

# A REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF MODERN LIBRARIES IN THE CURRENT INFORMATION SOCIETY

Devaraju M N

Librarian

Government First Grade College for Women  
Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka State, India - 577101

E-mail Id: [devarajumn2207@gmail.com](mailto:devarajumn2207@gmail.com)

**Abstract :** Libraries serve as hubs of information. When people think of a "library," they typically envision books. However, books now come in various formats, such as e-books and audio books. Beyond just housing books, libraries are valuable sources of knowledge, offering individuals free access to a vast amount of information that may be difficult to find elsewhere, whether online, in print, or through personal connections. Libraries have a crucial impact on society since they serve as access points to knowledge and culture. A creative and forward-thinking society need new ideas and perspectives, which are fostered by the resources and services they offer. They also promote intellectual and educational endeavours. Libraries also aid in the preservation of reliable documents and collected wisdom from earlier generations. Research and human knowledge advancement, as well as preserving knowledge and cultural heritage for future generations, would be difficult in a society without libraries. In this essay, the function of libraries in contemporary society will be skimmed over.

**Keywords :** education and recreation, information society, human society, libraries, institutions

## 1.0 Introduction

Libraries offer free education and entertainment to everyone, whether they are students, working professionals, or regular members of a community. Regardless of your financial position, you are qualified to have free access to books that can educate and transform you. State and community libraries are open to everyone, and anybody can take advantage of those during operating hours, even though access to academy/ council and research libraries is restricted to students of that specific academy/ council. It may not be incorrect to state that a library serves as a central repository for books of various genres and subjects. A good modern library will occasionally purchase subscriptions to all required journals and daily newspapers so that anyone interested in these information sources can access them. At the moment, libraries are expanding their field of endeavour. It is no longer restricted to physical objects. utilising technology from the twenty-first century, it may provide all the installations' information needs anytime or wherever you want utilising the internet in online mode.

## 2.0 Institutions Founded by the Human Society

In our present era, the utilization of information has become more prevalent in our daily lives compared to previous times. The abundance of information accessible through various mediums such as radio, television, internet, books, newspapers, and magazines has significantly increased, both in developed and developing nations. The exchange of information between individuals, organizations, and parties has become more information-intensive, leading to heightened interactions. This trend is further amplified by the growing number of individuals employed in service sector occupations, even in developing countries, resulting in a greater intensity of information in economic activities. These developments can be attributed, in part, to the ongoing structural changes occurring in the economy and society, as well as advancements in technology. Although it is challenging to separate the influence of these factors, it is evident that technology has played a pivotal role. The remarkable progress in information and communication technologies (ICT) has revolutionized societies in both developed and developing nations, surpassing what was once deemed unimaginable. Our personal lives, interpersonal relationships, and engagement in production and distribution activities have all undergone transformative changes, which have long-term implications for society as a whole and the economy in particular. The ability to connect with individuals worldwide instantaneously, conduct various tasks such as shopping, banking, and work from the comfort of our homes, and access top-quality entertainment, education, and medical care has undoubtedly enhanced our quality of life.

Numerous establishments have been created over an extended period to fulfill this crucial duty. Social institutions encompass schools, colleges, universities, research centers, cultural establishments, fine arts and recreational facilities, business and industrial enterprises, among others. The library is one such institution. However, unlike other institutions that cater to specific societal needs, the library has the ability to address almost all of them. As a school student, your main responsibility is to acquire the necessary knowledge for your level. This is primarily achieved through oral communication with teachers, supplemented by reading a few prescribed textbooks. However, in the library, you will have access to books covering a wide range of topics that provide knowledge, stimulate your intellect, instill values and learning skills, and offer recreational materials. Consequently, among all the institutions established by society, the library and its modern counterparts are the most effective in meeting the diverse requirements of users in modern society.

