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Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RMIC) Library, Kolkata: Bird's Eye View

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Abstract:

RMIC library is one of the famous libraries in north-east India. Well maintained services in automated library environment with strong collection with language wise stack system. The maximum numbers of books are in English language but other language books are also available. There is a sound ready reference reading room collection and help desk for reader services. There are 400 current serials along with academic online journals published by Oxford University Press, Cambridge University press, JSTORE and Sage. The well maintains rare collection for the books published before 1900 and the valuable first edition of Ramakrishna movement along with the digitization by latest technology. Library organization and management information system (MIS) through Vivekananda Library Management System(VLMS) performing by skilled professionals with the latest standard (DDC, Sear's List of Subject Heading, AACR). The bar code charging and discharging strengthening the circulation system.

Keywords: *Library collection, Ready reference, serials collection, Technical processing, Centre for development of Advanced Computing*

1. Introduction

The focal point of the Institute is its library. It is one of the best library of north east India providing lending, reserve, demand, renewal over telephone or by hand, ready reference along with long range reference, referral, audio video, internet and online database access, on demand softcopy (PDF), along with photocopy services. It does this by combining an efficient organizational structure with cutting edge Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Since its inception in January 1938, the Institute has maintained a library and a reading room. The library at Gol Park, South Kolkata was planned by a group of experts under the leadership of Mr. B. S. Keshavan, the first librarian of the Indian National Library, and was inaugurated by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru in November 1961. An annex to the Gol Park premises was completed and inaugurated in November 2005.

Some of the impotent components are:

- Central air conditioning of the reading room,
- Study carrels for serious researchers,
- Another Help and Reference Service Desk, with a reference librarian, has been added, with internet connections, for providing personal and comprehensive bibliographic information,
- A cloak room, water filter and another entry desk with computer terminal have been added,
- The number of computer catalogue terminals in the library reading room for searching bibliographic records is ten.
- Two separate rooms have been designated for rare books and digitization.
- A separate floor (basement) has been assigned for bound (back issues) periodicals,
- Broadband internet connection of 19 computers in the General library,

2. Objective of the Study

- To find out the collection comprising with language distribution.
- To identify the nature of ready reference collection.
- To observe the stranth of preserving rare documents.
- To to find out the library organization and management process and the status of periodical and serials collection.

3. Membership

Library membership is open to all—irrespective of caste, gender, political or religious persuasion, even though borrowing rights are restricted to those residing in greater Kolkata. Given its central location at Gol Park and its close proximity to schools, colleges like City College (5 minutes walk), universities like Jadavpur (10 minutes away), research institutes like the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (10 minutes away), public and private enterprises and residential area, the demography of the library’s readership is wide and varied. Its readers include school and college students studying in formal, non-formal and distance educational institutions, academics and researchers, book lovers, professionals and other enthusiasts.

4. The Library Collection, Composition and Distribution

The library’s collection comprises of books, periodicals and multi-media CD-ROMS in English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Hindi and other languages. These are made available to readers through a card and a computer catalogue with multiple access points. Its collection is periodically taken stock of (every 5 years) and updated by discarding redundant material. The last stock take was undertaken between August 2012 and March 2013.

English is the primary language of the General library’s collection, comprising 52% of all its titles. But its Bengali and Sanskrit collection are not negligible. The language-wise distribution of the library’s collection is illustrated in Figure 1.

