

## **LIBRARY NETWORKS AND LIBRARY LEGISLATIONS: A Comparative Study of State Library Legislations of India**

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Presents chronological movements of legislation programmes for establishing library systems throughout the world. Discusses the good and bad features of the four library acts of India—namely, Tamil Nadu (1948), Andhra Pradesh (1953), Karnataka (1965) and West Bengal (1980). The network structure, the governance problems, and the library finances aspects of these state acts are compared.

### **Introduction**

Current day library organisation is heavily oriented towards networking of libraries. Networking generally suggests creation of different tiers of hiesarchical structures in library set up. The goal of networking of libraries is for effecting economy. However, this depends on effective communication and productive operation of the system. This is possible, if the constitution of networking is based on sound principles. These principles should take care of the variables in networking. The variables are several such as, the user population, the documents, the library staff, the finance, the geographical area, the modes of communication. Library networking has to find a synergistic relation between these variables.

Library legislation has been found to be an effective way of establishing library networks. It helps to increase certainty and spread a democratic flavour to the library organisation. It is interesting to find that the library legislation has been adopted in several countries as indicated in the tables.

**I Table 1: Chronological List, Arranged by the Year of the First Act, of Countries and States with Library Acts**

SN	Year of First Act	Country/State	SN	Year of First Act	Country/State
1	1835	New York (U S A)	39	1927	Arkansas (U S A)
2	1849	New Hampshire (U S A)	40	1928	Bulgaria
3	1850	England and Wales	41	1929	Arizona (U S A)
4	1851	Canada	42	1929	Oklahoma (U S A)
5	1851	Massachusets (U S A)	43	1929	Tennessee (U S A)
6	1852	Indiana (U S A)	44	1929	West Virginia (U S A)
6	1854	Vermont (U S A)	45	1931	Florida (U S A)
8	1855	Ireland	46	1935	British Honduras
9	1867	Connecticut (U S A)	47	1935	Norway
10	1867	New Zealand	48	1938	Rhode Island (U S A)
11	1870	Argentina	49	1939	Australia
12	1886	Wyoming (U S A)	50	1940	Mississippi (U S A)
13	1897	Michigan (U S A)	51	*1941	Cuba
14	1899	Japan	52	1941	Nebraska (U S A)
15	1901	Georgia (U S A)	53	1941	New Mexico (U S A)
16	1901	Idaho (U S A)	54	1943	Montana (U S A)
17	1901	Washington (U S A)	55	1943	North Dakota (U S A)
18	1905	Illinois (U S A)	56	1944	Kentucky (U S A)
19	1908	Chile	57	*1945	Antigua
20	1910	Czechoslovakia	58	1945	Guyana
21	1910	Maryland (U S A)	59	1945	Kolhapur (India)
22	1912	Sweden	60	1945	Missouri
23	1915	South Carolina (U S A)	61	*1946	Panama
24	1917	Mexico	62	1946	Poland
25	1919	Alabama (U S A)	63	1947	Colorado (U S A)
26	1919	South Dakota (U S A)	64	1947	Minnesota (U S A)
27	1919	Texas (U S A)	65	1948	Delaware (U S A)
28	1919	Virginia (U S A)	66	1948	Philippines
29	1920	Denmark	67	1948	Tamil Nadu
30	1920	New Jersey (U S A)	68	*1949	Dominica
31	1920	U S S R	69	1949	Ghana
32	1921	Belgium	70	1949	Greece
33	1921	Finland	71	*1949	Grenada
34	1921	Hawaii (U S A)	72	*1949	Jamaica
35	1921	Wisconsin (U S A)	73	1949	Kansas (U S A)
36	1924	Iowa (U S A)	74	1949	Maine (U S A)
37	1925	Nevada (U S A)	75	1949	South Africa
38	1926	Louisiana (U S A)	76	1949	St Kitts Group

