**Library and Society**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**  
 In modem societies, every human activity is organized through institutions. Every major social task, whether economic performance or health care, education or research, business or industry is institutionalized. The protection of the environment or defence is today invariably entrusted to institutions and organizations. Libraries and other similar types of institutions are those that collect, stock, process, organize, disseminate and distribute information/knowledge recorded in documents. Since knowledge and information are so vital for all round human development, libraries and other institutions that handle and manage knowledge and information are indeed invaluable. In this Unit, you are introduced to the important role that libraries play in the educational process of formal and non-formal learning, in research and development, in cultural activities, in spiritual and ideological realms, in recreation and entertainment, etc.

**2. LIBRARIES NEEDS OF MODERN SOCIETY** As members of the modern society, we are all aware of its varied needs. Education is perhaps the most important among them, for it helps to mould a well informed, knowledgeable and responsible citizen who alone will be able to contribute to progress and advancement. Then there is the goal of the economic well being of society. Activities towards this end have to be sustained by technological developments brought about by research and the enormous amount of information it makes available to us. But `man does not live "by bread alone". There are deeper and finer instincts in the human being such as the spiritual and ideological instincts, cultural and aesthetic instincts and others which refine life and elevate it to a higher plane.

A person also needs recreation during his/her leisure time, and unless there are facilities for constructive and competitive activities, his/her attention is likely to be diverted to negative and destructive avenues. The aim should be the development of a society that is able to lead a cultured, prosperous and fulfilled life, laying emphasis on certain basic values in life and adhering to them. It is the collective responsibility of members of society to make suitable arrangements for this purpose.   
  
**3. INSTITUTIONS FOUNDED BY SOCIETY**   
  
 It is for the purpose of discharging this important responsibility that society has, over a long period of its existence, founded various institutions. Educational institutions like schools, colleges and universities, research institutions, cultural institutions, institutions of fine arts and recreation, business and industrial establishments and a host of others are some examples of such social institutions. The library is also one such institution. But, unlike the other institutions each of which concentrates on one or a few of the needs of society, the library is able to serve almost all its needs. If you are a student of a school, your primary task is the acquisition of knowledge prescribed for that level. And this will be mainly through oral communication from the teacher supplemented by the reading of a few prescribed text books. But in the library you are exposed to books on a variety of themes - books that will give you knowledge, bring to surface your latent aesthetic talents, stimulate your intellect. There are 3 kinds of libraries. They are

1. Personal library

2. Public library

3. Institutional library

**3.1 Personal library**

A personal library is one which belongs to a private person, generally of sufficient means. Such libraries grow out of such person’s taste for knowledge and, sometimes, for fashion. There are, of course, small scale private libraries owned by solvent lawyers, educationists and persons of literary taste. But such libraries contain books on some particular subject or subjects chosen according to the taste and interest of their owners.

* 1. **Public library**

A public library is one which is open to the public. In order to cater to the taste and interest of all classes of people, a public library has to contain books on different subjects and varieties. Such libraries may be seen in large numbers in every country, Most of these libraries are managed or subsidized by their states. The British Museum library of London and the Central library of Moscow are instances of public libraries.

A public library is a non-profit library, which is maintained for public use and funded by the government or the public sources. Unlike other libraries, public library satisfies general public information needs by providing all kinds of knowledge and information available to all segments of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status. It may also provide other services to their communities such as, storytelling for children, after-school programs, language learning, seminars, workshops and other community services.

Public libraries were initiated back in ancient times. They were known and used by Greeks, Romans, North Africa and Middle East. However they did not arise in Europe and America until 18th and 19th century.

* 1. **Institutional library**

Institutional library is one which belongs to an institution such as a university, college, a school, a chamber of commerce, a club or a governmental department. Such a library is open to the member of the institution concerned and therefore, generally contains hooks which are needed by them most. As acquisition of knowledge depends mostly on reading, man has to read as necessarily as he has to eat. It adds to what he has already learnt and makes him strong and fit for rude battle of life. But for financial difficulties most of the persons who are keen on reading cannot purchase the books they need to read. Hence arises the importance of libraries. Had there been no libraries, both public and institutional, such persons would have been deprived of their reading. The teachers and the students, in like manner, would be badly affected if their institutions had no libraries of their own. But for the libraries, there would be no authors, no poets, and no thinkers.

The libraries thus help in the advancement of learning and expansion of knowledge. The library has another very important use. No research work is possible without a well equipped library containing valuable books of all ages, rare manuscripts and old records. A library of this type is thus of incalculable help in throwing light on unearthed subjects. Time passes in an unbroken continuity as does the water of the river. The books of the libraries are a record of this continuity. They thus enable us to know how human society has developed in thought and action step by step.

## Sections of a Library

Public libraries have got two sections generally. One is the reading-room section and the other is the issue section. In the reading-room varieties of newspapers, weeklies, and monthly magazines are placed on the tables. Anybody can go and read them. A catalog of books is maintained by the librarian. Everybody can consult this catalog and get any book issued for reading in the reading-room.

In the issue section a list of members is maintained. The members have to pay a small monthly subscription. They have also to pay an initial deposit as a security for the books. Then they can get books for use at home. The rules regarding issue of books for home-use different from library to library.

## Benefits and Uses of library

The library is a very useful institution. It is not possible for everybody to purchase books on every subject. In the library the same books pass through several hands by rotation. A man can read a large number of books at a very little cost or even no cost. It is a fit place for close and careful study. Here, there is no disturbance and everybody can read with rapt attention.

The library helps a good deal in spreading knowledge and education. Many books are so costly that a man of average means cannot purchase them. People can derive benefit from these books by consulting them in the library.

## Conclusion

In India, there are very few good libraries. There is great need for opening a library in each village. Only then can the huge illiteracy prevailing in Indian villages be removed.