

M.Phil/ Ph.D Course Work
Unit-I
History and Development of
Academic Libraries in USA

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INTRODUCTION

An academic library is a library which serves an institution of higher learning, such as a college or a university— libraries in secondary and primary schools are called school libraries. These libraries serve two complementary purposes: to support the school's curriculum, and to support the research of the university faculty and students.

Development of libraries in the USA is of recent origin. Early migrants to America were more concerned with settling down and making a living. They were more anxious to build a house in the wilderness and to find an avocation. In spite of the hazardous life of the early migrants, they had not forgotten their religious heritage. The clergy had carried the Bible and the physician his books, but by and large the early collection was mainly religious. Then some private libraries with a very modest collection came into being. In these small collections we see the beginning of library history in the United States of America.

COLONIAL PERIOD

Some of the early settlers in America brought with them their private collections of books. Libraries in the colonial period were mainly private libraries. Some of the **well-known private libraries belonged to (1) William Brewster of Plymouth Colony, (2) John Winthrop, Governor of Connecticut, (3) Col. William Byrd of Westover, Virginia, and (4) James Logan of Philadelphia.** Their collections were between 3,000 to 4,000 volumes.

Colonial Period

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- The credit for establishing what may be called the first public library went to Boston. In 1653, Robert Keayne, a Boston merchant, bequeathed in his will an amount of £ 300 for setting up a room in the Town House to establish a library for public use. His wish was fulfilled and a library was set up in the Town House. It survived for nearly a century until it was consumed by a major fire in 1749.
- It was Thomas Bray, an Anglican clergyman who created literary centres for the colonists. He set up more than 70 libraries during the period 1695-1704. His major activity was in Maryland but his ambition was to establish one large library in each colony. Bray was assisted in his work by two groups, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The collections in these libraries were mainly theological, as these books were meant for the clergy. Strictly the Bray libraries were not public libraries though a few were so designated.

SOCIAL LIBRARIES

Like UK the book clubs and subscription libraries were popular. On a similar pattern libraries were also established in USA. They were designated as social libraries. Benjamin Franklin was a pioneer in starting social libraries. He floated a company in 1793 called the Library Company of Philadelphia and requested interested persons to become members. Franklin's library was often referred to as the mother of the social library in America. Subscription libraries of varying sizes began to proliferate throughout the USA. Three other well known subscription libraries were (1) the Redwood Library of Newport, (2) the New York Society Library of New York city and (3) the Charleston Library Society of Charleston.

Social libraries were very popular during the period 1790-1815 and thereafter there was a gradual decline due to the rise of public libraries supported by the state.

MERCANTILE LIBRARIES

The USA was changing from an agricultural to an industrial country. With the advance of trade and commerce, a new class of the mercantile community sprang up. Another segment of society consisted of industrial workers due to the setting up of various types of industries. Business firms and industries sponsored "mercantile" libraries to foster educational and recreational reading among their employees. These libraries were also known as "mechanics" libraries or "apprentices" libraries. These libraries were closely related to the education movement in the first half of the 19th century.

SCHOOL DISTRICT-PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Before the advent of free public libraries, a novel idea was mooted by the Governor of New York, Dewitt Clinton. He recommended to the state legislature the formation of school district libraries. The idea was to house these libraries in the existing schools and open them to the public without any charge. In 1835, the New York legislature passed a law to levy a tax of \$20.00 to start a library and \$10.00 in subsequent years to provide for its growth. The state legislature made available a sum of \$55,000 a year for the purchase of books. The school district was expected to raise an amount of money equal to that received from the state exchequer.

The novel idea of opening school district-public libraries found favour with many states and by 1876 as many as twenty-one states had followed suit.

LIBRARY LEGISLATION

The credit for establishing a free public library in the modern sense of public libraries goes to Peterborough in New Hampshire. In 1823, the Peterborough Municipal Council made a provision in its budget to set up a free public library. Legislative measures in the USA can be traced back to 1848. The Boston Public Library was established by an Act passed by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1848. In the very next year, New Hampshire legally authorized the cities and towns under its control to establish libraries and also made provision to levy a separate tax for funding the libraries.

Library Legislation

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Today every state of the USA has a public library Act. The Act provides the legal basis for the establishment and administration of public libraries and for the tax provision. However, the Acts differ from state to state.

Federal legislation in the USA evolved very slowly. It was only in 1956 that the first general library law was enacted at the national level. This was the Library Services Act in which a national commitment to the support of libraries in the overall educational programme was made. The Act was applicable to rural areas but in 1964 it was amended to include urban areas also and the Act was renamed the Library Services and Construction Act. This Act appropriated funds for library services and for inter-library cooperation.

PHILANTHROPY AND LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Philanthropy played a great part in the later half of the 19th century. The New York Public Library was a creation of philanthropy. John Jacob Astor, a businessman, bequeathed \$4,00,000 in his will to establish a reference library in New York city in 1848. Astor entrusted one Joseph Green Cogswell to buy books. The Astor Library opened in 1854 with 90,000 volumes.

Another reference library was opened in New York in 1870. This was done by James Lenox who had collected nearly 20,000 volumes covering subjects like American literature, folklore, history, works of Milton, Shakespeare, Bunyan and several other classics. In 1800, former Governor of New York State, Samuel J. Tilden left an estate worth \$ 50,00,000 for the creation of a free public library.

