

## CENTRALIZED LIBRARY SYSTEM (NETWORKING) FOR MINISTERIAL LIBRARIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO INCREASE THE USABILITY OF RESOURCES: A STATE-OF-THE-ART REPORT

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the existing Ministerial Libraries of the Government of India and their limitations. It advocates the need for a networking/ centralized system to optimum utilization of available information resources in their libraries. This study also attempts to identify the steps taken by the Librarian to increase the usability of information resources.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries attached to various ministries and departments of the Government of India are located mostly in the capital city of New Delhi. These are called government Libraries and are set up with specific objectives. Its primary purpose is to serve the Government's legislative, administrative and development functions. The collection strength of these libraries is official gazettes, parliamentary debates, census reports, gazetteers, annual reports, committee & commission reports, manuals, budget papers, acts, serials, monographs and other published material in the areas of their specialization.

These libraries have to undergo a sea change in the present digital era. Especially with the shrinking economy and resource crunches, libraries have no option but to share their resources and information transfer among the libraries and within the organization to which these libraries are attached. In the present conditions, networking with other libraries is a prerequisite or a priority for resource sharing among the libraries of one system or various systems to the organization to which they belong.

Every ministerial Library, by its nature, is a special library and has to acquire, collect, organize and disseminate information to help its present organization in policy programming, decision making, research development and also for self-education and proper use of leisure of the employees of the organization to some extent.

### 2. EXISTING LIBRARY SYSTEM IN MINISTRY

Ministerial libraries are strict followers of the traditional system of Library. Publication of the Government of India, like Annual reports, Economic surveys, Debates of Lok sabha and Rajya Sabha, Different reports of the Ministry, etc., occupy many shelving areas in these libraries. Now, most of these documents are available in digital form. However, entire old documents are not digitized completely, and hence their availability and retrieval become difficult for researchers.

There are two categories of users in these libraries. The first category of users of Ministerial Libraries is using the Library to fulfil the need for required information for planning and policy-making activities and is therefore called serious users. They could be either generalist administrators or specialist practitioners. They need the latest data and information pertaining to their areas which could be socio-economic indicators, literature on foreign relations, health statistics, employment and community development information, women's education, etc. Dedicated library professionals serve their users by creating suitable metadata of source material. The 2nd category of users uses libraries for recreational reading. They borrow books from the Library and use the Library during lunchtime.

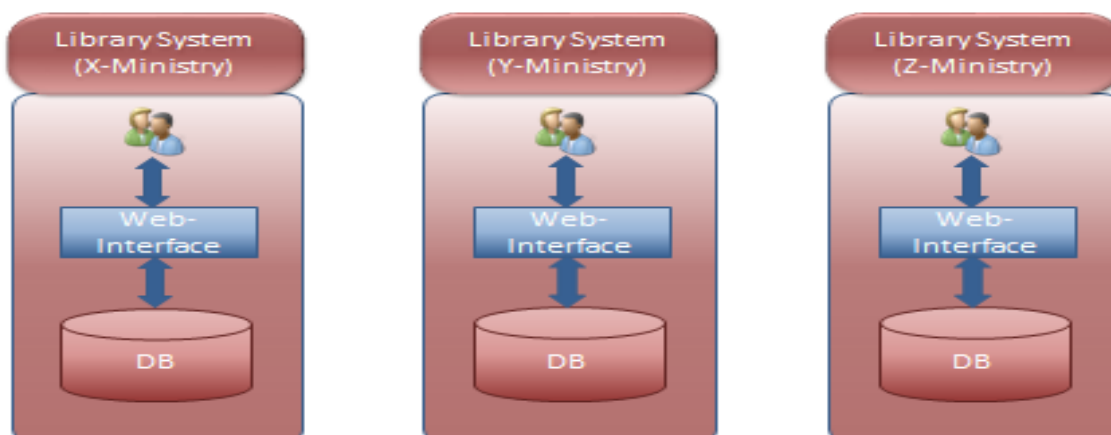
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The bigger challenge with the existing system is that libraries housed in various ministries are like an unconnected island of knowledge. Each Ministry has its own in-house library system and local database repository (hosted in its own data centre). This has restricted access to all essential resources like reports, papers, e-books, and other documents to a smaller group in that Ministry. Staff from one Ministry cannot access the Library of another ministry because :

- a) The catalogue of the respective Library is not available online for others;
- b) The officers/officials of one Ministry don't have permission to access the Library of another ministry.



**Fig. 01: Architecture: Existing Library Systems in Union Ministries**

### 3. LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM

One can assume that the collection, processing, organization and dissemination of government-produced information is one of the significant activities of government libraries. We may also add the data produced by international organizations and foreign governments.

The existing system has the following limitations:

- a) Each library system is isolated from another library system in the union ministry;
- b) Non-uniform catalogue system among libraries;
- c) Access & outreach are restricted to a smaller group; and
- d) An inefficient way of discovering resources leads to the rework & reproduction of content/reports.

