower. Since government agencies have not done much regarding policy issues, concerned professional associations and organisations should take up the initiative in this regard. The paper concludes with the hope that in the near future, library associations and organisations shall play proactive and assertive roles so that some of the issues currently faced by the profession are sorted out.

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* Lecturer, Department of Library & Information Science, Punjabi University, Patiala 147 002.
  Email: harry@pbi.ernet.in