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Name of Department: **<u>Library & Information Science</u>**

Name of Teacher(s) : <u>Dr. Manoj Kumar Joshi</u>

PUBLIC LIBRARY
&
DIGITAL DIVIDE

Editor
Abhaya Kumar Padhi

ODISHA STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY
SAMBALPUR

PUBLIC LIBRARY AND DIGITAL DIVIDE OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES
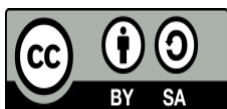
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CONTENT

#3

ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY
IN PROMOTION OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Prof. Manoj Kumar Joshi

Introduction

As we all know ICTs have deeply affected all areas of human life. Our life is increasingly being driven by ICT applications. This revolution known by different names such as ICT revolution, Internet revolution, technological revolution, digital revolution; has changed the entire world view of human civilization. It is increasingly becoming difficult to survive in cities without ICTs. Although, this revolution is transforming the urban life; villages are not lagging behind in ICT adoption. In fact, it has become an instrument of integration of rural and urban life.

This revolution has engulfed the entire human civilization at such a rapid pace that we cannot find any such precedence in history. If we confine our discussion to only our own country India; this transformation can be seen in less than three-quarters of a century. The history of computers in India goes back to 1955 when the first computer was installed at Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta. "In 1955 only a few dozen scientists and engineers in India knew about computers. In 2010 there were over 2.4 million people employed in computer-related jobs and over 60 million Personal Computers were in use" (Rajaraman, 2012, p. 7). This surge has been the result of a number of government and private initiatives; notable among these is the establishment of National Informatics Centre in 1975 (Rajaraman, 2012, p. 27) that spearheaded the e-governance initiatives and computerization of ticket reservation system of Indian Railways in 1986. "The reservation system using computers was an eye opener to the general public as it demonstrated the advantages of using computers. There was an attitudinal change among both the general public and the white-collar workers about computerization. This was the beginning of the acceptance of computers and the realization that in a country which has large volumes of data to be processed the use of computers is inevitable" (Rajaraman, 2012, p. 38). Gradually the developments in telecommunication sector made mobile accessible to the common man; and the users of mobile phone in the country are estimated to be 813.2 million in the year 2019 (Statista, 2015).

The digital library projects were started in the USA during the 1990s, but Indian boat started its journey mainly with the dawn of the century. Although, the result of long preparation, a number of educational and cultural digital content providing or digitization projects like UGC INFONET, INDEST, NPTEL, National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) were started in 2003. In 2006, the Government of India approved the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) with the following vision: *"Make all Government Services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man"* (India, NeGD, n.d.)*.*

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In a traditional sense, libraries are storehouses of books. They are repositories of knowledge and ancient wisdom. Civilizational footprints are markedly found in a well organised and soundly managed library-may that be in the public domain or privately owned. But are the resources stocked and stored in a library accessible to the discerning scholar, the inquisitive student, the lay reader? Can the desired book, journal, or article be retrieved with ease and at the right time? Can a person seeking information and knowledge from a distance be able to access the resources without moving out of his or her space.? Or is there a gap, a chasm that separates the source and the resource from the intended beneficiary-the user of the library? These are a few questions that were raised and answers were attempted at a two-day Seminar jointly organised the Sambalpur Public Library and the Odisha State Open University. The theme was 'Public Library and Digital Divide: Opportunities and Challenges'. This book is the outcome of that exercise. In the essays derived from the proceedings of the seminar and collated here by senior academics and library professional throw light on interesting aspects of knowledge flow and the need for digitalisation of library for easy and universal access to knowledge sources and academic resources.