

# STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY CONFERENCE 2018 -TELANGANA-



Reaching  
the Unreached

JANUARY 18-19, 2018

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HOSTED BY

Maulana Azad National  
Urdu University (MANUU)  
Hyderabad  
Telangana



Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM) and Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) recently organised the state chapter of the Indian Public Library Conference (IPLC) in Telangana in collaboration with the Government of Telangana and the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU).

A two-day State Public Library Conference (SPLC) was held at the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) at the Saiyid Hamid Central Library Conference Facilities on January 18-19, 2018. The theme of the conference was ‘Transforming **Public Libraries in India: Opportunities and Challenges in Digitising Information, Content and Services**’. It was organised to bring together and provide a platform to civil society, NGOs, information professionals, academicians and educationists in the field of literature, education, library and information science and knowledge industry to present papers, discuss, exchange views and experiences on various issues related to the theme of the conference.

The conference provided a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas on ‘Transforming Public Libraries in India: Opportunities and Challenges in Digitising Information, Content and Services’. The main objective of the conference was to discuss, debate and develop strategies to digitally transform public libraries into 21st century information, content, knowledge and resource centres; and promote partnerships of academic institutions, government, corporates and professionals of the knowledge sector for transforming public libraries in digital integration, solutions, content, information, services, digitisation and content sharing, so public libraries could be integrated in today’s education system and it contributes to knowledge based society and economy

scholars; management professionals; library professionals; knowledge managers; IT & information service providers; electronic publishing & virtual communities; corporate social responsibility (CSR) groups.

The conference was inaugurated in the presence of some of the best known Academics, and Library experts in the current era. Dr. N. Ravichandran, Former Director, IIM-Indore, and visiting faculty IIM-A, delivered the keynote address.

The speakers included representatives from the government, academia, corporate, library administration, media and NGOs, besides innovators and entrepreneurs.



The participants included academic fraternity in teaching, learning, and research; Public library community from the government and private sector; students and research





Dr. N Ravichandran,  
*Former Director, IIM-Indore*

“Libraries are not places where knowledge is created, but places where knowledge is available in a condensed and detailed form. How we make our libraries as community inviting places is the key to their survival. Otherwise, public libraries have no hope. All the states should enact a public library act and resolve the governance issues related to the provisions for managing public libraries. Provisions of libraries should be completely decentralised and localised. Public libraries should exist at state level, district level and sub-district level. Every village should have a library, and they should be positioned as stream specific libraries, academic libraries, and general libraries. The children today are very focused on their education, but complementary reading is neglected. What we are creating is a set of individuals who are packaged with some information, rather than truly informed individuals who are educated. We have failed to integrate public libraries as a part of education and learning, both as a student, and as a citizen. If children cannot come to school, take the schools to the children. We say students today are not interested to learn or read anything apart from their academics. Actually we lack spaces that motivate cultivation of reading as a core habit. The best way towards creating infrastructure, is to co-create it with existing schools, colleges, and institutions. This will create a symbiotic relationship, where one will complement the other. A good library is driven by community, has good collection of books, and space that inspires.”

The opening panel saw Mr. P. Jayrajan, Founding Chair, Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM); Mr. Srikanth Sinha, CEO, NASSCOM Foundation; and Mr. Osama Manzar, Founder-Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF); expressing their powerful views on the dire need to usher public libraries into the digital era, and its development through participation from various stakeholders, and community engagement.



P. Jayrajan,  
*Founding Chair, IPLM*

“India had a great start to its public library system some 100 years ago, but today it has come to a state of ‘taken for granted’ institution. Three factors affect public libraries in India and anywhere in the world—the changes in society; the scrutiny of institutions and value for money invested; and the penetration of

technology. Public libraries in the current world cannot be just about books but they have to be public spaces where people can engage in various activities. MHRD and Ministry of Culture are developing their own versions of National Virtual Library of India independently, but in the public libraries in India, there are no computers, no internet, and no people with required skills to use it. Public libraries will continue to be neglected sector and we have to accept it unless the Government of India makes a conscious decision to make a huge investment in the public libraries. In a survey conducted under IPLM, 97% of the members of public libraries feel that public libraries are important for the welfare of society. We can make our libraries public spaces, introduce a lot of new things, but still public libraries will continue to be seen as a place where we get books.”