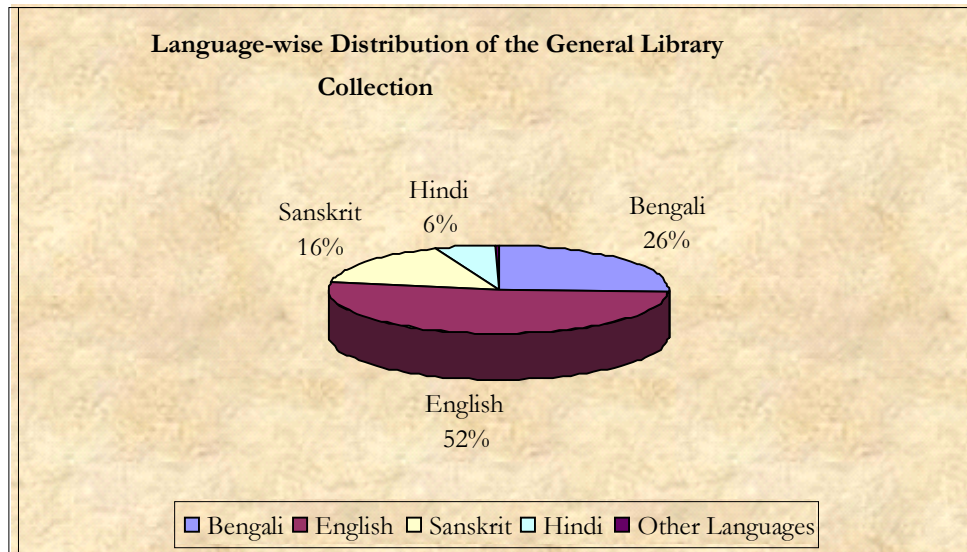


Figure 1: Language-wise Distribution of the General Library’s Holdings

Even though the library’s collection encompasses all disciplines, it tends to specialize in the humanities and social sciences. This is depicted in Figure 2.

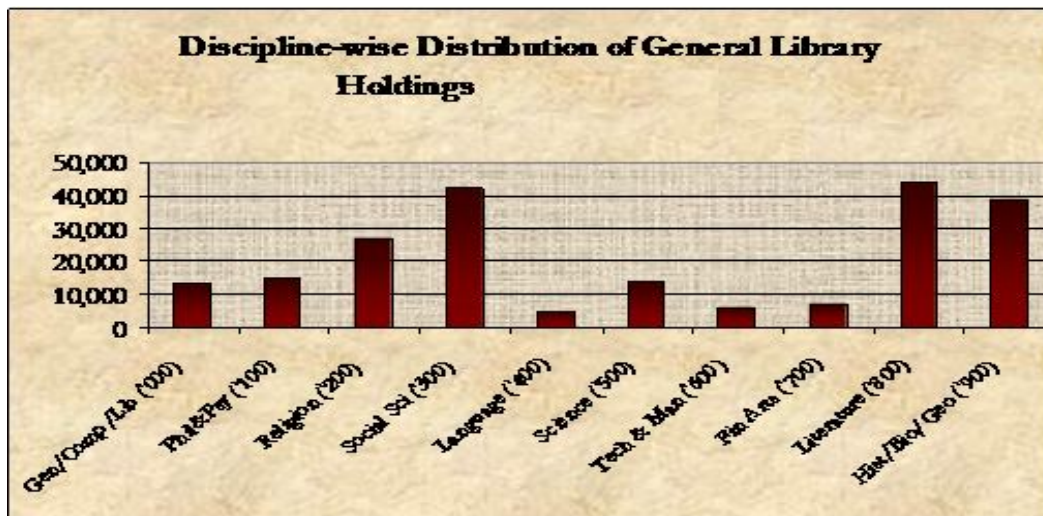


Figure 2: Discipline-wise Distribution of the General Library Holdings

A discipline wise distribution of the library's collection reveals that Literature (800 class in Dewey decimal classification) is the dominant discipline with 43, 707 titles, followed closely by the Social Sciences (300 class) with 42, 089 titles. The 900 class, which includes History, Geography and Biography, is third highest category with 38, 987 titles.

4.1. Reading Room Ready Reference Collection

The library's reading room collection is at the fingertips of readers for ready reference. This collection includes general reference books, encyclopedias, handbooks, manuals, directories, guides and language dictionaries which are arranged on a disciplinary basis. There are also special sections for the Ramakrishna Movement literature, the Institute's publications, Bengali fiction, Bengali reference and Sanskrit reference books. There were 4,319 titles which grew into 5, 677.

4.2. Help Desk, Reference and Bibliographic Services

The library operates two help desks providing reference services to readers, ranging from simple fact finding exercises to providing detailed bibliographic information for serious researchers. Readers also have access to the World Wide Web for browsing the internet at both these help desks. A couple of the notable bibliographic services of the library are the compilation of a Ramakrishna Movement Index and a bibliography of books published on Swami Vivekananda entitled Books on Vivekananda: A Bibliography.

4.3. Periodicals and Serials Collection

The library has over 400 current serials on display in its reading room. About half of these are academic journals published by the likes of Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Springer, Elsevier, Sage etc. Back issues of periodicals are bound, catalogued and made available for reference on demand. There is also a collection of souvenirs, relating to the Ramakrishna Movement, on display in the reading room. Even though its periodical collection is confined to print—option has been explored for subscribing to electronic journals through internet portals. E-journals, are subscribed in electronic format from publishers and Institutions. Presently most of the journals are coming in electronic format. Due to E-journals, consortia have become popular for information services among libraries e.g.: UGC-Infonet, JSTOR e-journals and Sages E-journals etc.