SN	Year of First Act	Country/State	SN	Year of First Act	Country/State
77	*1949	St Lucia	93	1957	Virgin Islands
78	*1950	St Vincent	94	1958	Singapore
79	*1949	Trinidad and Tobago	95	1959	California (U S A)
80	1951	Montserrat	96	1960	Andhra Pradesh
81	1953	New York (U S A)	97	1961	Pennsylvania (U S A)
82	1953	North Carolina (U S A)	98	1961	Sierra Leone
83	1953	Ohio (U S A)	99	1963	South Korea
84	1955	Alaska (U S A)	100	1963	Tanzania
85	1955	Iceland	101	1964	Brazil
86	1955	Oregon (U S A)	102	1964	Burma
87	195	Puerto Rico	103	1964	Uganda
88	1956	American Virgin Islands	104	1965	Kenya
89	1956	Hungary	105	1965	Karnataka
90	1956	U S A	106	1967	Maharashtra
91	1957	China	107	1970	Sri Lanka
92	1957	Utah (U S A)			

NOTE: In the items with asterisk (\*), the Year of the first Act is not known.

**2 Table 2: Alphabetical List of Countries with Public Library System under Executive Action\* or Without it**

SN	Country/State	Executive action	SN	Country/State	Executive Action
1	Bermuda	No	14	Libya	Yes
2	British Honduras	Yes	15	Malagasy Republic	Yes
3	Chad	Yes	16	Morocco	Yes
4	Congo (Brazzaville)	No	17	Nigeria	Yes
5	Congo (Leopoldville)	Yes	18	Pakistan	Yes
6	Cyprus	Yes	19	Rumania	No
7	East Germany	Yes	20	Saudi Arabia	Yes
8	El Salvador	Yes	21	Senegal	Yes
9	Fiji	Yes	22	Sudan	Yes
10	Indonesia	Yes	23	Thailand	Yes
11	Italy	Yes	24	Tunisia	Yes
12	Ivory coast	Yes	25	United Arab Republic	Yes
13	Kuwait	Yes	26	West Germany	No

\* NOTE: An Executive Action is here taken to be a Government Order authorising, in the absence of a Public Libraries Act, the establishment of a public libraries system—that is, a federation of public libraries into a state grid or national grid of public libraries, as the case may be. The provision of supplementary funds or a similar support by the government to the voluntary action of a local community to organise ad-hoc public library service, outside the federation of public libraries forming a state grid or national grid, is not construed to be Executive Action. Such a help may be given just to implement the Principle of Equalisation of Opportunity to all the communities in the country, but not as part of a state policy to build up a federated grid of public library system.

## 2 Resource Sharing

Essential force for library legislation is resource sharing. It means not only book/document resources but also includes materials, equipment, people, time and money and man-power. It aims at making several institutions work in a co-ordinated fashion. Resource sharing network services include shared cataloguing remote catalogue-access, directed message routing, automatic hierarchical routing of inter library loan messages, circulation and inter library loan record control, serials control, and citation retrieval both for and by users. The legislation created network of libraries in India are generally geographical networks spanned over the jurisdiction of the respective constituent states. They aim to develop a federal structure of libraries, by providing increasing number of nodes at each hierarchic levels.

## 3 Functions of Library Networks

The essential function of library legislation is to create mechanisms to support a variety of functions. The main function is to support resource sharing—that is the goal. However, several linkages are needed to make the resource—sharing function up.

They can be

- 1) Inter library system, with supporting document supply facility.
- 2) Referral networking and communication facilities.
- 3) Cooperative acquisitions programs.
- 4) The technical processing involved in acquisitions, collection organising, collection linking and circulation facilities.

- 5) Creation of an operational system of/ or implementing the network objectives.
- 6) Periodic assessment of various problems in networking and harmonizing, Horizontal/vertical hierarchical nodes.

#### **4 Library Legislation in India**

The library legislation so far established in India present a picture of unity lies the goal of resource sharing among libraries. The diversity lies in the network structure, financial provision and governance or administration. The succeeding sections in this paper provides a comparative study of the five state acts—namely Tamil Nadu (1948), Andhra Pradesh (1960), Karnataka (1965), Maharashtra (1967) and West Bengal (1969).