Srikanth Sinha,  
*CEO, NASSCOM Foundation*

“In a country like India, where 53% of the graduates are first generation graduates, it is important we include the needs of the uneducated in the public library spaces as well. Until we change the mindset that libraries are merely institutions for issuing and receiving books and nothing beyond that, the fate of our libraries as predicted will be doomed. Libraries should be considered as community engagement, knowledge and information centres, and that’s what they should be evolved into. When we talk about internet era and public libraries, they have to complement each other, and become instrumental in each other’s growth. There is dearth of teachers in our educational institutions. A lot of resources can be provided through public libraries to such institutions. Internet, just like everything else has its own pros and cons. Public access of computers in public libraries, will help share knowledge and information like never before.”



Osama Manzar,  
*Founder & Director, DEF*

“According to dictionary, ‘a library is a building or room, containing a collection of books, periodicals, and sometimes films and recorded music for use or borrowing by the public, or members of an institution’. But

according to Wikipedia, 'a library is a collection of sources of information and similar sources made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing'. The importance of libraries today is not books, but a public space where we go and access information, and it is extremely important we revive that sense of public space. Today our communities are growing apart. Public spaces are disappearing because of which the value of togetherness is vanishing. Hence, the value of a public library becomes extremely important for creating a public space using modern digital devices. A public space can have a cafeteria, a wifi hot-spot, and all the digital devices to access information. How much information relies on oral as a medium, written as a medium and digital as a medium, is extremely important, especially in a country like India where knowledge lies in an oral conversation, and oral is a medium, which was not captured in written form for a long time, or secluded the people who had oral knowledge. Digital is a medium, which is a repository of written as well as oral knowledge, unlike traditional libraries. We have a huge challenge for our libraries for being a public space that migrates form written medium to oral medium, and now digital medium, to revive community engagement and togetherness."





## **Session 1:** *Changing Dimensions of Public Libraries in the Internet Era*

Libraries have always been at the heart of the communities they serve. They are accessible and safe spaces, providing access to huge resources of information and knowledge. 73 per cent of public libraries are in developing and transitioning countries. But today, public libraries are at a turning point. The way we access and consume information has changed dramatically in the 21st century, and this presents major challenges and opportunities for public library systems across the world. The advent of new technologies has changed some of our reading habits. But our need for shared, community-centred spaces to find information and connect with others is unlikely to change any time soon. To survive in the digital age and stay relevant, public libraries need to be innovative. They must embrace both the physical and virtual.

**The panel on ‘Changing Dimensions of Public Libraries’ was moderated by Dr. Amir Ullah Khan, Director, CSE Coaching Academy, MANNU; and it engaged Dr. Shubhangi, Executive Director, IPLM; Shrikant Sinha, CEO, NASSCOM Foundation; and Dr. Akhtar Parvez, University Librarian, MANNU; in a riveting discussion on the topic.**

The internet can give us information, but a library and a librarian can give us authentic information. That used to be the state of public libraries and librarians in our society. In a country like India where knowledge is given very high importance, public libraries will not lose their relevance or importance as long as there are librarians who are welcoming and forthcoming. Irrespective of whether the internet is here or not, public libraries will not lose their relevance, because more than anything else, these libraries are the places where information in whatever form, size or means is delivered to the public. The technology in the present era has helped in increasing the number of members in the public libraries. Technology leads to democratisation of knowledge more than any other means or methods, if used smartly in public spaces. If we need to bring public libraries to a level where these institutions would be seen as the new age knowledge institutions, we need to actually look beyond government funding and concentrate on public private partnership.

