



Networking of Rural Libraries in Nagaland: A study of Mokokchung District

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Abstract: *A library network is broadly described as a group of libraries coming together with some agreement of understanding to help each other with a view to satisfying the information needs of their clientele. National Commission on Libraries & Information Science in its National Programme Document defines a network as two or more libraries engaged in a common pattern of information exchange; through communications for some functional purpose. The future of libraries in rural areas is tied to the future of the communities which they serve. As the telecommunications landscape continues to shift, these communities have opportunities to decrease their isolation, increase their connectedness, and affect the overall health of small towns and even whole regions through the innovative use of new technologies, and the finding sources, libraries in rural areas will strengthen their position in the community “Networking of Rural Libraries in Nagaland: A Study of Mokokchung District”, discusses the necessity for library networking, and puts forth suggestions for rural library networking in the district.*

Keywords: *Information Technology, Networking, Resource Sharing, Rural Libraries*

Introduction: The term “network” has been defined by Miller as “a cooperative system established by libraries and information centers which are brought together by common subject, geographic proximity to share information service”. A network is thus, a cooperative system of sharing resources among two or more libraries through a formal institutional agreement. The ultimate purpose of networking is to achieve maximum results with minimum input. The major factors which have created the need for networking include the rise in the cost of publications, a lack of funds and adequate manpower, and the geographical dislocations of libraries i.e., the fact that libraries are now located in remote and far-flung areas. (Singh, 2007)

The amount of literature being generated daily in every field of knowledge, the ever increasing number of users with their different information needs, and the application of electronic media are the factors which have forced modern day libraries to construct and participate in networks. Networking of libraries is the best way to make resource sharing effective in order to ensure equitable availability of required information (Vavrek, 1990)

The purpose of library networks is to ensure an easy access to relevant information. Their objective is to make the better use of existing resources available among participating libraries. The benefits of networking are as follows:

1. Utilization of library holdings within the limited budget.

2. Improve user services.
3. Reduce investment in multiple subscriptions.
4. Effective SDI and CAS services.
5. Inter library document transfer facility.
6. High reliability.
7. Saving money.
8. Access to remote information.
9. Person to person communication.
10. Interactive transfer of information, and so on.

Role of Rural Libraries:

Rural libraries are the part of public libraries mostly established by the voluntary organizations and some are established by the respective state Government. It is the effort of some enlightened people who wants the development of rural people in their different spheres of life. Rural libraries can play as the closest friend, guide, philosopher, teacher and information provider of rural people. “Books, Information and Knowledge are for use” is meaningless for the 85% rural population and meaningful for the 15% urban population of North East India until and unless rural libraries are the part of networking of information system. (Sinha, 2007). Rural libraries can play a vital role in:

- Providing information in different areas like health care, agriculture, education, employment, socio-cultural, legal etc.,
- Providing needful literature for the rural people,
- Collecting and disseminating the different kinds of information used by the rural folk,
- Acting as the centre for Rural Recreation,
- Providing Books and other reading materials to the rural youth,
- Improving the standard of living of the rural people,
- Creating social consciousness among the rural masses,
- Preserving traditional art and culture of the rural folk, etc.

Thus rural libraries can act in various forms in the diverse information needs of the rural people of North East India.

Networking: A Study of Mokokchung District Rural Libraries

Mokokchung district is the home of the Ao Naga community. The district has an area coverage of 1615 sq. km. with a total population of 2, 27,230. The district is comprised of six ranges (see Table below) on which are nestled about 102 Government recognized villages. Study reveals that library in some form or the other exists in most of the villages. The present paper projects only those rural libraries registered (see Table below) under the Department of Art and Culture, Mokokchung district. The data presented herein are the

findings obtained through random sampling of 12 rural libraries. Questionnaire methods and personal interviews.

As on 1 October 2010, there were 54 rural libraries registered under the above department. The table below shows the range wise break-up of these libraries

Sl. No.	Range	Rural Libraries
1.	Ongpangkong	16
2.	Asetkong	04
3	Langpangkong	12
4.	Changkikong	09
5.	Japukong	11
6.	Tzurangkong	02
	TOTAL	54

(Source: Department of Art and Culture, Mokokchung)

For the purpose of the present study, the writer had selected and visited 12 rural libraries (two from each range), as samples from a particular range Questionnaires were sent to additional three libraries each selected from each range, on a random basis, of which only 5 (five) responded. Interview was also conducted with the District Cultural Officer and Reference Librarian of the Department of Art and Culture, Mokokchung District Library, as rural libraries in each district (11 districts in Nagaland) are looked by the respective District Libraries

The findings of the present work are based on the information provided through personal contact (interview) and data received by way of questionnaire from the concerned libraries. The main emphasis of the investigation was based on networking and resource sharing among rural libraries in the district.

