
UNIT 1 ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN SOCIETY

Structure

- 1.0 Learning Outcomes
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Society: Meaning and Composition
 - 1.2.1 Modern Society
- 1.3 Libraries and Society
- 1.4 Libraries: Basics
 - 1.4.1 Meaning of Library
 - 1.4.2 Need and Purpose
 - 1.4.3 Value and Importance
 - 1.4.4 Defining a Library
- 1.5 Functional Role of Libraries in a Society
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Answers to Self Check Exercises
- 1.8 Keywords
- 1.9 References and Further Reading

1.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

This Unit gives an overview of societal roles that libraries play in the formal and non-formal education, life-long learning, cultural activities, recreation and entertainment, etc. After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain what is the purpose of society; why society is so important;
- discuss what libraries are, why are they necessary, what purpose do they serve in the society;
- describe how libraries function to serve persons with different needs and purposes;
- comprehend that people need libraries to consult books, find information to serve their specific interests;
- explain the roles that modern libraries play in educational institutions, life-long learning and in the lives of ordinary persons;
- discuss that libraries are an integral part of the society contributing to the growth and development of the country; and
- highlight that libraries are undergoing transformation in their basic characteristics and features with the growing use of ICT applications in managing library services.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit introduces you to some of the basic concepts of society, its composition and the major transformations that society has gone through the last few centuries. A general level of understanding is given about what libraries are, what is their need, purpose,

value and importance in the society. Further, the Unit explains how library as an institution serves the society focussing in particular on roles that libraries play in the cultural, educational and research *institutions and in all such other institutions that are vital to the mankind.*

1.2 SOCIETY: MEANING AND COMPOSITION

Meaning of Society

A society, or human society, has several different meanings. It refers to people living together in a community, sharing common interests and may be having distinctive customs and institutions. The term 'society' may also be used to refer to various distinctive cultural groups of people such as Tamilian society, Punjabi society or Gujarati society. Besides, people living in a particular country or region also constitute a society such as Indian society, Chinese society, English society, French society, or German society. An organised group of people associated together for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes may also be considered a society. Put simply, we may view society as aggregate of individuals living together as interdependent members in a highly structured system of communities.

Psychologically, people identify themselves with the idea of being part of an organised group for unity and strength. The purpose of forming people into societies is therefore to provide protection, continuity, security and identity.

There is yet another connotation to the meaning of society. It refers to a totality of human relationships. Human beings in relationship with each other, form a society. Society exists only when members of a group know each other and share common interests. For instance, two persons travelling in the same train, even if seated together, do not form a society; because they are not socially related and have little mutual interests to share. But as soon as they come to know each other, the element of society is created. There can be no society without reciprocal human social relationships or social interactions between individuals or between members in a group. Hence, cohesion, affinity and interdependence within a group are integral to the formation of a society. Reciprocity and mutuality in social relationships is the very basis of society. Libraries have a role to play in building and strengthening social relationships within the groups by providing them community space and opportunities to organise academic and cultural activities and to interact around information.

In the modern era, societies are dependent on institutions more than ever to address societal needs, issues and interests in the nation. Institutions have become political, cultural and economic imperatives. We see a pattern of institutions operating in our societies for utilisation of national resources, economic development, educational development and infrastructure development, development of services, or law and order. Their (institutions) numbers are growing in the private, corporate and public sectors in the national economy. For every societal activity, societies have evolved a variety of institutions. For instance, a State is a political institution and societies have evolved it for governance. Institutions have become one of the distinguishing characteristic of the societies, the basis for service to majority of the population and serving as a major part of the national income. They are instrumental in shaping the national economy and contributing to distinct social structure, educational system, Science and Technology system, political system, financial and economic system and cultural identity in the nation.

Definition of Society: Society is a structured composition of individuals in groups, communities, institutions and associations that exist together for their mutual benefits

and for the benefit of humanity. Society may also be viewed as a process of reciprocal, social and complex relationships among all components of the society.