We are seeing a steady decline in the number of library users, and the Public Libraries are gradually but surely disappearing. Regular visitors to libraries expect them to continue to provide the services they have provided

for many years. And rightly so -- the 'traditional' library of books, journals and quiet reading spaces shouldn't just disappear. 21st century public library service will be one in which "local people are more active and involved in its design and delivery." Besides, libraries also need to respond quickly to the real changes in how people live their lives. In a world, where everything is becoming smart; from our cars to refrigerators; outdated library spaces need to evolve accordingly. Marriage of cutting-edge technology with the traditional heritage, is the need of the hour.





## **Session 2:** *Challenges and Way Forward: Digitalisation of the Libraries*

Dr. Gayas Makhdumi, Former Librarian, Jamia Millia Islamia University, the moderator of the session, opened the discussion by putting the theme in perspective. According to him, the most profound technological development, a connection of computer to computer in an unbroken chain around the world, may alter the fundamental concept of the library in the twenty-first century. But technology will not substantially alter the business of librarians, connecting people with information. If librarians and information professionals are going to progress into the 21st century then a clear and effective “digital library” model for library services and development will be increasingly important. An increasingly complex technological, social, legal, and economic environment defines many boundaries within which “digital library” services will evolve.

The session saw individual presentations by the experts in some of the key areas pertaining to the digitalisation/digitisation of public libraries. Dr. K. Rama Patnaik, Librarian, IIM, Bangalore, spoke eloquently on ‘Digital Rights Management/Copyright Issues/IPR Digital Era’; Dr. S.M. Azizuddin Husain, Former Director, Rampur Raza Library, and Professor, Dept. of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, stressed on the ‘Historical Importance of Rare Manuscripts of Raza Library and its challenges’ especially in the digital era; Dr. P. R. Goswami, Library Director, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), underlined the challenges in ‘Digitalisation & Access: Hard Realities’; Dr. Tariq Ashraf, Dy. Librarian & Head, South Delhi Campus Library, University of Delhi, delved into ‘Equality, Inclusion and Empowerment through e-Governance: Leveraging Public Libraries to Support National Digital Programmes’; Dr. Saiful Amin, CEO, Semantic Consulting, enlightened the participants in the topic of ‘Open Source Technologies for Public Libraries’.



**Dr. K. Rama Patnaik**  
**(Digital Rights Management/Copyright Issues/IPR Digital Era)**

“Copyrights have been neglected for a long time because of the false notion of legal expertise required ever since the digital licensing was in place in early 90’s. In IIMs, when subscriptions are made to any digital resource, the concept of walk-in user is always integrated in the license agreement, to cater to the public who are interested in research. Copyright applies to a variety of works, including but not limited to literature, music, drama, multimedia, software, and so on.

Copyright is a limited monopoly, which is extended to the content creator and the owner, to exploit their work for commercial gain, for a limited period after which it is moved to the public domain. When public libraries negotiate the access for licensed content, they have to be careful about listing down the activities which constitute fair usage. As the users of digital content, some of the responsibility also lies with the user. They should be conscious of dos and don’ts of digital content. Publicly available content is governed by copyright laws, whereas, public domain content is not. Every public library should have a checklist, so that fair use of digital content is protected by the agreement. For preservation and mass digitisation activities, the copyright laws have to be more explicit. The cultural institutions of India like archives, museums, and public libraries, should engage in digitisation before the whole content deteriorates.”

**Professor S. M. Azizuddin Hussain**  
**(Historical Importance of Rare Manuscripts of Raza Library and it’s challenges’ especially in the digital era)**

“After the Turkish conquest of India, they brought with them their own collection of books, and they established libraries in Multan, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Panipat and many other places. Babur had a great collection of books and manuscripts, and the collection was continued by his successors. In 1774, Faizullah Khan established a library in Rampur, and all the subsequent rulers of Rampur were scholars. They procured rare books from France and Germany even in the 19th century. During the first war of Indian Independence, the British army looted many libraries in Delhi and other places. The library in Rampur survived. Once Rampur merged with the Government of India after independence, Raza Ali Khan shifted the library to his residence. In 1975, Professor Syed Noor Hasan, the education minister, brought the library under an act of parliament, and this library is currently running under the supervision of Ministry of Culture. The manuscript collection on Islam found in India , is rare and cannot be found in any other library in the world. The manuscripts need to be digitised, but at the same time there is also a need to catalog them in a proper manner. All our manuscripts should be made available on websites, so they are available to people who seek to refer them for their research.”