### 4. LIBRARIANS APPROACH IN SIX MINISTERIAL LIBRARIES TO INCREASE THE USABILITY OF INFORMATION

The six Libraries viz. NITI Aayog Library; Central Secretariat Library; M/o External Affairs Library; M/o Finance Library; M/o Home Library; and M/o Corporate Affairs Library take into account to know the Librarian's approach to improving the usability of documents/ information on different parameters as given in the following table to increase the use of information resources, Librarians of Ministerial Libraries are facilitating their users by following activities:

Activities/ Services	Library					
	NITI Aayog Library	Central Secretariat Library	M/o External Affairs Library	M/o Finance Library	M/o Home Library	M/o Corporate Affairs
Availability of WebOPAC	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Connecting to own LAN	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Conducting User Surveys	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Documentation Service	Y	N	N	N	N	N

<b>Abstracting &amp; Indexing Services</b>	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
<b>Press Clipping</b>	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
<b>SDI Service</b>	Y	N	N	N	N	N
<b>Membership of DELNET</b>	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
<b>Staff Training</b>	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
<b>User Education</b>	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
<b>No. of Publications for Readers</b>	12	N	2	N	N	N
<b>Remote Access</b>	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
<b>Mobile App</b>	Y	N	N	N	N	N
<b>Inter Library Loan</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<b>Photocopying Facility</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

From the above table, it is found that NITI Aayog Library is offering all services (listed in the table) and publishes 12 nos of publications of having frequency daily, weekly or monthly. Suppose we rank these four libraries in terms of services to increase the usability of available resources. In that case, the NITI Aayog Library is on the 1<sup>st</sup>, M/o External Affairs Library is on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, CSL is on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, M/o Finance Library is on the 4<sup>th</sup>, M/o Home affairs Library is on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and M/o Corporate Affairs is on 6<sup>th</sup>.

## 5. NEED FOR NETWORKING/CENTRALIZED SYSTEM

Government activities have increased manifold, and therefore the information has increased tremendously in the form of government reports and statistical data. Each Ministry requires accurate information at the right time to prepare policy documents. However, problems like shrinking budgets, decreasing footfall in the library premises, patron demands, and rising costs of books and periodicals are becoming barriers to providing such documents to policymakers. Therefore, to overcome these barriers, a centralized library system is the demand/ requirement in the present scenario. The main objective of a centralized system will be to share and optimize the utilization of information resources. Due to advanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the process of procuring and disseminating information has been changed. The ministerial libraries are in the back seat regarding ICT applications. The following points revealed the backwardness of ICT application in Ministerial Libraries:

- Almost all ministerial libraries are hard to find online;
- Limited human resources;
- Digital disruption has changed both what users find at libraries and what they need from libraries;
- Inadequate digital infrastructure in libraries has made them more expensive to administer and less responsive to their readers; and
- There is an insufficient investment on the part of libraries in their digital services compared to their physical part.

## 6. CENTRALIZED LIBRARY SYSTEM (PROPOSED) ACROSS MINISTRIES/ DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Based on the study of the present system of ministerial libraries, it is found that a centralized library system is required to maximize the use of information resources available in the libraries with

minimum cost. The objectives of the centralized system will be:

- a. Provide a common open-source Library Management Software (LMS) while retaining individuality for each Library;
- b. Having a union catalogue of all the physical contents available in various Ministries while retaining the individuality of the catalogue for each Library;
- c. Create a common institutional repository for archiving the digital publication, reports and documents created by various Ministries at one single location;
- d. Create a discovery system to facilitate the discovery of the content for the individual Library as well as discover what is available in other locations; and
- e. Create a common card system for the circulation of documents for officers/officials of the Government of India working in any ministry.

Based on the findings of the study, it is required to set up a National level infrastructure to support these libraries so that their contents can be brought into the mainstream. This system may be implemented on the cloud with proper IT infrastructure.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Ministerial libraries vary in Budget, size, Collection, Staff, Services and functions in correspondence with their Departmental needs. These Libraries are of a special kind. However, at all levels, the Government played a limited role in Library development due to a lack of policy in government libraries. In Government of India Libraries, i.e. Ministries/departmental libraries, users are very specific in their information. They need the right information at the right time, even at the crucial moment, at any cost. The Library staff should have the required information and be ready to provide the information at the right time. In providing such information, the library staff may face a problem. Maybe because the materials are not available in time and then they have to consult the other libraries through telephones, etc. If there is a centralized system of libraries with a union catalogue, information retrieval becomes fast. Even in the 21st century, the condition of small and medium size Ministerial Libraries is still pathetic, and therefore a centralized system is required to modernize the libraries. The study found that only NITI Aayog Library facilitates its members with Remote access and mobile app accessibility to increase the usability of available information resources.

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