Minutes of the 1st Meeting of National Mission on Libraries held on 18th May 2012 at 03:00 p.m. in the Conference Hall of Central Secretariat Library, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi

The 1st Meeting of the National Mission on Libraries (NML) was held on Friday 18th May, 2012 in the Conference Hall of the Central Secretariat Library at 03:00 p.m.

 The following members were present:

Prof. Deepak Pental : Chairman

Shri. B.S. Baswan : Member

Dr. H. K.Kaul : Member

Dr. Subbiah Arunachalam : Member

Dr. A. R. D. Prasad : Member

Smt. Sangita Gairola : Member and Convener
Secretary, Ministry of Culture

The following members had informed of their inability to attend the meeting:
Ms. Sudha Murthy
Mr. Sanjiv Misra

The following persons attended as Special Invitees:
Shri T. S. Randhawa,
(Additional Secretary and Financial Adviser,Ministry of Culture)

Prof. Swapan Chakravorthy,
(Director General, National Library)

Dr. V. Venu,
(Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture)

Dr. K. K. Banerjee, (Director Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation)

Dr. P. R. Goswami, Director (Libraries), Ministry of Culture

Smt. Sangeeta Gairola, Secretary Culture, Government of India, welcomed the members of the Mission, and gave a brief background of the developments that culminated in the constitution of NML. She pointed out that the terms of reference of NML have emanated from the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC). Secretary, Culture expressed concern on the declining reading habit in the country. The Mission will have to focus attention

how we can provide access to reading material in libraries in print and electronic form with the help of ICT.

The Chairman, in his opening remarks, emphasized that the Mission should take decisions on the implementation of the recommendations as early as possible and provide a roadmap for the future. He said that the tenure of the Mission is for three years. It may not be feasible to suggest creation of new institutions or libraries. It would be better to up-grade the existing libraries. The Chairman said that he has given some suggestions which have been circulated to the members. He requested the Members to offer their comments/observationson the future activities and programmes to be undertaken by the Mission.

Dr. H. K. Kaul, said that all types of libraries (i.e. public, academic, special and school libraries) are under the ambit of the Mission. He informed that digitized version of 180 million pages (4,40,000 books) are available on the web, and the NML could supplement the digital material by creating new content, if required. He suggested that there should be knowledge centres in villages with new contents on health, agriculture, etc. in different languages, for which Post Offices and schools can be used. Dr. Kaul also said that there is a need to empower the librarians. Suitable training is needed for librarians so that they can use the online content. Networking can help these libraries to access online and digitized materials. Infrastructure development in public libraries is another area that needs immediate attention. Dr. Kaul said that the present course curriculum of library schools is outdated and there is a need to strengthen the training facilities.

Shri Subbiah Arunachalam suggested that National Census of Libraries must be given top priority so as to have objective and accurate data on the spread and use of libraries. He said thatthe reading habit is coming down and one of the main objectives of the Mission should be to make available books to the readers. Shri Arunachalam observed that emphasis must given to upgrade the present LIS system, and NML must make a strong case to improve library education.

Shri Arunachalam emphasized that there is a rural urban divide in dissemination of information. He mentioned about his experience with the Swaminathan Research Foundation's Projects. He stressed the importance of development of relevant content in rural areas, beneficial to the rural community to transform libraries into community service centres.

Prof. A. R. D.Prasad mentioned about the importance of multimedia information kits for the neo literates. He mentioned that public libraries should also offer referral services. A survey should be conducted to assess the information needs of the community. A data driven policy document should be prepared for the library sectors. He also mentioned that ISO certification is important for the standard practices in libraries.

Prof. Prasad said that for the purpose of maintenance of data repositories, cloud computing technology may be adopted by the libraries. He also emphasized the importance of open access to information and open data repositories.

He explained the need to establish Indian Institute of Library Science which would engage researchers to develop standards, best practices, preparation of training modules etc. and contribute to decision making process of the NML. The institute would have collaborative arrangement with various international agencies and also take up research projects from them.

Prof. Swapan Chakraborthy said that the Mission should give more attention to deliverables. One of the major purposes should be to identify and prioritize them. These may include (i) Integrated staff development plan (ii) Leadership training programme (iii) Information security issues caused by migration of technology etc. (iv) Creation of joint use libraries (v) Special provision for orthopedically handicapped in public libraries (vi) Revision of Delivery of Books (Newspapers) Act of 1954.