### **3.0 Information and Society**

In recent years, the advancement of Information and Communication Technology has provided us with easy access to a vast amount of information. However, it is important to note that having more information does not necessarily equate to having more knowledge. According to dictionary.com, knowledge refers to the understanding of facts, truths, or principles obtained through study or investigation, while information simply refers to the act or fact of informing. Based on this definition, we can deduce that knowledge involves analyzing and interpreting information. Therefore, a knowledgeable society would be one that constantly innovates and applies information in ways that can positively impact lives. It is worth mentioning that the concept of a knowledgeable society was first introduced by Peter Drucker in his book "The Age of Discontinuity" in 1969. To illustrate this point further, let's consider the example of making a sheet of paper. While anyone can find information on how to make a sheet of paper, it requires a certain level of expertise and wisdom to actually manufacture it on an industrial scale. This highlights the importance of not just possessing information but also having the ability to apply and utilize that knowledge. So, it begs the question: are we currently living in a society where innovation is constantly observed across all social levels? The answer, in my opinion, is no. The notion of a Knowledge Society is more of a myth. Instead, we find ourselves living in a society that is consumed by an insatiable appetite for news and messages generated worldwide. People are heavily immersed in social networks and primarily communicate through chat rooms where they can access news at any given moment. With such an overwhelming amount of information readily available, when do we find time for deep, critical thinking? To put it in perspective, it is akin to being a "lamb" that mindlessly follows the ideas and opinions of others, acting as a shepherd. Therefore, I propose the terms "Idea Shepherds" and "Information Lambs" to describe two distinct groups of individuals. The former represents those who actively generate ideas and contribute to knowledge, while the latter represents those who simply regurgitate the thoughts and opinions of others. As society evolves and adapts to its environment, we are constantly surrounded by an abundance of data from electronic and physical sources. This prompts me to initiate a debate on whether we truly live in a knowledge society characterized by a significant number of Idea Shepherds.

### **4.0 Library and Society**

The library and society are interconnected and rely on each other. The purpose of a library is to cater to the needs of the society. A library can be considered a widely recognized "social agency" that plays a crucial role in influencing our society. It serves as a means to transmit and distribute accumulated knowledge through various materials, such as books. Many years ago, libraries primarily functioned as guardians of books and written documents. These libraries preserved writings on different mediums like clay tablets, papyrus, parchment, velum, and paper. They were usually found in the personal collections of kings or in places of worship and religious centers. Access to these collections was limited, only available to the educated elite who sought knowledge. Over time, as education became more accessible to the general public, libraries started to be open to everyone, creating awareness about their importance.

### **5.0 Role of Libraries in our Society**

Modern societies are moving towards being predominantly information-based and knowledge-based. In such societies, information and knowledge are highly sought-after and valuable commodities. These valuable commodities, information and knowledge, are crucial for modern societies to establish themselves as economic leaders. Various institutions such as educational establishments, policy and decision-making bodies, and businesses rely on data for technological advancements, research, education, cultural development, and economic and social progress. Libraries play a vital role in making information accessible to society and the nation. They have become an integral part of the social framework and are involved in all social programs aimed at the growth and

development of the country. The roles that libraries play in supporting modern societies can be categorized into five main categories: (1) educational roles, (2) user education roles, (3) recreational roles, (4) library as a physical space, and (5) social and cultural roles. The social roles of libraries include the democratization of information and knowledge, connecting people to information and data sources, providing information and awareness services to communities for empowerment. Libraries also serve as attractive community centers, hosting various educational, social, and cultural activities. They collect, preserve, and conserve documents related to the socio-cultural aspects of society for future generations.

### **6.0 Current Society and Library**

Today, the word "library" is used in a variety of situations, including both physical and digital libraries. The Latin word "Liber," which meaning "book," is the root of the English term "library," according to the Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science (ODLIS). A collection or group of books and other print or non-print resources that are organised and maintained for use in reading, consultation, study, research, and other activities is referred to as a "bibliotheca" in Greek and Roman languages. A library is more than just a structure with books and resources; it also supports educational and research endeavours, fosters culture, disseminates knowledge, and helps people develop their own value systems. Some might question the need for librarians in the age of Google and the internet, just as they question the need for teachers when Wikipedia exists. However, just as Wikipedia does not replace teachers, Google searches and the internet do not replace librarians. Every book and item in a library is there for users and readers to use, and each reader must locate their own book. The library would be devoid of books, readers, patrons, and library employees. Free books and a peaceful reading area are provided by libraries, which has a positive impact on and increases reading habits. The proper answer may be found at the right time by library specialists, unlike Google, which can produce hundreds of replies or solutions to a single issue. Libraries help society in the current era of information abundance by maintaining and making available pertinent information as needed.