Activity I

Look into four to five different dictionaries for the definition of the term 'society' and compare how these reference sources differ in defining the meaning of the term 'society'.

1.2.1 Modern Society

Stages of Societal Evolution – Society is not static in its composition and relationships. It is dynamic and keeps changing with time. In the last few centuries, society has witnessed major revolutions that determined and shaped the course of humanity. The revolutions that impacted the society are: agricultural revolution, industrial revolution, ICT (information) revolution and knowledge revolution, each possessing its own distinctive elements.

- **Agricultural society** made it possible to meet the basic food needs of a large percentage of the population.
- **Industrial society** made permanent impact on the means of production and created the social model of the great cities we live in today, made it possible to use of technology to enable mass production of material goods and supporting a large population endowed with a high capacity for division of labour.
- **Information society** gave technological tools that made impact on production of information and public services such as e-governance, e-commerce, e-business, e-learning, e-health, e-publication, etc. The information society has changed the way institutions and organisations transact work in business, education and logistics.
- **Knowledge society** refers to any society where knowledge is the primary production resource instead of capital and labour.

Modern Society – Modern society effectively took shape after the era of industrial revolution. Modern society refers to all societies that belong to the era that characterise the post-industrial society, information society and knowledge society. The factors that were instrumental in bringing about the transition of the traditional society into modern society were several, such as changes in the life styles, increasing awareness and competition, changes in the human values and the economic freedom brought about by advances made in the fields of technology, science, education and computers. The culture of consumerism, commercialisation and globalisation in modern times further accelerated the pace of societal shift to the modern society. It must be recognised that in modern society the speed of social change was rapid and faster than what it was there during the traditional society. This could be attributed to the emergence of institutions during the modern era as the underlying instruments, structures and mechanisms of social order.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

1) What is the difference between information society and knowledge society?

.....

1.3 LIBRARIES AND SOCIETY

Libraries as social institutions have become integral part of the society. Library and society are interlinked and interdependent, not mutually exclusive. We all recognise that information plays significant role in the all round human development, enabling peoples to develop their full potential with appropriate education and skills and preparing them for a transition from education stage to work stage. We also recognise that libraries provide the basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individuals and social groups. Libraries as gateways to knowledge and culture also offer countless learning opportunities that can fuel economic, social and cultural development.

Institutions in all sectors of economy – be it education sector, research sector, or service sector – need libraries. They need them because library is one of the most effective means of making information available for cultural, economic and social development. Educational institutions need libraries to support formal and informal education, learning, support literacy, check digital divide and help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are central to a creative and innovative society. Quite simply, libraries offer a means by which institutions can gain access to knowledge, thought and culture.

Communities need libraries to create awareness among under-privileged sections for their empowerment, such information on upcoming opportunities in the market for skill development, employment in the societal institutions, opportunities for their engagement in social and economic sectors. Society needs libraries so that people become well-informed citizens; they are able to exercise their democratic rights and play active role in societal development, human freedom and prosperity. The State, the largest institutional partner in the society, too needs libraries for creating awareness in public about governmental policies, projects and programmes, decision making, promoting trade and culture, etc.

Libraries are rich repositories of historically and culturally significant collections, many of which are not available anywhere else in the world. Society needs libraries to preserve records of knowledge created and accumulated by present and past generations. In a world without libraries, it would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world’s cumulative knowledge and heritage for future generations. Society needs libraries for capturing and preserving traditional knowledge, “born digital” works such as websites or electronic journals and manuscripts and other rare documents not available in print format.

Libraries need societies as much as societies need libraries. Societies have influenced libraries in several ways. It was mainly due to advances and developments in the ICT that traditional libraries could see change in their basic operations and services, bring change in their working environment, effect new modes of acquisitions such as e-resources that presuppose the implementation of new access strategies, etc. In the emerging electronic era, the mechanisms for information delivery in libraries have since changed from print to online. The use of electronic services and Web-based information sources has increased, libraries are managed in a more democratic way and that library services are more user-oriented. The ever expanding user base of institutions in the

education sector, service sector and Research and Development sector has indeed influenced and contributed to the growth and expansion of libraries, the dynamics of libraries, catalysing libraries into collaborative system at all levels of library service.