**Dr. P. R. Goswami**  
**(Digitalisation & Access: Hard Realities)**

“Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA) has collected manuscripts belonging to different streams from 52 heritage institutions, and signed 52 agreements. Since, the manuscripts are covered under intellectual property law, and not under copyright law, they cannot be made available in the public domain for access by the public. When the meeting was called by IGNCA to discuss how these manuscripts can be made available through the Ministry of Culture for wider circulation to the public, only 15 of the 52 institutions



agreed to share the manuscripts, and release them to the National Virtual Library of India. Many of our institutions like National Library, National Archives, IGNCA, and so on, are digitising their content, but there is no coordination. Digitising is a never ending process, and unless all our institutions and stakeholders come together, and coordinate better, The National Virtual Library of India will be a distant dream.”



**Dr. Tariq Ashraf**  
**(Equality, Inclusion and Empowerment through e-Governance: Leveraging Public Libraries to Support National Digital Programmes)**

“The three dimensions of sustainable development are; economic, social and environmental. Social exclusion has its roots in India’s historical divisions along the lines of religion, caste, tribe, community etc. Inequalities being more structured in nature, have kept the entire groups trapped, unable to take advantage of opportunities that economic growth offers. The introduction of e-governance can contribute positively towards administrative reforms by improving

inter-processes, better connectivity of citizens to services, and enhancing interaction of government with the people. e-Governance initiatives provide a gateway for the inclusion of poor and the marginalised sections, when traditional governance channels perpetuate exclusiveness and elitism. e-Governance results in reduced investment and marketing, lesser delivery time, increased quality of services, reduced cost, innovative outputs, and an increased quantity of outputs. e-Governance has made government systems available round the clock, seven days a week, and strengthened trust and encouraged citizens to see governments as fair and ethical. Libraries are fighting to survive, and they need to diversify into new areas, while promoting e-culture on a massive scale. Public and community libraries are the only places in many countries where poor people can use electricity and light to read, and also fill application forms for jobs. The Indian Library Association has recently approached the Indian Government seeking to thrust the public libraries under the digital India mission, and select libraries for digitisation of knowledge and heritage. NASSCOM foundation, India’s largest IT association has launched the Indian Public Library Movement (IPLM) to re-vitalise and transform public libraries into inclusive knowledge and information centres, catering to the needs of the communities across India.”

**Dr. Saiful Amin**  
**(Open Source Technologies for Public Libraries)**

“Digital archives and digital library projects are being initiated all over the world for materials of different formats and domains. To organise, store, and retrieve digital content, many libraries as well as archiving centres are using either proprietary or open-source software. While it is accepted that print media can survive for centuries with some physical preservation techniques, digital media requires continuous processes to keep it compliant with current technology. It is not only necessary to organize digital content but also important to preserve it to ensure accessibility, sustainability, and retrieval across time. Use open source because it is better and not because it is free. Absence of warranty, managing the changes, lack of in-house infrastructure, long term support, and implementation constraints are some of the barriers to open source systems. Having a dedicated project manager, staff training, quality data migration and automating repetitive tasks are some of the keys to success while using open source.”





### Session 3: Role of CSR in Transforming and Revitalising Public Libraries

The session was moderated by Dr. Shubhangi Sharma, Executive Director, IPLM. The panel comprised Shrikant Sinha, CEO, NASSCOM Foundation; R. S. Sharat, Head of CSR, Mytrah Energy (India) Ltd.; Sri Abhishek Rajan, Global Head-CSR & Sustainability, Brillio Technology; and Sreedhar Gunduboina, Head-CSR, ADP Pvt. Ltd. Knowledge is a complex phenomenon, which cannot be defined in one succinct sentence. The inclusion of a number of variables and categories make the task of defining it cumbersome. There are traces of the transition taking place in developing countries into knowledge economies. There have been continued barriers to its success that starts with an understanding of the notion of knowledge society.

