

Library and Information Policy At The National Level

K Rajaram^{1*}, *S Jeyachitra*², *BS Swaroop Rani*³

¹Department of Library and Information Science, K.S. Rangasamy Institute of Technology, Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu, India

²Department of Library and Information Science, Urumu Dhanalakshmi College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India

³Department of Library and Information Science, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

The libraries for special groups should be built in areas of tribal concentration or of minority communities to develop their distinctive cultures. Government will provide all encouragement for such communities to develop their distinctive cultures and to develop their own libraries through voluntary effort. Each public library should have a section for children and, in addition, separate libraries for children with attractive books and audio-visual supporting material should be established wherever possible.

Keywords: Policy, policy statement, infrastructure development, national information policy, national policy initiative

***Author for Correspondence** E-mail: jairajaram6@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Policy, Objective, Plan Programme and Procedure

Policy is a statement of general principle of intent that helps translate programme objectives into accomplishments. An objective is a desirable future condition. To achieve an objective, we have to draw a course of action. The course of action we may describe as a plan.

The plan has to be implemented. The process of implementation needs a programme. A programme warrants several procedures [1].

Lack of Policies in the Past

For the most part, information agencies have not developed or used policies. They are guided by rules of thumb or were following trial and error method.

Scientific management brought in the concept of policies planning, implementation, evaluation, etc.

Basic Policy Questions

Policies can be formulated at different levels, say, at local, regional, state, national and international. At the local level, different

institutions may have different policies. Thus, the policies of different institutions may differ. However, there will be some basic policy questions in general which even evolved separately may come out to be common [2].

Policy Statement

Policy statements provide the basis for orderly, smooth and thoughtful change. They further assist and enable longer range management planning. There can be policies to cover every decision or to meet every contingency. The following basic premises are likely to be useful:

1. Programmes and activities must operate within one framework and be directed towards a common set of objectives.
2. The establishment of performance goals and the determination of priorities is contingent upon a clear understanding of general policies.
3. Consistency and efficiency of operations are ultimately dependent upon the existence of a sound body of policies.
4. Clear policy statements reinforce and protect the information service in matters where its position is questioned or challenged [3].

Value of Policies

Policies are of value in a number of ways. To name a few:

- i. They standardize activities;
- ii. Facilitate decision making;
- iii. Minimize confusion;
- iv. Coordinate the activities of various units; and
- v. Conserve time training personnel.

Policy Question for Information Organizations

Information organization must address themselves to the following basic policy questions:

1. What is the major role of the information service?
2. What are the components of the information system? And how they are related?
3. What information services are provided? And how?
4. What are the different categories of users served?
5. Which levels of services are to be provided?
6. What role is to be played by the information unit in relation to the services available from outside agencies?
7. What are the roles, responsibilities and relationship of the users' vis-à-vis the information services administration and staff?
8. What are the lines of authority and process of decision making?

Issues for a Policy Statement

As mentioned earlier, policy statements are to be formulated at the institutional level, regional, state, national and international level. Whatever may be the level at which the policy has to be formulated, it should comprehend a set of basic issues. Some of these are illustrated below:

Infrastructure Development

1. Identification of the objectives and thrust areas of the institution.
2. Requirement of the users.
3. Existing infrastructure and new infrastructure to be developed.
4. Manpower, material and monetary requirements.

Information Services Development

5. Increased control of locally generated information.
6. Access to databases and databanks.
7. Information dissemination methods.
8. Information analysis and consolidation.
9. User studies and identification of user needs.

Utilisation of New Technology

10. Improving access to new technologies.
11. Guidance for utilization of the new technologies.
12. New services with new technologies.
13. Sharing of resources and services.

Manpower Development

14. Increasing training of manpower.
15. Initiation into new technological developments.
16. Organizing continuing education programmes.
17. Training in user training.
18. Training of trainers.

Other General Recommendations

19. Guidelines for policy formulation.
20. Study and evaluation of system and services.
21. Reviewing of the policy and its effectiveness.
22. Preparation of policy manual.
23. Cooperation and coordination with organizations at different levels and in different fields.

Process of Policy Formulation

The following framework for policy formation may be adopted:

- Initiated of policy development: involves preparation of a plan of action.
- Review of existing policies: covers identification of existing formal and informal policies.
- Analysis of existing policies: A staff group may take up this task and identify the areas of the existing policy which may need to be rewritten or modified; as well as, new areas to be comprehended in the revision. Such decisions should primarily be based on the judgement of the effectiveness of each item of the present policy statement.