As societies advance and modernise, users’ expectations from libraries have also changed. Societies have persons of all age groups – men, women and children, all classes of people — rich, middle income group, poor, scholars, teachers, students, semi-literates, illiterates, physically handicapped and blind, different races and ethnic groups and so on comprise modern societies. Complexities in serving them with information and knowledge available in books in libraries still pose a challenge. The challenge is that their interests, needs and library uses are not common. The nature of their activities vary sharply and accordingly their needs. Their information needs range from a simple to complex requirements reflecting their varied interests and activities. Libraries and other institutions that handle and manage knowledge and information can only meet such growing expectations of modern society.

We must understand that society without libraries has no significance and libraries without society have no origin. Libraries have indeed become an integral part of the growth and development of the society.

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answer in the space given below.
 ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.
- 2) Why are libraries and information systems necessary in the education institutions?

.....

1.4 LIBRARIES: BASICS

1.4.1 Meaning of Library

Libraries represent different things to different people – from a place where students can go and study, to a service allowing anyone to borrow a book, access the Internet or do research. Quite simply, libraries offer a means by which students, scholars, teachers, professionals, or lay persons and others can gain access to information/knowledge, in particular to the organised collections of books and other published material for reading and borrowing. Being institutional facilities, access to libraries is restricted; it is open only to such individuals who are members of the institution of which library is a part.

What functions libraries perform? – Libraries are service oriented institutions that provide access to information, knowledge and culture. To perform this role libraries collect, stock, process and organise documents published in print, electronic, digital, or multi-media formats; build tools to search material for use; and offer user services for information dissemination.

Managing a Library – For managing library services in a systematic manner, library staff is broadly grouped into user services, technical services and library administration.

Library staff is accordingly organised into these services. Staff engaged in serving library users fall in the category of user services. Staff working behind the scenes to prepare the library's materials for users fall in the category of technical services and the staff handling administrative and physical functioning of the library are part of library administration; they keep the library services in line with user expectations. Libraries in majority are funded by government departments or institutions to which they are attached. If library defaults in meeting expectations of parent organisations, future continuance of library funding becomes an issue for the library. In this context, the role of library administration in keeping library services in order and running is critical and important. Significantly, libraries are pro-active; important changes are taking place in the characteristics and features of libraries with the increasing application of information and communication technologies. These relate to the ways libraries manage their functions; the ways they provide access online on the Internet; and the ways they store, manage and deliver information resources using ICT.

Books and other learning material are organised systematically by subjects and kept in open stacks for access, browsing and borrowing for home reading. Library holdings are generally rich and varied comprising books, periodicals, newspapers, reference books and other learning materials. For access, dissemination and distribution of information/knowledge stored in such documents, libraries build catalogues, databases or such other lists as library access aids. In addition to acquisitions, serials, classification and cataloguing work, a typical library is required to perform various other functions such as shelf maintenance, stock verification, library administration, circulation, reference and other user services.

Staff management in small libraries – The various services outlined above do not necessarily require staff members who work exclusively in any one single area. Librarians and other staff often fill multiple roles. In a small library, for example, a librarian might provide reference service and/or reader advisory service for a few hours and then complete some book selection work and thereafter take any other function. Multitasking in libraries nowadays is the order of the day.

Library automation and staff management – Library is an integrated system, its sub-systems depend on each other. Automation has enabled its sub-systems to work more in collaboration and unison to help the library perform better as a system. However, automation in libraries has blurred these lines of staff functioning in separate work areas. When a library installs an automated system, every person on the staff is involved with it. Library builds a central database of all library materials both titles and items (copies). Library cataloguers add records and keep updating the database. Circulation staff uses this database to check books in and out and keeps track of where they are. Acquisitions staff and serials staff uses this database to order new purchases and monitors items on order, checks them in and keeps track of the funds. Reference staff in library uses this database to answer user queries, assisting users in getting access to books and other library materials on stacks. To run and manage a library automation system, libraries require systems librarian who is responsible to keep the system functioning. The automated library system has changed and, with each new upgrade and added functionality, it continues to change traditional organisational patterns in the libraries.

