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National Library: Role And Functions

-Dr. K.M. Karim

THE popular concept of a national library is that it is the biggest and richest library in terms of its size and collection of books in the country and the people can expect to have any book or reading material or a piece of reference they need. In a word, a layman understands that a national library will keep everything for reading, reference and research purposes. But the modern concept of a national library is somewhat different. Speaking broadly, the national library of a country is the one which is responsible mainly for collecting and conserving the country's book production and other information materials no matter where it is published for the benefit of the people of that country in general and for the future generation in particular.

During the post-Second World War period, one of the striking features of the library development is the emergence of national libraries in newly independent states as distinct cultural institutions. These institutions have either been established under an act of legislature or through an executive order of the government. In any case, the national library's suthority should be acknowledged by law which will enable the institution to play a leadership role in the whole sphere of the library development of a country. The areas where it can play a desired role are acquisition. documentation and reference, book development, conservation and resource-sharing.

The acquisition unique activities which have played a vital role in the levelopment of human civilization. The present century has seen an mcreased emphasis on the dissemination of information materials through more sophisticated and effective ways. To meet the potential users' needs, a wide variety of institutions and services have been developed. In re-

sified situation an apex library and biological sciences, physical Book development is another organisation can perhaps pursue sciences, general social sciences, area in which the national liban effective policy regarding the education, law, official publica rary in a developing acquisition and distribution of tions humanities arts, literature, has a substantive role to play. books and other forms of pub- music etc. lished documents through a co- It should be pointed out here with an attractive get-up at a ordinated service.

BOOK-DEPOSIT REGULATION

Under relevant 'book deposit' regulation the national library performs the custodian role of the copies of printed materials published within the country as well as the materials relating to the country published abroad. deposit for Provision essential to provide a basis for national bibliography. books are not deposited because of the ignorance of law. Hence the compilation of national bibliography suffers. Compulsion for deposit is often enforced by providing for fines for non-deposit. The publisher the securencouraged for ing copyright protection. It can also be ensured through arran- port research and enquiry on a publishers. gements with the The national library should have an effective machanism of en-'book deposit regulaforcing Thus while reminding tions'. the publishers about the necessity of depositing books, it is Imperative for personal contact and publicity through mass media. Again the national library should have a clear programme , of purchasing the published materials periodically.

The collections of the national library will be built up not only legal deposit but by through preservation purchase, gift, international exand dissemination of informa- change and by transfer from the tion of books and documents are libraries of the books not actually required by those institu. Countries with advanced technotions. These are arduous tasks logical base are bound to be in and the national library with its front line because new informaleadership role will perform tion technology fits very well these functions quite effectively with their scientific and technoby its own authority.

printed literature, maps, films, video-records, musical scores, ous reasons. However the march sound recordings, pictures, pho- of information technology cantographs and private cent years, public, university, cripts. The principal collections college school, special and mo- of printed literature should be up the global information sysbile library services have been maintained in bibliography, set- tem as a result of modern survival.

established and in such a diver- ence and technology, medical 'knowledge explosion'.

that legislation will impose on a cheaper rate to masses national library the specific du- income is low ties of preparing or maintaining. For them foreign books are exa national bibliography and other bibliographical tools such as union list of periodicals, indexes and abstracts of articles. biographical dictionaries, gazetteers, almanacs and directories. Moreover, it should have an effective central cataloguing service. A library is by and large a service institution. Its aim is to enable the users to make the most effective use of the resources and service of the library. Again library service is information one and librarians are in-In that formation managers. deposit on the part respect the national library will should extend and improve public library services, promote cooperstion in library affairs and supnational scale, it will also extend library service to the blind and physically handicapped, hospital patients, children and prisoners etc.

There is no doubt that the basis of all librarianship is bibllographic. It is true that the field of bibliography is a tast one and no single agency can think of bibliographic control on its own. It requires combined Nevertheefforts at all levels. less, the national library will have the maximum control over written and published records which are provided by law for the purpose of bibliography, indexing and abstracting services. logical environment. But the The acquisition will include process is bound to be slow in developing countries for obvimanus- not be stopped because new technological facilities tend to link

Books are to be made available pensive. Thus there should be a national planning of book production, distribution and sale Its aim will be to have better books, good quality of printing and publicity in sale and marketing.

With a national acquisition policy, the national library should follow a coordinated conservation policy of the documentary heritage of a nation. Conservation includes two elements e.g. restoration and preservation of documents and books. Many other national institutions such as national archives and tional Museum may have the facilities of the conservation of cultural monuments, such as paper documents, parchments, leaves films tapes, recordings and other objects of wide varieties. But a systematic national policy is necessary for conservation and in that respect the pational library should take a leadership role.

national library is the The focal point for promoting and maintaining nationwide resource sharing networks. It should also have wide power to contact other outside organisations for the development and maintenance of these net-works.

It is concluded that wide range of the national library functions will remain confined merely in paper unless they are put into execution on a legal basis. A national library like many other cultural institutions of a nation stands for the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of a nation lying in documentary form. In order to make it a really serviceable institution, sufficient trained men and money will be required wihout which it will be limping while gasping frantically for its