They provide accurate information as well as a history of the knowledge developed and gathered by earlier generations. It has become difficult to select pertinent information from the huge amount available across many platforms as a result of the information explosion. The 'Gateway of Knowledge for the Community', libraries perform a crucial function. Libraries are able to service all of society's requirements equally, unlike other organisations that only address particular needs. Their offerings encourage literacy and education, offer learning opportunities, and aid in the development of fresh viewpoints and ideas crucial to the development of an inventive and creative society. Due of national quarantines and closures during the Covid-19 pandemic, libraries, like many other institutions, experienced tough obstacles.

They had to make difficult choices regarding the services they could offer, considering pandemic-related measures. Schools and colleges shifted their operations online as much as possible. Despite these circumstances, library associations played a commendable role in informing and supporting their members. They offered online training related to Covid-19 and professional development, launched campaigns against Covid-19 misinformation, and took steps to reopen libraries safely as cases decreased worldwide. Without libraries, it would be challenging to conduct advanced research and preserve human knowledge and heritage for future generations. Libraries are pillars of education, and digital libraries present new opportunities for innovative educational practices. While the demand for library services is gradually shifting towards digital media, the relevance of libraries in the digital age lies in their ability to provide access to all forms of media for everyone. Libraries serve as gateways to knowledge, and they have proven their adaptability and versatility in the past to fit changing environments. They will continue to do so in the future.

### **7.0 Conclusion**

Libraries are one of the few places in the world that provide opportunities for even the most disadvantaged individuals to improve themselves. There are numerous activities available for you to engage in. You can learn about topics such as depression, alcoholism, personal finances, job searching, and home repairs. It is not an easy process, and it requires dedication. You need to have a grasp of the English language and be willing to spend several hours of your time. You can utilize various newspapers and employment resources to find job opportunities, as well as access different books for studying and much more in the library. The library welcomes individuals of all ages, offering a gateway to education and recreation for everyone. Regardless of your financial situation, you can visit and

freely access books that will enlighten and transform you. I sincerely hope that libraries will continue to exist in some form or another.

### **8.0 Reference**

- i. Godin, Seth. (2011). The Future of the Library. Seth's Blog. N.p., 16 May 2011. Web. 18 May 2011.
- ii. Kaul, H.K. (2013). Librarians of the future: mastering the road ahead. New Delhi: DE1.
- iii. Chakrabarti, Bhubaneswar & Mahapatra, Piyushkanti (2008) Library and Information Science : an introduction. Kolkata : The World Press Pvt. Ltd.
- iv. Evas, Wendy and Baker, David (ed.) (2011). Libraries and Society: Role, Responsibility and Future in an Age of Change".Oxford :Chandos Publishing.
- v. Godin, Seth. The Future of the Library." Seth's Blog. N.p., 16 May 2011. Web. 18 May 2011.
- vi. Kaul, H.K.(2013). Librarians of the future: mastering the road ahead. New Delhi: DELNET.
- vii. Kumar, Krishan (2001). Library organization". New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House.
- viii. Pandey, S. K. S. (1992). Library and society", New Delhi: EssEss Publication.
- ix. Bawden, D. & Robinson, L. (2009). The dark side of information: overload, anxiety and other paradoxes and pathologies. Journal of Information Science, 35(2), pp. 180-191. doi: 10.1177/0165551508095781
- x. Bawden, D. & Robinson, L. (2012), Introduction to information science, Facet, London.
- xi. Bell, D. (1974). The coming of post-industrial society, Heinemann, Portsmouth.
- xii. Bynum, T.W. (2010). The historical roots of information and computer ethics, in Floridi, L. (ed.) The Cambridge Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 20–38.
- xiii. Feather, J. (2013). The information society: a study of continuity and change, 6th edn, Facet, London.
- xiv. Floridi L. (2008). Information Ethics, its Nature and Scope, in van den Hoven, J. and Weckert, J. (eds.), <https://www.slideshare.net/mssridhar/library-and-society>.
- xv. <http://www.nios.ac.in/media/documents/SrSecLibrary/LCh-001.pdf>
- xvi. <http://www.nios.ac.in/media/documents/SrSecLibrary/LCh-001.pdf>
- xvii. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library>