Types of libraries – Library is a cultural institution that is shaped by society. In the society we have persons with different needs and purpose. In response to the different needs of such client groups, various types of libraries have evolved that are 'user based'. We have evolved public libraries, school libraries, college libraries, university libraries, special libraries, government libraries. In addition, we have libraries that are 'function-

based' or 'material-based' (e.g. manuscript libraries, audio-video libraries) or 'subject-based' (e.g. agriculture, engineering libraries) as national libraries. Even within a particular library type the needs of various client groups are different. For example, in a public library we may have persons of all ages, children, young, old and people from different trades, business centres, or person with different abilities. Libraries have evolved suitable collections to cater to persons with such different information needs and interests.

Library-user relationship – Library is an organisation based on users. To make library vibrant it is desirable that the services that a library provides must be user-oriented. User - library relationship will determine how users view their library. User - library relationships have to be nurtured in a systematic manner. Every interaction that a librarian has with users is an opportunity to develop relationships. Building a relationship with a new customer does not end after an introductory session about library services. The reality is that libraries have to earn trust and this takes time. It is imperative that libraries also focus on building credibility through providing excellent advice and customer service. The following activities should assist librarians to build effective relationships:

- Provide training on information resources or information management tools.
- Attend a meeting, class or conference devoted to the users' area of expertise (not oriented to librarians).
- Meet (in person or virtually) senior members of the user group to discuss information-related needs and services.
- Attend user group meetings to learn about their work and information needs.
- Meet with regular user to discuss information needs and present results to them.
- Attend social events of user groups.

1.4.2 Need and Purpose

Books are carriers for distributing and disseminating information. Books carry information and knowledge. Students need books for gaining knowledge in various subjects of their interest. Teachers need books for carrying out teaching functions efficiently and effectively. Doctors, lawyers and such other professionals need books in the practice of their profession. Almost every literate person needs books for some purpose or the other. The body of literature in any subject is very large and dispersed. It is also very difficult for any one individual to afford large book collections, as large as are in libraries. Books are generally expensive. Besides, not every book bought for personal use may be needed ever again once its use is over. Even if it be so, books will have to be kept on shelves properly and preserved.

Libraries make it easier for people to access books that they need especially when collections are large and scattered at different locations. Being repositories of knowledge, we need libraries to preserve the written records of our civilisation for posterity. At present, there are libraries in every school, college, university for the benefit of students, teachers and others. In addition, there are libraries for professionals for the purpose of meeting their specific information needs.

The purpose of the library in modern societies is to give information support to the institutions of education and learning, policy and decision making bodies, industry and to members of the community in the widest sense for raising awareness and education on issues of common interest to the society in health, social welfare, etc. Library is one of the most effective means of making information available to the society and nation for

its cultural, economic and social progress and development. Library is for propagation of basic knowledge, preservation and dissemination of human culture and civilisation.

In brief the purposes of libraries are:

- to disseminate books and other information carriers and information to contribute to institutions' missions and goals;
- to archive information;
- to provide a community space for people to interact around information;
- to provide facilities to access, store and reproduce information in different media; and
- to give people access to ICT tools necessary to manage digital divide, manage access to information in a sensible way.

1.4.3 Value and Importance

Libraries are a dynamic environment in which to work, but they still are struggling to find their place, to establish their territory and define their services in the new information world. Libraries do not exist in vacuum. They are accountable to the funding bodies and their parent institutions; they need to demonstrate to them the value of investments made on libraries otherwise their future will be at great risk. Value, of course, is not to be viewed strictly in the economic category. It is more about what *meaning* a society places on library outputs and outcomes.

Strengthening academic and research performance – As a fundamental support system to the academia the value of library lies in strengthening their performance in teaching, learning and research. As aids to nation building, libraries are invaluable means for all round human development.