Shri B. S. Baswan said that the declining reading habit is the major concern for the society. We should avoid creating new institutions and try to develop the existing libraries. Street corner libraries, networking, reference as well as referral services, digitization of relevant materials are important for library development.

He also said that a Mission should not be a permanent body. It can be converted to an autonomous organisation later. He expressed his concern regarding public private partnership, observing that private agencies may be encouraged to investin libraries as a part of their corporate social responsibility programme. The content development is a critical area. In order to implement the recommendations it would be necessary to create brief, clear and specific business like proposals.

The Chairman summarized the view points presented by the members. He laid emphasis on using existing resources like school libraries to achieve reach and penetration, and on organizing and presenting existing digital content. He said that the NML would work as an advisory body, and stressed the importance of establishing a Task Force, anchored within the Ministry of Culture, which will be responsible for implementation of the projects of the Mission. The task force should engage consultants for its work. The Chairman also emphasized that the Task Force should be headed by a Joint Secretary level officer. He agreed with the suggestion that Working Groups may be set up, using external expertise, wherever necessary, to prepare an implementation plan. The advisory body or the Mission can meet as often as needed to endorse the plans and programmes prepared by the Working Groups.

After detailed discussions, the following decisions were taken:

1) There should be setting up of a National Virtual Library. All the Governments (States and Centre), public libraries, Institutes, Universities, private foundations can contribute to the NVL. Due credit should be given to the organizations that contribute content to the NVL.

2) The content available on the NVL should be available to anyone who has access to internet. The content should be available in an easy to access form and in an engrossing form. An ICT platform should be identified which would provide immediate access to the digitized knowledge in the most extensive and cost – effective manner possible.

3) To begin with, the content which has alreadybeendigitized through government funded programmes should be made available on the NVL platform.

4) In new content generation, children's needs should be kept the foremost. Content on skill development and content of regional and local interest should also be given high priority.

5) To increase access to knowledge and information, all the school libraries should be opened to the communities. Special grants need to be provided to the school libraries for access to ICT tools and for purchase of books and reading material. To begin with, this model can be implemented in the Central schools. Participation of MHRD would be a must in this programme.

6) All the existing public libraries should be upgraded and put on a common ICT platform. Open software available should be developed further, if necessary, for cataloging and managing library services. Information on the resources with public libraries, national libraries, special libraries and NVL should be available at each major library.

7) Existing libraries should be made user friendly for the physically challenged.

8) Training of library professionals is the key to develop libraries of the future. University departments that teach M.Lib degrees, and have reasonable staff, should be upgraded and trained for efficient library work. All M.Lib students should carry out library work during their studies and should be paid a stipend for that.

9) Special funding be provided to the institutions and university departments that can train the librariansthrough short term courses. Such institutions should be identified and projects should be solicited. Enthusiastic young

librarians could be sent abroad for a 1 year Master's degree in ICT based Library science courses.

10) A census should be carried out on the resources available in the libraries. A study should be carried out on the reading habits in different regions of the country and amongst rural and urban communities. Areas where public libraries are scarce should be identified.

11) The mission should act only as an Advisory body. To implement the decisions of the Advisory Body, a Task Force should be created which will act as an interface between the Mission and the other ministries, national and state level stakeholders. A Joint Secretary level officer should head the Task Force.

12) The following working groups be constituted to develop a road map for implementation of the recommendations.

   a. Working group on the setting up of National Virtual Library, networking and ICT applications in libraries:
   Chairman- Dr. H.K. Kaul
   Member- DR. A.R.D. Prasad

   b. Working group on National Census of Libraries, content creation,and community information centres:
   Chairman- Dr. Subbiah Arunachalam
   Member- DR. H.K. Kaul
   Member- Dr. A.R.D. Prasad

   c. Working group on up-gradation of the existing public libraries, school/college libraries and use of school libraries as community libraries:
   Chairman- MR. B.S. Baswan
   Member- Dr. H.K Kaul
   Member- Subbiah Arunachalam

   d. Working group on library and information science education, training and research facilities:
   Chairman- Dr. A.R.D. Prasad
   Member- Prof. Swapan Chakravorthy

13) Each group should have 5-6 members who are well known experts in the area. These working committees should be finalized at the earliest and approved by the Mission.

14) Working groups can seek advice of experts outside the group and record the opinion of the outside experts. Working groups can take a few full-time or part-time consultants for advice on softwares, ICT tools, good library practices and management of the libraries.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.

Sd/-

(Deepak Pental)
Chairman
High Level Committee
National Mission on Libraries