Collaboration of CSR in developing public libraries will require a change in the mindset of all stakeholders in realising the importance of reading in education and willingness to alter policies and practices in the light of the findings. The CSR initiatives must aim to explore holistic education driven by communities to lead India towards becoming a major knowledge economy. In this connection, there is considerable merit for Indian companies to take leadership in supporting the development of public libraries.



**Dr. Shubhangi Sharma began the session by stating,** “Public Libraries as institutions for information, education and engagement have been at the centre of collective community learning. However, with the advent of technology, they require to reposition and reinventing themselves. There is a need for raising awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility by highlighting the role of public libraries and their importance in applying CSR initiatives.”



**According to R. S. Sharat,** “Companies enter a social project with an exit strategy in place so that they are self-sustainable and can manage on their own after a stipulated time frame. Development of Public library is a new area for CSR. Public libraries need to be identified as a robust vertical of education for CSRs to be inclined to look into them. Currently, corporates are only following a defined path. Health and Education happen to be the most preferred areas to contribute in as it is easy to justify them. I accept we have to adopt innovative thinking. People working in other spheres also have to work closely with the corporates and government to form new perspectives.”

**Abhishek Ranjan states,** “The corporate sector has always been instrumental in responding to the key social causes, innovative ideas to incubate and flourish for the developmental Initiatives and societal welfare. The CSR mandate as per Companies Act 2013 and further amendments thereto have given an impetus to change the way the corporates implement their CSR activities in a comprehensive and well defined manner. The country has also seen considerable resources being deployed for out-of-the-box social development endeavours. We have to define the role of Public Libraries from the perspective of Education, which should not be difficult. There is a need for CSRs also to redefine their thinking.”



**Sreedhar Gunduboina enumerated,** “Although library building is a great asset, it is the people who actually make a difference in the community, and therefore it is important for the librarians to get into the community. Library staff should spend some of their time outside the library building, meeting with business and community leaders in order to learn about important community development needs. This enables libraries to lend their support through creating awareness on these community needs and subsequently encouraging firms to act upon these needs in a socially responsible manner. Public libraries are at the centre of community transformation, and they should encourage CSR.”

**Shrikant Sinha emphasized,** “Reading is an integral part of acquiring knowledge. A community driven approach towards reading and acquiring knowledge could be achieved through public libraries. CSR should be looking at public libraries in that light. Development of public libraries will impact the dynamics of acquiring knowledge, and this is the biggest social cause that CSR should be inclined towards looking at. A range of new services—knowledge kiosks, children spaces, or providing alternate learning spaces to children/women/youth— serving as information and support centres to the deprived and marginalised on government schemes and programs to get benefit of, and thereby contributing to the sustainable development agenda of the country. Since libraries are considered kind of social responsibility due to their contributions to social, educational, cultural and economic aspects, it also have a role in the dissemination of environmental education and increase community awareness of relevant issues.”





#### **Session 4:** *Challenges and Way Forward in Access and Availability: Public Libraries in the Age of Digital Content and Services*

There is reliable evidence that at least a billion Indians are more fluent and comfortable in vernacular language than English. Only 350 million Indians are classified as ‘English users’, which means they can read English words, and only around 100 million people can speak English. In that light, Most of the Indians may prefer to access content in their mother tongue. It will not only lead to better comprehension, but also a better engagement with the content.

We have all been slow to realise the importance of digital local language content. That is the reason, growth of Internet usage across India has been rather slow.

Affordability and low per capita income have been cited as a barrier to internet access too. This is gradually dissolving. Phenomenal increase in the use of smart phones and affordable Internet packages have set a new trend of internet usage in India. Access to local language digital content will ignite faster acceptance.



Moderated by Professor Laxman Rao, President, Telangana Library Association, this session saw speakers from NGOs, Academics and Start-up such as, Vishnu Vardhan, CEO, NTR Foundation; Himanshu Giri, CEO, Pratham Books; Pallas Bajjuri, Co-Founder, Kahaniya; Archana Joshi, Director, Deepak Foundation; Dr. Manoj Kumar, INFLIBNET; and Dr. Elavazhagan Kannan, Librarian & Chief Knowledge Officer, Tiruchirappalli.