Bridging links between information sources and users – The librarian is an agent of communication and information transfer for the benefit of the community. The library serves as an interface between books and users bringing information forward to make it relevant, understandable and usable. It is in this very context that many a time libraries are perceived as information centres.

Bridging digital divide – With the societies becoming ICT-based and knowledge based, access to the Internet and ICT tools has become predominant. Libraries play leading role in reaching out to masses. For bridging digital divide libraries provide Internet facilities and organise tutorials to give exposure to all those who lack ICT skills and lack access to Internet facilities.

Libraries are the only institutions that can manage books and information resources without commercial interests – Books that carry information and knowledge are indispensable for gaining fresh thoughts for conducting affairs of governments, industry and services or for addressing issues and tasks at hand. Books are absolutely essential for education and learning. Libraries are the only institution that can manage book stocks and become links between information sources and the prospective users. Therefore, libraries of various types that stock books have come up and have grown eventually as essential institutional facilities, funded by governments and/or other institutions as invaluable aids to nation building.

Library motivates individuals – Library motivates individuals to do something useful for the society; it gives them confidence in running and organising academic, social and

cultural activities. Libraries motivate individuals because they (libraries) are designed for learning. Learning makes individuals literate, informed, knowledgeable and analytical in his judgements and decisions. Library experiences act as external motivating sources that drive individuals to inculcate positive values, attitudes and behaviours that promote harmonious relationships. Library experiences influence thoughts, patterns and collective behaviour. Library experiences are exciting and motivating because libraries are a place for education, cultural interaction for mutual interest, societal interest and self-help in bridging digital divide and making individual's information literate. Because they bring access to all, they bring opportunity to all.

Libraries are the only institutions that provide free access to resources– Access to library is for free. This is the best feature of a library. It makes no charge upon the readers for making available to them newspapers, journals and other learning material for reading. This feature is of immense interest to the ill-paid and poor members of society who, notwithstanding their poverty, are interested in their educational development and personal empowerment.

Libraries serve as gateways to rich library resources – No library can meet total needs of users solely on the strength of its own collections. Rather, users need lot more than what a library in its collections. They are in dire need to be connected to the bigger libraries. They perceive library more as a gateway to access information resources held in bigger libraries or get links to the Internet for searching web resources. Therefore, in addition to libraries serving as centres of information, they should also serve as gateways to resources and knowledge held in bigger libraries.

1.4.4 Defining a Library

A library is a service oriented organisation created to facilitate access to learning resources, propagation of basic knowledge, preservation and dissemination of information, human culture and civilisation.

Self Check Exercise

- Note:** i) Write your answers in the space given below.
 ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

3) What are libraries? Why are they necessary?

.....

4) What changes are taking place in libraries because of the application of ICT?

.....

5) What is multitasking and why it is important in managing small libraries?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6) State briefly what factors led to the creation of different type of libraries.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Activity II

Visit a library in your locality and attempt to write a small note on the library collections, their users, the order in which these books are kept on the shelves, reading room and understand what different services the library provides.

1.5 FUNCTIONAL ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN A SOCIETY

Modern societies are heading towards information-based and knowledge based societies. Information and knowledge are the most sought-after and valuable merchandise in such societies. Modern societies need this valuable merchandise – information and knowledge – to support their missions to emerge as economic leaders. Institutions of education and learning, policy and decision making bodies, industry use information for technological innovations, research, education, cultural, economic and social progress and development. Libraries are one of the most effective means of making information available to the society and nation. Libraries have become part of the societal framework. Libraries have become integral part of all societal programs of growth and development of a country. The roles that libraries play in supporting modern societies can be grouped under five major categories (i) higher education roles (ii) user education roles, (iii) recreation roles, (iv) library as a place and (v) societal and cultural roles. The societal roles that libraries have come to play include democratisation of information and knowledge, linking people to knowledge and information sources, information and awareness services to communities for empowerment. Library as a place has an attraction in itself as library is used to run and organise academic, social and cultural activities. Libraries serve as community centers with creative spaces suitable for a number of activities such as organising cultural activities to promote social harmony. Libraries collect, preserve and conserve documents relating to socio-cultural aspects of the society for future generations. The following table gives in brief functional roles of the library in the society:

Role Type	Library Role
Roles in Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting education, teaching research, and training in the society by providing access to knowledge resources, materials and by providing referrals (Traditional role) • Dissemination and distribution of information/ knowledge stored in such documents to stakeholders in education • Serving as gateways to the collections of global libraries • Supporting informal self-education and learning
User Education Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building good reading habits • Information literacy, computer literacy • Encouraging use of library collections and services
Roles in Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the educational, civic, and cultural activities of groups and organisations.
Library as a Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information commons – a library model for learning • Offering architecturally designed building as a place that inspires interest in every one for academic pursuits
Social and Cultural Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratisation of information and knowledge in the society • Linking people to knowledge and information sources • Giving under-privileged sections of the society awareness about opportunities available in the society for their social and economic development • Community information resources • Community awareness about State programmes such as mass literacy • Organising cultural activities to promote social harmony such as book discussions, lectures on important topics • Supporting the civic and cultural activities of groups and organisations • Knowledge preservation for posterity • Capturing and preserving traditional knowledge • Serving as a gateway to local and national government

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

7) Discuss briefly the societal roles of libraries.

.....

1.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you are introduced to the important roles that libraries play in the societal institutions engaged in formal and non-formal education, research and development, cultural activities, in the spiritual and ideological realms and in recreation and entertainment, etc. You are introduced to the various meanings of societies, why societies are important to the mankind, how have societies changed over centuries. In this Unit you are introduced to the concepts of what libraries are, why are they necessary, what purpose do they serve in the society, how libraries function to serve persons with different needs and purpose. You must have come to understand and appreciate that libraries are undergoing transformation in their basic characteristics and features with the growing use of ICT applications in managing library services.

1.7 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

- 1) Information society gave ICT based tools that were highly instrumental in making profound impact on the production and management of information and public services such as e-governance, e-commerce, e-business, e-learning, e-health, e-publication, etc. The information society has changed the way institutions and organisations transact work in business, education and logistics. It is through e-services that the information society has benefitted the common man in the society. On the other hand knowledge society refers to *any society where knowledge (technological innovation, knowledge based technologies) is the primary production resource instead of capital and labour* for any society. In knowledge society knowledge is used for the prosperity and well-being of its people.
- 2) Libraries are necessary for educational institutions to support their missions in the society. This includes formal and informal education and learning, mass literacy, information literacy, bridging digital divide and strengthening performance of academic institutions. Educational institutions need libraries to support research work. For research work, information requirements are highly specific and only specially trained professionals employed in libraries can offer these services. Libraries offer the means by which institutions can gain access to highly specialised collections and get customised library and information services on demand.
- 3) Libraries offer the means to access knowledge, thought and culture. To support this activity libraries collect, stock, process and organise documents published in print, electronic, digital, or multi-media formats. Library holdings are generally rich and varied comprising books, periodicals, newspapers, reference books and other learning materials. Libraries build catalogues, databases or such other lists as library access aids for access, dissemination and distribution of information/knowledge. Libraries are necessary because they make it easier for people to access books that they need especially when collections are large and scattered at different locations. We need libraries to preserve the written records of our civilisation for posterity, strengthen academic and research performance, bridge links between information sources and users and bridge digital divide. Library motivates individuals, provides free access to resources and serves as gateways to rich library resources. At present, there are libraries in every school, college,

university for the benefit of students, teachers and others. In addition, there are libraries for professionals in various disciplines for the purpose of meeting their specific information needs.

