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Role and importance of national and state level associations in library development in India

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Abstract:

Professional associations, societies academics and foundations form a backbone of the professional development. In a developing country like India the role and importance of Library Associations in the development of libraries is hardly realized. Social, political, economic and educational factors have a major share in the flourishment of the Associations. It is true in the case of India. This paper presents the brief outline of the existing scenario of the Library Associations in India. Regional Associations role is more visible in some parts of country and in recent years the associations at the national level are striving hard to make their presence felt and convincing the professionals that they have some role to play in the library development programme. Some of the vital issues are proposed for consideration and discussion.

Introduction:

Associations and Professional Societies are powerful forces representing the voice of the professional community to solve the problems related to the welfare, status, working conditions, physical facilities, education and training including the research and development activities. Although the central purpose of the associations has always been to serve the needs and to protect the interests of the community, they strive to broaden the purpose and serve the over all needs of the nation.

Associations become more common and significant as society advances in Science and Technology, complexity and scale and hence their study is becoming the part of study of social change. In the contemporary situation, due to rapid social change, associations are important as a means of organizing people in order to achieve new ends. They are also of great significance to the professionals in that they reveal cultural values and goals that the members themselves are unable to formulate. Another important aspects of rapid social change is the way new forms of organizations create new roles and relationships.

Indian Scenario:

Unity in diversity is the watchword of Indians. Though India has suffered social, economic and educational set back due to the frequent invasion and as a consequence of transfer of power from the Mughal to the British, she also gained much that proved to be of lasting value. The contact with the west had opened out a window through which her people could look at a world, which was rapidly expanding, and making progress in material attainments.

There are few library associations in different part of India whose contributions to the development of national consciousness were immense and deserve to be remembered by the future generation of library professionals. Association is a yardstick for measuring the growth of awareness of problems and needs of a country with in a given time. Founding fathers of Librarianship in India have very clearly visualized the commitment of the associations to the following vital aspects;

1. The furtherance of library movement in India.
2. The promotion of the training of librarians
3. The improvement of the status of librarians

These activities are very well reflected in the overall performance of Indian Library Association, Bengal Library Association, Andhra Pradesh Library Association, Andhra Pradesh Public Library Association, Madras Library Association, Karnataka Library Association, Punjab Library Association and Kerala Library Association.

The associations in their formative period were adorned by the men of eminence who have dedicated themselves to the cause of national development. They were the great visionaries supported by very committed people who were the first rate scholars in their own field of activity and worked to fulfill the objectives set by the elders.

Library Associations and Societies, Academies, Trusts and Foundations have endeavoured a lot to give a new face-lift to the professionalism in India. Presently, there are associations and societies representing different types of Libraries and Information Centers. Most of them are making consistent efforts to develop the associations on the pattern of the associations of United States of America and United Kingdom. Many of them are emulating the world-recognized associations. But, there are some constraints of peculiar nature, which are coming in the way of progress.

It is observed that the associations inspite of national and regional recognition constantly striving;

- i) To promote the spirit of professionalism.
- ii) To see that the gaps in the professional activities are filled.
- iii) To bring together other smaller organizations and associations in the neighborhood.
- iv) To bring professional talents together.
- v) To nourish the profession to inculcate good professional ethics.
- vi) To promote education and training.

Dawn of New Associations:

Emergence of INSDOC (1952), NISSAT (1971) and INFLIBNET (1991), and other subsequent Information Systems and Networks have paved the way for new professional outlook and consequently the formation new associations and societies for the development, promotion and application of information technology in day to day activities. Society for Information Science (SIS) which was formed in 1976 is one such example. This society started functioning from 1981 with well stated objective of ;

- (i) inter-change of information on Information Science among the specialists and between the specialists and the public.
- (ii) to encourage and assist the professionals engaged in Information Technology to maintain professional integrity and competence, and
- (iii) to foster a sense of partnership among the professionals.

The activities of SIS over the years have developed a sense of responsibility and awareness of IT application for information activities through its composition of members from different subject fields and through the conferences and seminars.

Inspite of the success story of the achievements of the library associations, there are some lacunae in the library development programmes in India. The reasons for this are many. India is a vast country having different political parties both at the center and the states. The fluctuations in governments are very common. Whatever the best work done in promoting the library development with the mediation of the Associations may or may not be continued. Hence the development of the libraries is hampered. Even the Associations have inculcated the spirit of the political system and more involved in elections and making efforts to gain the power. This has resulted in slowdown of the development. Associations at the National level like ILA, IASLIC, and SIS have done some noticeable changes and developments. They are hardly continued by the next group of office bearers. They may go for their own strategies. Therefore the Associations have to have a plan of action to withstand the test of the time.

It is strongly felt that the Associations should take a broad outlook and consider the following aspects in order to gain the national and international recognition;

- (i) Maintaining the task force of members to analyze professional problems and to find ways to solve them.
- (ii) Strive for representing the government formed task forces to form a part of the nation building.

- (iii) Conduct tests and inspection and grading services to help and ensure professional satisfaction.
- (iv) Developing standards, grade-and-quality labeling to help the professionals to choose right products to serve the needs of the users.
- (v) Workout the method of operation to introduce accreditation and assessment of Library and Information Science education and training.
- (vi) Formulation of lobbying group to interact with the administrators, management, bureaucracy and the local governments to impress upon them the need for giving the library due consideration of essential services.
- (vii) To workout the practical and viable norms and standards for LIS programmes through distance mode of education.
- (viii) To formulate national Information Policy and advocate for its implementation.

In this direction Library Associations in India have made very marginal progress. National Associations have the Special Interest Groups in very vital aspects of the professional matters like Library Legislation, Academic Libraries, Special Libraries, Government Libraries, LIS Education and Research, Information Technology Application etc. But the aspects of Standardization, Accreditation, and Curriculum Development providing choice based credit system, interdisciplinary research, collaboration and linkage with national and international organizations and associations etc., are not given serious thought. Time is ripe and the new millennium demands that the appropriate action be taken by the associations in India in this regard.

Padmashri *Dr. S.R. Ranganathan*, the father of library movement in India has guided the activities Madras Library Association since its inception with his multifaceted professionalism. His contribution to ILA and many other regional library associations are worth appreciating. He was responsible for inspiring innumerable followers all over the country to carry the mission forward. The achievements of ILA, IASLIC, RRLF and SIS have set a good trend of bringing out publications, organizing seminars, conferences and workshops, promoting education and research encouraging the regional and local level associations. Comparatively speaking much more remains to be achieved by these organizations.

Conclusion:

Library Associations in India suffer from the financial assistance both from the professionals and the government. They thrive only on membership fees and sale of publications. Conferences and Seminars conducted now and then provide the additional income to run the association. Very few associations have assets to nourish their activities. It is the time for the Associations to plan for fund raising activities and exploring the possibility of philanthropy. In addition the promotion of consultancy, marketing and conducting need based education and training programmes will go a long way in making the associations to strengthen further. There is a need for promoting the research activities and exploring the funding agencies to fund the research. Institution of awards, prizes, fellowships etc., will help in changing the attitude of the professionals and developing the regard for professional activities.

Further, India needs a Federation of Library Associations in order to bring together all the scattered associations at national and regional level together. This federal outlook will enable smooth co-operation, co-ordination, standardization and development. This reminds the adage, “*Coming together is a beginning, Keeping together is progress, Working together is success*”.