- Recommendation of the new and revised policies: Areas in the policy that need to be rewritten or modified are to be drafted. Policy has to be formulated on areas which warrant consideration for the first time.
- Process of formulating policies: A priority list of written policies that need to be drafted and outline of areas that need policy statements should be formulated.
- Preparing a policy manual: This will form an ideal tool for management. Such a manual should comprehend objectives, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision of the policy; areas like institutional framework and linkages, services, systems and networks; personnel and management.
- Dissemination of the policy: Once the manual has been published the same need to be circulated widely for review and expert opinion.
- Finalization of the policy: valuable suggestions extended by reviewers and peers should be incorporated and the policy statement should be implemented.
- Periodic review of the policy: The policy implemented has to be closely monitored for its performance. A policy review and revision programme has to be worked out [4].

NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICY

It is increasingly being realized that information is vital for national development as like energy and manpower. Most of the nations started evolving national policies for information for information generation, organization and dissemination. In spite of restrictions trans-border data flow has become imperative and common [5].

Need for a National Information Policy

By and large nations have realized that the progress of a nation depends upon the information it generates, disseminates to the users, and puts it to work. Lack of information is going to adversely affect the development.

Secondly, the cost of information is directly related to its use or application. Generation of new information needs lot of inputs by way of research, gathering, processing and storage. Information dissemination is governed by the

factor of recovery of investments in research, gathering, processing and storage costs. The cost of information makes it imperative to share the information in a planned manner and coordination of information activities within a nation. In almost all countries national governments are the major investors and disseminators of information. As such, each country should evolve a national policy of its own taking into consideration the developments at national and international level.

Guidelines for the National Information Policy

A national information policy should comprehend the following:

1. Identification of the information needs of different socio-professional groups.
2. Establish priorities in regard to these needs.
3. Visualize a 'National Information System' with various sub-systems, sectoral systems, etc.
4. Services to be offered and methods to provide the services.
5. Keep a watch on the capacity of the national information infrastructure (manpower, material, money etc.).
6. Decide the measures needed to enable the national information system to perform its role and ensure compatibility among the various information systems in the country.
7. Decide as to how the national information system should be further developed.
8. Development and improvement of primary publications and ensure generally of the availability of information and data.
9. Strengthening the collections and improve the accessibility.
10. Policy regarding access to foreign collections of documents and databases.
11. Development of translation services; databases; networks; preservation, dissemination and conservation of documents.
12. Bibliographical control of documents generated in the country.
13. Coordination between various information units and sub-systems.

14. Establishment of standards for information processing and communication of information.
15. Manpower planning.
16. Financing of information systems and pricing of the services.
17. Enacting appropriate legislation for regulation of information activities.
18. Promotion of user education and services.
19. Encouragement of education and research in library and information science.
20. Cooperation with other national and international organization and institutions.

National Policy Initiative in India

The department of culture, Government of India sets up a committee on national policy on library and information systems (conpolis) on 7th October 1985 under the Chairmanship of Prof. D.P. Chottopadhyaya, Chairman RRRLF.

During the period between December 1985 and February 1986, the committee toured different parts of the country and discussed with cross-sections of people. Suggestions were also received from several individuals and institutions. An interim report was submitted in March and the final Report on 30th May 1986.

Salient Features of the Report

- The most important task before the Government is to establish, maintain and strengthen the free public libraries in the country and enable them to work as a system.
- The main trust in this area should go to the rural public library. A village or a village cluster with an adequate population should have a community library which will also serve as an information centre. Resources of different agencies engaged in the work of public health, adult education, local self-government and such others may be pooled to build up this composite centre.
- An important link should be established between the community library of the village and the village primary school. If the school does not have a library of its own, the community library should provide the children with an adequate book-corner.

- The community library should also importantly cater for adult education and make adequate audiovisual aids available to attract the illiterate villages.
- The district library should serve as an apex library for each district with public libraries at city, town and village levels consulting important components in the district library system. In addition to the usual services to be rendered by it, it should also provide for learning facilities and recreation for the handicapped, wherever possible, district libraries and comparable city public libraries should provide literature in Braille. The district library and branch libraries serve within its area wherever it is necessary and feasible. Special services should be rendered to hospitals, prisons and infirm in their homes.
- The district library will take the leadership in establishing linkages between all other public libraries of the district and work towards resource-sharing within the area.
- The key role of public libraries as chief sustaining agencies of distance education should be recognized and they should be adequately equipped with the relevant resources for this purpose.
- All the libraries within a state should form part of a network extending from the community library of the village through intermediary levels to the district and to the state central library. This is state network.
- The state central library is crucial in networking and the establishment of uniform library procedures within the state. The State Central Library or Directorate of public libraries has to perform as the co-ordinating agency for public libraries in the state.
- To bring about the development of the public libraries in a state it is vital each its own library legislation. The central Government should revise the model public library bill, which it has already prepared, in the light of experience gained in recent years and urge upon the states the importance of enacting such legislation. Finances for library development should be funded by each state either from its general revenues or from local taxation.