- 4) Due to the application of ICT, libraries are automating their housekeeping services. ICT based applications do not require as much staff strength as it is required in a manual system. Library automation in a way is helping libraries to carry out routine housekeeping functions with minimal staff; thus giving them opportunities to redeploy their staff and ask them to do multiple roles, spending more time on user oriented services. All these are changing the traditional characteristics and features of libraries. In the library work new technologies therefore offer new possibilities to raise service levels too.
- 5) Multitasking is doing more than one task at the same time by one person. In the library context it is about asking a staff to play multiple roles in a library. For managing library services in a systematic manner, library staff is organised into services such as user services technical services and library administration. These services have staff in varying numbers depending upon the size of the library. But it is also true that you do not always require one staff exclusively for every single activity. Librarians and other staff often fill multiple roles. In a small library, for example, a librarian might provide reference service and/or reader advisory service for a few hours and then complete some book selection work and thereafter take any other function. Multitasking in libraries now a day is the order of the day, more so when library automation has come up as a house-keeping tool.
- 6) In the society we have persons with different needs and purpose. In order to cater to specific needs of such various client groups, we need libraries of different types, each type serving each user group with user-specific collections and accordingly 'user based' libraries of different types have been evolved. These include public libraries, school libraries, college libraries, university libraries, special libraries, government libraries, each library type serving a distinctive user-base. Even within a particular library type the needs of various client groups are different. For example, in a public library we may have persons of all ages, children, young, old and people from different trades, business centres, or person with different abilities. Libraries have evolved suitable collections to cater to persons with such different information needs and interests. Libraries are therefore cultural institution shaped by the society.
- 7) Modern societies are changing into ICT-based and knowledge-based societies. Information is the most sought-after and valuable merchandise in such societies. People want information and not 'books'. The challenge before libraries is in information dissemination, how to keep up with the continual flow of information, new resources and new technological developments, more so when the amount of information in the world is enormous and fast changing. Libraries in the modern societies are also changing to remain relevant in the modern societies. They have undertaken several new roles to establish and retain their distinctive significance in the society. Libraries now play several different societal roles. These include building good reading habits, undertaking programmes on information literacy and computer literacy, building information commons, providing the communities access to learning resources, community information resources and information infrastructural facilities like Internet and tutorial services. Democratisation of information and knowledge in the society, linking people to knowledge and information sources, preserving knowledge for posterity and providing under-

privileged sections of the society information and awareness services are the other societal roles that should interest societies. Organising book discussions, lectures on important topics are the examples of cultural activities that libraries undertake to promote social harmony.

1.8 KEYWORDS

- Digital Divide** : It refers to the gap between people who have access to effective information technology and resources and people who do not have such facilities.
- Institution** : Organisation or establishment devoted to an activity and in its promotion for a particular purpose.
- Library** : A library is a service oriented organisation created to facilitate access to learning resources, propagation of basic knowledge, preservation and dissemination of information, human culture and civilisation.
- Library Automation** : Use of computers in library functions such as acquisition, cataloging, circulation, etc.
- Modern Society** : Societies that belong to the era that characterise the post-industrial society, information society and knowledge society.
- Revolution** : A complete pervasive, usually radical change in something.
- Society** : Different groups of people with distinctive cultures living in a geographical territory.

1.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Khanna, J.K. *Library and Society*. New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1987. Print.
- White, Ben. *Guaranteeing Access to Knowledge: The Role of Libraries*. WIPO Magazine, 4, 2012. Web. 14 April 2013. <http://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2012/04/article_0004.html>.
- Nuut, Anu. "The Role of Libraries in a Knowledge-Based Society: Estonian and European Experience". *Diversity in Unity: Baltic Libraries in the European Union: Proceedings of the 7th Congress of Baltic Librarians, September 30 - October 2, 2004*, Jumurda, Madona region, Latvia. 2004. Print.
- About America's Libraries*. Web. 15 April 2013. <<http://www.ilovelibraries.org/getinformed/about-libraries>>.
- McGuire, Hugh. *What are libraries for?* April 2011. Web. 13 April. 2013<<http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2011/what-are-libraries-for/>>
- Why is Society so Important?* Web. 13 April 2013. <<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/purpose-of-society-why-is-society-important.html>>.