Philanthropy and Library Movement

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In 1895, the three trusts stated above merged and the New York Public Library came into being. It is a private library but the services are free.

The Enoch Pratt Library (1884) at Baltimore, the Newberry Library at Chicago (1887), the John Crerar Library, also at Chicago, (1894), the Henry E. Huntington Library at San Marino (1919).

- The greatest single benefactor to the public library cause was Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919). His donations were mainly meant for the construction of library buildings. Funds for books and maintenance had to come from the community. In the USA alone, 1681 public library buildings were constructed through Carnegie's endowments. By 1920, the Carnegie Trust had donated more than \$ 500,00,000 for the construction of library buildings. There were only seven municipality-supported libraries in the 16 larger cities of the USA in 1890. This situation markedly changed after Carnegie's donations. In the last decade of the 19th century, libraries started spreading throughout the length and breadth of the USA.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library of Congress, which is at present considered as the national library of the USA, was originally created to serve the U S Congress. It was established in 1800 with a small collection, but grew steadily. By the Copyright Law of 1870; the Library acquired the status of a depository library, getting the privilege of free delivery of two copies of printed books, charts; dramatic or musical compositions, engravings, prints or photographs, etc. Today the Library ranks as one of the largest national libraries of its kind and occupies an eminent place in the world of scholarship and learning.

Following are main features of LC:

- i. LC is the largest centre for information storage in the world, having 20 million volumes, books representing only one-fourth of its collection; the other 59 millions of stored data are on sound records, motion picture reels, computer tapes or in the form of manuscripts, maps, prints and photographs. Less than one-fourth of its collection is in English.

The Library of Congress

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- ii. It operates with a staff of about 4800, comprising professional librarians, highly trained personnel such as musicians, lawyers, chemists, computer specialists, scientists and technologists, Braille specialists, etc. It is housed in three enormous buildings with three different architectural styles; covers a total area of over 71 acres; 3,000 readers can sit at a time in its several reading rooms; and
- iii. It offers services to a variety of specialist groups such as Congressmen, legal community, scholars and academicians, performing artists, blind and handicapped, library and information community;
- iv. Ten million pieces of material are handled every year, twenty seven thousand every day.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES GROWTH AND FUTURE TRENDS

The USA academic libraries developed individual growth patterns. The Harvard University Library represents the largest of the privately supported institutions, whose collections and inter-institutional responsibilities have grown in geometric progression. Notable among the other university libraries are - Berkeley, Stanford, Columbia, Chicago, Princeton and Yale.

A distinguishing feature of academic libraries in the USA is the development of school libraries and media centres. More than 75,000 libraries and media centres are now in public and private elementary and secondarily schools. The infusion of federal support, coupled with standards developed by professional associations, have allowed libraries and media centres to improve traditional services in reading, reference, and teaching.

Academic Libraries Growth and Future Trends contd...1

Key Trends:

- i. One such development is the INTERNET. Arising out of this is the Network of Computers and Communications which is likely to be the characteristic infrastructure of the post-modern world.
- ii. A significant effort to deal with the increasing role of information in its widest dimension is a National Information Infrastructure (NII) which is also called the Information Super highway, is envisaged with various possibilities of information use.
- iii. People to create, publish, organize, preserve, manage, and use information; to develop applications and services; to design and implement policies and standards; and to educate and train individuals for all aspects of NII.

Academic Libraries Growth and Future Trends contd...2

- iv. The information content in all formats and media, including text, still and moving images, numeric files, sound recordings, archival records, museum collections and other evidence of all kinds.
- v. Hardware and other physical components, including computers, monitors, input devices, printers, telephone, fax machines, compact disks, video and audio media, cameras, televisions, cable and other wires, switches, satellites, microwave nets, optical fibre transmission lines and other devices yet to be invented.
- vi. Software and news groups such as file transfer protocol, gophers, USENET news, Wide 'Area Information Servers (WAIS), the World-Wide Web (WWW), with mosaic and Hypertext Language (HTML), and many others to be developed.

Academic Libraries Growth and Future Trends contd...3

- vii. Standards, codes, regulations, and other policies to facilitate, interconnect, provide interoperability, ensure privacy, protect security, provide for appropriate compensation to owners of intellectual property, protect the integrity of data, promote ethical practice, and ensure true universal access and service.
- viii. In building up the proposed infrastructure, principles, goals, strategies, and mechanisms have been evolved. An Information Infrastructure Task Force (IITF) has been charged with articulating and implementing the administration's NII vision, working with the private sector to develop comprehensive telecommunications and information policies.

ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- In the USA, the American Library Association (ALA, 1876), the Special Library Association (SLA, 1909) and the American Society for Information Science (ASIS, 1937) have been working with zeal and tirelessly for the promotion and development of libraries and information services.
- These professional bodies have endeavoured to promote library and information services in their countries, and strive to protect the interests of professionals, developed professional practices through standards, guidelines, codes, manuals and other types of publications, published journals to reflect professional developments, conducted professional courses and training programmes to enable skill development, established national and international contacts to be in tune with international thinking and practices and done similar other things.

Thanks

Any Questions ?