#### **5 Network Structure**

The network structure of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka is a hierarchical one. It runs five tiers—namely State Central Library, City and District Central Libraries, Taluk Libraries, Village Libraries and Delivery Stations.

The Maharashtra Act provides the scope for the establishment of public libraries by local body or a private trust in a jurisdiction. The state establishes only the State Central Library and a Divisional Library for each Division.

The West Bengal Act also provides for centralised network for public libraries.

#### **6 Governance/Administration**

The governance of libraries is vested with the Director of Public Libraries. He will be advised by the State Library Authority and the local library authority in the case of Tamil Nadu. There appears to be greater autonomy for LLA libraries. The Andhra Pradesh Act stipulates a Department of Public Libraries. The function of Director specified is similar to that of Tamil Nadu but in addition it specifies the role of centralised classification and cataloguing. The Karnataka has also provided for the Department of Public Libraries. But nominates State Librarian as the Head of the Public Libraries

Department. The most important feature being that a state library service is provided for. It provides the uniform state library service rules for librarians in all the public libraries of the State. The Maharashtra Act also provides for Department of Public Libraries and a Director. The Maharashtra Act also presents that all the librarians serving the Public Libraries act are government servants and the service is called Maharashtra Library Service. The West Bengal also provides for similar structure.

## **7 Library Fund**

The financial provision is one of the most important aspect of public libraries act. The three acts Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka Act have incorporated library cess. This is surcharge on property tax and kinds of revenue collected by local government. The Karnataka act makes the state pay for the salaries and the cess amount is assigned as book fund. In case of the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh Act, the library fund the state gives a grant matching that of the cess amount collected.

The Maharashtra and West Bengal do not provide for library cess but makes a provision for state grant, which is not less than twenty-five lakhs of Rupees. The major problems with library cess is the collection of the amount into the state fund. The revenue collection itself is tardy and it takes a pretty long time to get the library cess from the revenue department into State Library Fund. Added to that uncertainties of the amount likely accrue is also there. At present we witness many kinds of concession in revenue collection, like progressive movement towards abolition of land tax and periodic concessions in property tax. The tax revenues in the rural areas would be meagre and the library cess amount collected would be insufficient to operate the library service efficiently. On the other hand, the provision of recurring block grant may not have these problems. But there ought to be problems of insufficiency of funds as the library network grows. The recurring grant may have to increase proportionately. Such a problem could have been overcome, if the acts had provision for per capita book grant. The rural population served would have benefited more from such provisions. The acts should have made provision for rate increase of funds for libraries. The funding for maintaining tools such as national biblio-

graphics, union catalogues, research projects are to be incorporated in the act on percentage basis. The capital expenditure on buildings, furniture and other equipments have not been adequately provided for in act. Financial provision in the act should be amended in proper manner so that the functioning of network of libraries. The Indian Library Association and the State Library Associations should work in close liason with the Department of Public Libraries and the State Government regarding amendment the financial provisions in the Acts. The provision of funds for audiovisual materials should also be highlighted in this amendment.

## **8 Conclusion**

In general, it is necessary to look into the two older acts namely Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in respect of the provision of State Library Service. This is essential as the current-status of librarians, is miserable. They are being ruled by two bosses namely the Chairman of Local Library Authorities and the Director of Public Libraries. The provision of State Library Service will provide opportunities for promotions and provides incentives for ambitious service minded librarians. Further, in this context we must also examine the need for enacting acts for school libraries and college libraries.

Whether these two types of libraries should be included in the current state acts to make them an integrated network or separate acts are to be enacted for each of them should also be looked into. The school libraries and the college libraries have been victims of maladministration and mal-funding so far. The status of school and college librarians have not been properly recognised. The profession may discuss these aspects in detail and bring into force a viable legislation.