Professor Laxman Rao stressed on the need for mutually beneficial and complimentary collaboration of Public Libraries with NGOs, start-ups, social entrepreneurs and academics who are doing exemplary path-breaking work

platform. If public libraries have to grow and develop in the digital age, then more innovative ideas and partnerships have to be encouraged. The days of public libraries as a passive space and resource provider has long gone. Now they have to be active participants. They have to reach out to their users through innovative means. Since, most of the public libraries are located in smaller cities and towns, providing access to local language digital content is one way of increasing the footfalls in the library, and making it relevant for the local youth, who may not be proficient in English.



**Vishnu Vardhan shared his experiences when he was working with the Centre for Internet and Society's Access to Knowledge programme.** He shared, "It is India's indigenous language speakers that are creating and consuming the content that is driving Wikipedia's growth on the subcontinent. We targeted ten tongues — Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi and Telugu — and started working with India's Wikimedia chapter, responsible for coordinating the local volunteer efforts, to boost the amount of local language content being created on a range of websites including, Wikipedia, Wiktionary, and WikiCommons. 13,400 articles were added in the top four

languages, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi; page views on the 25,000 Bengali entries grew by 1.4 million to about 4 million; there are over 100 active Malayalam Wikipedia editors working consistently. I hope this capacity building exercise will spark a self-fulfilling cycle of local Wikipedia content production and consumption. Mobile operator Aircel and Wikimedia India had announced that subscribers could freely access m.wikipedia.org, available in 19 Indian languages, from their mobile phones. We have also created the unicode for Konkani language, and now more and more digital content is being created in Konkani language."

**Pallas Bajjuri is the founder of Kahaniya,** which is a platform to read short fiction e-books in regional language. He observed, "Vernacular languages are coming to the forefront to establish their supremacy as a mode of communication in the changing linguistic scenario. Majority of the Indian population prefer their digital content in regional languages. I think the notion of 'regional language apps' will last for long. Very soon, every app will have to support regional languages if the makers and companies want to tap the Indian market. Soon there would be an exponential increase in the demand for regional language content, where specialised apps or platforms would find a foothold. Between Hotstar and Netflix, more Indians will likely download Hotstar as it has a lot of regional language content. Even in news, DailyHunt is more popular than Flipboard in our country, because fundamentally language is not just about spoken or written words, it's also about culture, familiarity and things that matter to us every day."



**Himanshu Giri, the CEO of Pratham Books, believes,** "A book in every child's hand" is Pratham Books' mission and it has evolved a unique, high-volume business model to fulfil it. All Pratham Books' titles have an average print run of 12,500 copies. And since it is difficult to sell that many books in a single language, the same title is printed in multiple vernacular languages. Translating children's books involves not just taking the words from one language and putting it in another. Regional references, cultural nuances, idiosyncrasies of the language and local dialects, plus the vocabulary appropriate for the intended reading level all come into play, which makes

it not only challenging but also extremely rewarding. While proficiency in both languages at a native level is a must, familiarity with the colloquial and idiomatic usage is a great plus as it helps make the work accessible to a diverse group of kids with varying backgrounds. More and more tribal children are now enrolled in formal school. They have to study in the official language of the state which is different from their mother tongue. The government has recognised the difficulty this poses for the child and has introduced multilingual education. StoryWeaver is an open source digital platform from Pratham Books on which stories can be read, downloaded, translated, versioned or printed for free to expand the diversity of storybooks available to children, especially in native languages. All content on StoryWeaver is available under Creative Commons licenses to encourage collaboration and reuse. In a little over a year, Storyweaver has expanded to offer books in over 60 languages. Teachers, literacy organisations, and parents can easily find resources that fit their students' reading ability as well as their language preferences. We have over 14 million readers on our platform.”



