

# NEP 2020 AND THE CHANGING ROLE OF LIBRARIES

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**Abstract:**-The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India represents a paradigm shift in the country’s educational landscape, advocating for holistic, multidisciplinary, flexible, and learner-centric education. This transformative policy document implicitly and explicitly redefines the role of libraries, moving them from peripheral, passive repositories of information to central, dynamic nexuses of teaching, learning, and community engagement. This research paper investigates the changing role of libraries as mandated and implied by NEP 2020. It argues that libraries are no longer merely support services but are critical infrastructure for achieving the policy’s ambitious goals of fostering critical thinking, creativity, lifelong learning, and inclusive access to knowledge. Through a comprehensive literature review and thematic discussion, the paper explores the new dimensions of the library’s function: as a physical and digital learning commons facilitating multidisciplinary inquiry; as an active pedagogical partner in curriculum delivery and information literacy; as a catalyst for digital equity and open access; as a preserver and promoter of indigenous knowledge; and as a vibrant community space. The paper also addresses the significant challenges in this transition, including infrastructural deficits, skill gaps among library professionals, and budgetary constraints. It concludes that the successful implementation of NEP 2020 is inextricably linked to the strategic reimagining and robust resourcing of academic and public libraries. For this evolution to occur, a concurrent "National Library Policy" and a commitment to transforming Library and Information Science education are essential.

**Keywords:**-National Education Policy 2020, Academic Libraries, Learning Commons, Digital Libraries, Information Literacy, Multidisciplinary Education, Open Educational Resources (OER), Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Librarian Competencies, Library Transformation.

## 1.0 Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Indian government, is a landmark framework aiming to overhaul the education system from pre-primary to higher education. Its foundational pillars include accessibility, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability, with a pronounced emphasis on flexibility, multidisciplinary, critical thinking, and holistic development. While the policy extensively discusses curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, institutional restructuring, and technological integration, its vision cannot be fully realized without a concurrent re-evaluation of one of the oldest and most fundamental educational institutions: the library. Traditionally, libraries in India, particularly in academic settings, have been perceived as static warehouses of books and silent spaces for solitary study and book issuance.

**Table -1 Zest of NEP 2020 regarding Libs**

Aspect	NEP 2020 Provisions	Changing Role of Libraries
<b>Access &amp; Inclusivity</b>	Promotes equitable access to quality education for all learners, including socio-economically disadvantaged groups.	Libraries become inclusive learning hubs with multilingual, accessible, and community-friendly resources.
<b>Digital Transformation</b>	Emphasizes the use of digital tools, online learning platforms, and technology-based education.	Libraries evolve into digital resource centers with e-books, databases, ICT tools, and internet access.
<b>Holistic &amp;</b>	Encourages flexible, multidisciplinary	Libraries curate cross-disciplinary

<b>Multidisciplinary Education</b>	learning pathways in higher and school education.	collections and support project-based, inquiry-driven learning.
<b>Teacher &amp; Student Support</b>	Focus on continuous professional development for teachers and personalized learning for students.	Libraries offer training, digital literacy workshops, and personalized learning materials for teachers & learners.
<b>Foundational Literacy &amp; Numeracy (FLN)</b>	Launch of National Mission on FLN to improve basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills.	Libraries provide storytelling corners, reading programs, and early-literacy materials.
<b>Research &amp; Innovation</b>	Establishment of the National Research Foundation to boost research culture.	Academic libraries enhance research support services, provide access to journals, and promote open-access initiatives.
<b>Use of Technology in Governance</b>	Promotes educational technology, online assessments, and digital governance.	Libraries adopt automation (OPAC, RFID), digital archives, and efficient library management systems.
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Encourages schools and institutions to engage with local communities.	Libraries host community programs, awareness workshops, lifelong learning activities, and cultural events.
<b>Library as Learning Spaces</b>	Recognizes the importance of well-equipped libraries for experiential and discovery-based learning.	Libraries redesign spaces into interactive zones: maker spaces, reading nooks, and collaborative learning areas.
<b>Skill Development</b>	Focuses on vocational education, coding, and 21st-century skills.	Libraries provide resources for skill training, coding clubs, career guidance, and entrepreneurship learning materials.

