

Libraries are like universities

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The term public library has had still has many different connotations. Since public library is a product of modern democracy it is in short a free library for the people, of the people and by the people.

They are really people's universities. The need for establishing public libraries grew with the spread of free compulsory primary and secondary education in the western world as an essential instrument for popularizing education.

Changes and growth are the key features of to-day's world and as such there is a growing need for public libraries. Everyday people must learn to solve new problems and to adjust to new ways of life. They are more than a centre for leisure-time activity.

They must play an active role in education for all people of all ages throughout their lives, irrespective of their races, religions, political views creeds or sexes.

As agencies of information, education and recreation, they assume contributory role for the economic, cultural and social develop-

ment of a community and of a nation as well as backing for literacy and adult education campaigns.

The development of a nation depends on the welfare and achievements of its people and everything regarding the welfare and achievements of the people depends upon their education.

Again education solely depends on books and libraries. Without books and libraries we cannot conceive of our existence in modern time.

In a country like ours where the book industry is not well developed and where the income of the general public is insufficient to permit them to purchase books for personal reading.

There is no alternative to improve the condition of our people in both living and thinking but by democratizing education supplemented by a net work of effective and efficient free library services through the country.

It is a matter of great satisfaction for us that the government of Bangladesh has taken up a plan to

establish libraries at upazila level.

We very much appreciate the decision of the Government. Possibly we had also a plan to establish libraries down to union level. Really it will be a right step for our national development.

Eighty per cent of our people live in rural areas but practically a library is non-existent in our rural areas. Rural development is our real development. All our national development programme should be rural-oriented.

If we want to improve the condition of our people we must educate them. It is one of the basic principles of democracy that knowledge should be free as far as practicable to persons who will take the troubles to have the benefit of it and it is our responsibility to create facilities.

Democracy postulates the basic necessity of educating the masses, and public libraries as potential instruments of mass education fill in the gap that the normal school service leaves uncovered.

Emphasis has been laid on universal Primary educa-

tion, adult education and eradication of illiteracy but if there is no efficient and effective nationwide free library services to cater for follow-up literature and to accord facilities to the semi-educated for further education how can the neo-literate be saved from relapsing into illiteracy.

We are largely dependent on agriculture. To popularise modern innovation in agriculture and the real concept of family planning among the masses public libraries will surely play an important role.

Unemployment is a great challenge to our nation and gradually it is pushing its head high above others. Library development may solve some of our unemployment problems.

Public libraries are generally in touch with the most intellectually alert members of the community and are therefore will be the best potential local agencies for open university. They should be the second home for aspiration for degrees from the open university.

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If we want to maintain the standard of open university and not to be lower than that of the residential ones, students should have access to a wide range of reading materials and in doing this we should adopt all means and procedures. In the interest of efficiency of an open university and for the attainment of success of distant education public libraries should be established, organised, developed and adequately strengthened.

Since the work of public librarian is centered on people, it is his or her duty to make sure that the public library serves the needs of the public who use it. It is librarian's duty to make the public library a dynamic research tool geared to the increasing emphasis placed on research in education, industry and other fields and also to inform the people of the community about its ever-growing importance.

Just as there is a need for public libraries, so there is also a need for persons to operate them efficiently. A library is a service oriented

agency. Each and every of its service point must be equipped with properly trained personnel.

Librarianship is a growing profession and it is still at its infancy in our country. There is no denying the fact that due to lack of training facilities our existing libraries even suffer from want of trained librarians. It is a specialised profession all over the world.

Persons coming from outside the profession will not serve our purposes. A good collection is useless unless they are profitably utilised. The proper utilization of resources mainly depends on proper organisation which depends entirely on the efficiency of the staff.

The efficiency of staff depends on their education and training. Hence there is a need for creating facilities for proper library education.

Some odd jobs are usually carried out in the libraries by sub-professional and non-professionals staff. Hence there is also a scope for employing a large number of other persons who will work under the guidance of qualified staff.

Only the university of Dhaka offers its post-graduate Diploma and Degree in Library Science but it is not at all sufficient for our purpose. The demand simply exceeds the supply.

If we want to establish and organise our libraries properly a huge number of professionals and sub-professionals will be needed to staff them.

To meet the present challenging shortage and to cater to future needs it may be suggested here that all of our university authorities (general university) should immediately offer librarianship courses as one of their disciplines.

The Library Association of Bangladesh should be requested to offer its certificate course in Library Science at all district headquarters to produce and train up sub-professionals.

If we consider the essentiality and desirability of establishing and organising our public libraries properly it will involve a huge amount of money.

But the cost of library services should, of course, be regarded as a capital investment, for they are complementary and essential to education itself.

The matter should receive our thorough and careful consideration.