**Archana Joshi, Director, Deepak Foundation added,** “If children cannot come to libraries, then take the libraries to children. We partnered with Pratham books to provide access to their stories to the children in the tribal villages by initiating mobile library services in the tribal villages of Roha in Raigad district, Maharashtra. A mobile library van travels to otherwise inaccessible tribal areas, and provides library experience to the tribal children, and build their imagination and inculcate the interest for reading. It has also improved reading level literacy in the community. Academicians Dr. Manoj Kumar and Dr. C. K. Swain spoke about digital content in local languages from the perspective of access.

**Dr. Manoj Kumar, INFLIBNET; shared,** “The library automation process aims at modernisation of libraries, as it is the knowledge manager or epicentre of knowledge. The library and information networks are playing an important role in collection development and resource sharing, organisation of information, retrievals and the dissemination of information across the country for the benefit of academic communities. Due to financial crisis and resource crunch in government as well as private sectors, emphasis was given on the idea of resource sharing among libraries and information centres through library networks. The main purpose of all these networks is to acquire reading materials collectively, avoid duplication, consortia approach for costly foreign journals and databases, maximise utilisation of reading materials in libraries of a particular locality or region by users.”



**Dr. Elavazhagan Kannan, Librarian & Chief Knowledge Officer, Tiruchirappalli, stated,** “Digital Technology has provided faster access to information and it is also challenging the libraries to rethink and remodel their services by adopting the technological changes. Today mobile phones are becoming an integral part of everyday life and are changing the way one connects and interacts with the world. In this changing scenario, Mobile Technology will be of great help to libraries towards strengthening their relationship and providing enhanced user oriented services to existing users. Libraries may well reach out to the remote users who were considered unlikely to connect because of absence of a medium. In this regard, collaboration and partnerships with digital content creators in local Indian

Languages will enhance and accelerate the process of engagement with public libraries, especially one with wikipedia.”

Laxman Rao noted that creation and access of digital content in local languages is the most important aspect of digitalisation of Public Libraries. We need more initiatives like Pratham Books and Kahaniya to accelerate the process of digital movement across the country. Public libraries have to come up with out-of-the-box solutions and think beyond their space. Looking for alternative ways to provide access to libraries to those who cannot not access library is the key to the growth and development of libraries in the future.





### *Session 5: Strengthening Public Libraries of Telangana in the 21st Century*

The last session was an open house dedicated to the librarians, secretaries and chairman of 31 District and State Public Libraries of Telangana; and the officials of the Directorate of Public Libraries (DOPL) and Telangana Grandhalya Parishad. They discussed openly about the challenges and issues that are hampering the growth and development of Public Libraries in Telangana. They focussed especially on the ideas that were discussed in the last two days.

They all agreed that Public Libraries cannot develop in isolation. Partnerships and collaborations are the key. Training of library staff in digital usage is another area that needs to be pushed on priority. Sri Ayachitam Sreedhar, Chairman of Telangana Grandhalaya Parishad and the Director of the Directorate of Public Libraries, Sri CH, Ramana Kumar heard the issues of all concerned and promised to leave no stone unturned towards rapid digitalisation process of Public Libraries in Telangana, and adopt innovative solutions to increase the footfalls in the Public Libraries.



## Conclusion

There is a need to rethink the sustenance model of public libraries. It cannot just depend on the funds provided by the government. Most often than not, libraries do not figure in the priority list of the government. So, the public libraries are always left scraping the surface for the left overs. It is important to establish alternate sources of funding such as CSR funds, Crowdfunding, and other Community based sources.

The importance of public libraries, especially for the middle and lower middle-class youth in smaller towns of India cannot be emphasised enough. Communities have to consider libraries as an extension of their development. Hence, libraries cannot just remain as reading spaces. They have to be used more innovatively for recreational and self-development activities. IPLM has helped public libraries to evolve into spaces for motivational workshops, English-speaking classes, career counselling sessions, which has improved the depleting footfalls in the public libraries; but more such activities and ideas are needed to truly change the fortunes of the public libraries in India.

The conference ended on a positive note, with participating librarians, NGOs, Corporates, Academicians, Educationists, Government, Politicians, Students, unanimously acknowledging the importance of public libraries, and agreeing to address the issue of re-vitalising the public libraries in Telangana on a war-footing.



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