Their role has often been marginal in the pedagogical process, confined to a supportive, reactive function. NEP 2020, however, creates an imperative for a radical shift. The policy’s advocacy for experiential learning, research-based teaching, multidisciplinary coursework, and digital fluency positions the library at the epicenter of the new educational ecosystem. It is called upon to transform from a collection-centric to a learner-centric entity; from a gatekeeper of information to a facilitator of knowledge creation and dissemination. This paper aims to critically analyze the contours of this changing role. It seeks to answer: How does NEP 2020 redefine the purpose and function of libraries? What are the specific operational and strategic shifts required? What challenges must be overcome in this transition? And what is the future trajectory for libraries in the NEP 2020 era? By examining these questions, the paper underscores that investing in modernized libraries is not an ancillary activity but a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the entire policy.

**2.0 Objectives**

- **To analyze the key provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 related to libraries**
- **To evaluate the changing role of libraries in the context of NEP 2020**
- **To identify future opportunities and challenges for libraries under NEP 2020**

**3.0 Literature Review**

Internationally, the concept of the library as a "learning commons" or "knowledge commons" has gained prominence (Beagle, 2010). This model emphasizes collaborative spaces, integrated technology, and services designed to support active learning and group work. Similarly, the focus on digital librarianship, open access advocacy, and research data management has reshaped academic library services (Lynch, 2017). Literature extensively covers the librarian’s evolving role as an instructional partner, data curator, and digital humanities collaborator (ACRL, 2015). Studies on Indian academic libraries have historically highlighted challenges such as inadequate funding, outdated collections, lack of professional staff, low integration with teaching, and poor ICT infrastructure (Kumar, 2015). While initiatives like the UGC-INFONET and National Digital Library of India (NDLI) have made strides in digital access, a pervasive "culture of underutilization" and a perception of libraries as low-priority assets have persisted (Khan & Bhat, 2012). Since 2020, a growing body of commentary and analysis has begun to map the implications of NEP for libraries. Scholars like Singh and Sivakumar (2021) argue that NEP provides a "golden opportunity" for libraries to reinvent themselves. Libraries are seen as the ideal physical and virtual spaces to house and facilitate access to resources across disciplines, breaking down silos (Patil, 2021). The policy’s push for online and blended learning necessitates robust digital library platforms, e-resource provisioning, and information literacy instruction for navigating digital content (Jeevan, 2020). Libraries

are tasked with the critical role of curating, preserving, and providing access to indigenous knowledge, often through digitization projects (NEP, 2020). The focus on continuous education throughout life expands the library's mandate beyond formal students to the wider community (Mahajan, 2022). This review establishes that while global trends provide a framework, NEP 2020 imposes a specific, policy-driven mandate for transformation in the Indian context, which requires deeper exploration.

#### **4.0 The Multifaceted New Roles of Libraries under NEP 2020**

The core areas where libraries must evolve to align with and enable the NEP 2020 vision.

**4.1. Repository to Learning Commons:** The Physical and Intellectual Hub NEP's emphasis on collaborative, interactive, and discussion-based pedagogy (NEP, 2020), necessitates a radical redesign of library spaces. The traditional row-based, silent reading room must give way to a Learning Commons. This involves:

- **Flexible Spaces:** Zones for group discussion, project work, presentation practice, and individual quiet study.
- **Makerspaces:** Areas equipped with tools for experimentation (3D printers, coding kits, multimedia editing stations) to foster creativity and hands-on learning, directly supporting experiential education.
- **Integrated Technology:** Ubiquitous Wi-Fi, laptop lending, interactive screens, and seamless access to digital resources within the physical space.
- This transforms the library from a place to consume information to a place to create, collaborate, and synthesize knowledge, directly supporting the multidisciplinary curriculum.