- The central Government should assist the state in the development of public libraries in a larger way than it has done so far. The Raja Rammohan Roy library foundation as the national agency for coordinating and assisting the development of public libraries, be suitably strengthened enabling it to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

Empowered Committee

The department of culture, GOI appointed an empowered committee in November 1986 again under the chairmanship of Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya to lay down the programme of action for the implementation of the recommendations made in policy statement. The empowered committee submitted its report in April 1988.

Working Group

On examination of the empowered committee's decisions, the department of culture felt that certain decision would be difficult to implement in the form envisaged by the empowered committee. It was according to constitute a working group to go through carefully each decision of the empowered committee and indicate how best to implement them. This working group was chaired by Ms Komal Anand (Jt. Secretary to the govt. of India, department of culture). The president ILA was a member of the group.

The working group discussed the whole matter in four sittings between July and September 1992 and submitted its suggestions in December 1992. These have since been accepted by the Government for implementation.

Salient features of the empowered committee reports as accepted by the working group are given below:

- Declaring director, national library as the head of the central reference library.
- Initiating action for creation of national commission on library documentation and informatics within the Government set-up.
- Establish, maintain and strengthen public libraries in the country and enable them to work as a system.
- Making rural library service available in each village under the minimum needs Programme by 2001 AD by Central and State Government agencies.
- Every rural public library should have a children's section.
- Community centre libraries should have an important role in adult education programme.
- District libraries should provide more facilities for the handicapped and under-privileged classes.
- Public libraries should act as chief sustaining agencies for distance education and should be adequately equipped.
- State central library should play an important role in networking, establishment of uniform library procedures and standards within the state.
- RRRLF may establish 100 model rural libraries in collaboration with state agencies.
- The central Government may revise model public library bill in the light of the experience gained in the recent years.
- The central Government in collaboration with State Government may establish at least one multilingual library in each state.
- Every school and college must have a library and a qualified librarian.
- Association of Indian universities may take up a project evolving academic library norms on priority basis.
- To begin with, a few selected University library science departments may be provided with adequate resources as part of manpower development programme.
- The national library, INSDOC, DST and ICSSR may take suitable steps to create national databases.
- There should be a National library system (NLS) consisting of the National library, national depository libraries in Delhi, Bombay and Madras; national subject libraries and other libraries of national importance.
- There is a strong need of having a national R & D centre for library and information science. National commission on libraries once established may consider this proposal.

- A national 'Grid' of public libraries be developed linking village community centre library with national grid.
- The department of culture may take suitable steps in preparing the draft bill on national commission on libraries (NCL) giving the detailed provision under powers and function of the NCL; bodies of NCL; finance of NCL, etc.
- Department of culture has been requested to constitute a "Library Unit" which will be entrusted with the implementation of empowered committee's decisions.
- Most of the recommendations of the empowered committee are of general nature. It seems no action has been initiated either in creating the envisaged "Library Unit" or in the establishment of NCL.

The department of culture was vested with the responsibility of preparing the draft bill on NCL. The department of culture should appoint a "committee of experts" to draft the bill. The proposed NCL should have more of ex-officio members rather than ad-hoc nominations. Professional associations and senior professionals should have place in the NCL. In fact, the department of culture should appoint yet another committee to draft a national library plan giving long-term and short-term programmes, spelling out details of a national system' networking; norms for cooperation and coordination of services; etc.

REFERENCES

1. Atherton Pauline. *Handbook for Information Systems and Services*. Paris: UNESCO; 1977; 40–42p.
2. Guinchit Claire, Menon Michel. *General Introduction to the Techniques of Information and Documentation Work*. Paris: UNESCO; 1983; 313p.
3. Indian Library Association. National Information Policies and Programmes. *Proceedings of the XXXVII-All India Library Conference (Madras) (1991)*. New Delhi: The Author; 1991.
4. Kumar PSG. *National Planning for Library Services*. Presidential Address; New Delhi: Indian Library Association; 1996.
5. Valls J. *Working Document on Scientific and Technological Information in Asia and the Pacific*. Paris: UNESCO; 1983; 81p.

Cite this Article

Rajaram K, Jeyachitra S, Swaroop Rani BS. Library and Information Policy at the National Level. *Journal of Advancements in Library Sciences*. 2015; 2(3): 1–6p.