Findings: In the course of the investigation, it was found that with the exception of a few almost all the rural villages covered under the study, had good road connectivity and transportation facility. All the villages had electricity, and water supply facility. But with the exception of few villages located near the district headquarter - Mokokchung town telecommunication facility was not available. Efforts by the government, district Administration, village Council and village community to solve this all important need, if any, has so far not made its presence felt in the villages covered by the present study

In the light of the above findings, networking amongst rural libraries in the district would still take some time to become a reality. To supplement this present setback, the rural libraries were encouraged to computerize their holdings, and house keeping activities such as financial transactions, various records, routine works, and information's which is found important and useful, both for the library and the community it serves.

Alternately, because of the absence of good telecommunication facility in the rural areas, suggestion for resource sharing (which was also a new concept for almost all the rural libraries covered), was highlighted. All the libraries willingly accepted the concept, but expressed reservations, citing various reasons for such a practice. One reason for the complete absence of this all important library practice among the rural libraries

may be attributed to the fact that almost all the rural libraries were looked after by students body who has no knowledge about the importance and role of the library in the community

A study of the rural libraries in the district revealed that the libraries presently existing in the rural areas are in a poor state of affair. The libraries are traditional in nature and not well equipped to effectively cater to the information needs of the rural community. The access to information sources by the rural community is very limited. Lack of sufficient resources, both in terms of finance and human, is identified as the main reason for the present status of these libraries. Because it is more expensive to build infrastructure in rural areas than in towns, rural libraries have usually lagged behind urban and suburban libraries in their ability to adopt computer and networking technologies

It is needless to emphasize that libraries play a vital role to activate free flow of information. They facilitate utilization of information more precisely, exhaustively and pin pointedly in shortest possible time. All this could effectively be achieved by resource sharing through networks.

Suggestions for networking: On the basis of the findings highlighted above, the paper puts forth the following suggestions towards the development of resource sharing and networking activity amongst the rural libraries.

1. Rural libraries should develop consistent funding sources required to support improved library and information services;
2. Rural libraries should be computerized so that users are able to access the information available in the library easily. The implementation of this area of library service should be taken up on priority basis if rural libraries are to play its role as disseminator of information to its community efficiently and effectively.
3. Encourage and strengthen cooperative and resource sharing activities with other libraries.
4. Develop programs to increase library material holdings and to develop relevant collections. Presently the major share of the collection in almost all the rural libraries is of general nature, mostly received from RRRLF through the Department of Art and Culture
5. Training, workshop, seminars, and such activities, should be given from time to time particularly in IT application and techniques to library personnel's, so that they are better equipped to meet the challenges of the times.
6. Many rural areas cannot get the telephone service to support the needed connections for rural libraries to participate in networking activity. That rural libraries and rural communities are not information poor due to lack of telecommunications access, the trustees of rural libraries must be able to articulate their needs to the concerned authority to assure equal and cost-efficient access for local community.
7. As rural libraries acquire appropriate telecommunications, they must be willing contributors to the network by providing access to their resources in an electronic format This will require changes in attitudes and changes in funding for supporting resource access.
8. It is essential that the rural library be a leader in collaborative community planning for development of information access to the community.
9. The State and concerned authority should pay proper attention and allocate sufficient funds to support and develop the information services of rural libraries, and establish plans to make IT resources and other library material available to the rural libraries.

10. If rural libraries are to play its role effectively in the community in this networked world. It becomes all important that rural libraries should have trained staff.

Conclusion: The foundations of the Nation's security rest upon a wholesome, stable, and prosperous rural civilization. If tomorrow's rural libraries are to have an essential place in such a civilization, their objectives must have national unity and breadth, even while their local services respond sympathetically to variations in local conditions. (Saikia, & Prafulla, 2007).

Rural libraries in Mokokchung district have a long way to go to meet the needs of lifelong learners and decision-makers. "The transformations have yet to be made in converting the typical rural library a community information center" (Vavrek: 1990). In this age of information technology, rural libraries have enormous potential. Those that have good leaders will have a bright future. Our rural libraries must change. If they do not, they certainly will pass from the scene.

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