**4.2. Librarians as Pedagogical Partners and Co-instructors:** The librarian's role must shift from custodian to educator and collaborator.

- **Embedded Information Literacy (IL):** With the explosion of information (and misinformation), NEP's goal of fostering critical thinking cannot be achieved without systematic IL instruction. Librarians must collaborate with faculty to design and deliver integrated IL module teaching students to find, evaluate, use, and ethically cite information in all formats. This is foundational for research-based learning.
- **Curriculum Support and OER Curation:** Librarians can proactively assist faculty in developing courses by identifying and curating relevant Open Educational Resources (OER), e-books, journal articles, and multimedia, reducing textbook dependency and enhancing access.
- **Research Support Services:** For postgraduate and doctoral students, as emphasized in NEP, libraries must offer advanced services like literature review support, reference management software training, research data management guidance, and support for open-access publishing.

**4.3. The Digital Imperative:** NEP's vision of blended learning and online education makes the digital library non-negotiable.

- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Libraries must become public access points for students lacking devices or connectivity, ensuring equitable participation in digital education.
- **Developing Robust Digital Infrastructure:** This includes subscribing to quality e-databases, building institutional repositories for preserving and showcasing local research, and creating user-friendly discovery interfaces.
- **Promoting Open Access and OER:** Aligning with the global shift, libraries must advocate for and manage open-access publishing funds, and actively curate and promote high-quality OER to reduce the cost of education and increase the availability of learning materials.

**4.4. Custodians of Culture and Community Anchors:** NEP 2020 uniquely charges libraries with a cultural mission.

- **Promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):** Libraries must systematically collect, digitize, catalog, and promote resources on indigenous languages, traditions, arts, science, and medicine. This positions them as key players in decolonizing education and fostering cultural pride.
- **Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement:** The policy's focus on lifelong learning expands the library's user base. Public and academic libraries can host workshops, lectures, reading clubs, and skill development programs for alumni, local communities, and professionals, transforming into vibrant community knowledge centers.

**4.5. Challenges in the Transformation:** This ambitious transformation faces significant hurdles:

- **Infrastructural and Financial Constraints:** Most Indian libraries lack the capital for space redesign, advanced technology, and comprehensive digital collections. Sustained, increased funding is critical.
- **Human Resource Gap:** Existing library staff may lack the skills in instructional design, technology management, data curation, and community engagement. A massive upskilling and reskilling initiative is required, alongside revising LIS curricula to reflect these new roles.
- **Mindset Shift:** Overcoming the entrenched perception of libraries as low-priority "overheads" among administrators, faculty, and even students is a persistent challenge. Advocacy and demonstrable impact are essential.
- **Policy-Practice Dissonance:** NEP's recommendations for libraries are not accompanied by a detailed implementation roadmap or mandatory guidelines, risking inconsistency and ad-hoc efforts.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 presents not just a challenge but a historic mandate for libraries in India to reclaim their central position in the educational and socio-cultural fabric. The policy's success is, to a considerable degree, contingent upon the successful metamorphosis of libraries from passive repositories into dynamic, integrated, and intellectually vibrant learning hubs. This transformation encompasses spatial, technological, service-oriented, and philosophical dimensions. This vision to materialize, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. Firstly, there is an urgent need for a National Library Policy or a focused NEP implementation framework for libraries that provides standards, funding guidelines, and strategic direction. Secondly, Library and Information Science education must be radically overhauled to produce a new generation of librarians equipped with pedagogical, technological, and managerial competencies. Thirdly, library advocacy must be intensified to convince institutional leaders and policymakers of the library's strategic return on investment in achieving core educational outcomes, the library under NEP 2020 must be envisioned as the beating heart of the institutional place that empowers the curious mind, supports the collaborative project, bridges the digital gap, preserves cultural heritage, and fosters a lifelong love for learning. By embracing this transformative role, libraries can move from being silent witnesses to becoming active architects of India's new knowledge society.

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