4.4. Rare Collection

Preserving and propagating India's cultural heritage and that of mankind as whole is an important function of the Institute. One of the ways in which the library performs this task is by maintaining a separate rare book collection, particularly for books published before 1900 and other valuable first editions of the Ramakrishna Order. Prior to the building of the annex, rare books were scattered and stored haphazardly. This has subsequently been rectified with separate rare book room with compact shelving. A customized fumigation chamber, particularly for rare books, (capacity 80-100 books at a time) and many books and maps were laminated. There were 10,970 processed rare books, with another about 1,357 books wait for processing. Processed rare books are categorized into eleven sub-category which are declared as rare-1 to rare-11. The minimum eligible criteria for selecting rare books it must be the first edition, valuable, out of print 100 years old publication. Apart from storing these rare books separately and making them available through a separate catalogue, the library is also digitizing and making these images and PDF available online.

In January 2006, under the auspices of the Digital Library of India Project, which was being promoted by the former President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the library has been scanning and digitizing its rare books at a faster pace. The digitized documents are stored in a separate server and are available to readers through computer terminals. These images will also ultimately be available through the Digital Library of India Project's web based Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

5. Library Organization and Management Information Systems (MIS)

The library is a well knit and tightly integrated with the integrated library management system named Vivekananda Library management system. Its different sections like its common, cataloging, acquisitions, periodicals, membership, circulation, book search(OPAC) binding, rare digitization and accounts are not only distinct and well integrated organizationally, but are interlinked through a high speed Local Area Network (LAN). There is a strong maintenance and backup service has been continued by the institute's monk and he is also the expert of technical processing unit.

5.1. The Charging Counter

The charging counter is the nerve centre of the library. It process all transactions relating to readers including the issuing of membership cards, receiving reader requisition slips, delivery of books from the stacks, issuing and returning books for reference or home study, renewing books over the counter and over the telephone, processing reservations, photocopying and collecting fines for overdue material. As both membership cards and books are bar coded, the processing of transactions takes place effortlessly and efficiently with little margin for error. Although it is a closed access library system user can avail their request within a few moments by the grace of skilled and efficient worker.

5.2. Accessioning Section

The accessioning section purchases and does the initial processing for new books. It receives books from approximately 30 vendors and follows a policy of purchase on approval by a selection committee. The selection committee comprises of academics connected to the Institute and is headed by the Library in charge. Apart from purchasing books, the library also acquires books and other documents

through donors. The accessioning section has been steadily building the library collection, acquiring 26, 995 titles for the General Library, compared to 19, 656 titles over the preceding.

5.3. Technical Processing

Technical processing, which refers to the classification and the cataloguing of documents, is undertaken by professional personnel with a minimum of a bachelors degree in Library and Information Science from a recognized university. The Library follows the Dewey Decimal Classification (23rd edition) and the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2 (1988). The Sears' List for Subject Headings for English titles and the Granthagar Darpan for Bengali and Sanskrit titles are used for assigning subject headings. In order to maintain consistency and accuracy in technical processing checking is undertaken at different stages.

6. Major Findings of the Study

The study reveals present situation and condition of RMIC library with its latest collection of information resources managing with different medium and formate including books and non-book materials. The library preserved the India's cultural heritage as a rare document for the future generation. There are notable periodical collection in English, Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit language displaying their subject group. The library is running with the modern trends and development of catalogue and classification including library automation with its won intregrated library management software and digitization has been successfully running with compatible infrastructure.

7. Conclusion

Nowadays libraries has been struggling and suffering from its existence crisis due to the wide use of Information Communication Technology and internet but RMIC library is looking much exception relating to quality services and modern and upto date library infrastructure and the inception of new services has been increasing day by day with the supervision of present librarian popularly known as Joydev Maharaj. Sponsoring in-house training programmers for technical participants in: Internet Browsing, Accessing Internet Data bases and Portals, Latest developments in Classification and Cataloguing, Indexing etc. Digitizing the Institute's more Public Lectures, Classes, Musical Recitals etc over which it has copyright and making them available through the Institute's Web Site or Digital Library.

In the present digital age, the library has been playing a pivotal role in this regard by harnessing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to digitize, store, organize and disseminate India's knowledge and cultural base. The library has improved and extended its services in this regard. Specifically, these improvements and extensions have been ushered in upgrading its computers and network; broadband internet connectivity, utilizing MIS to monitor, plan, control and organize operations; stocktaking and weeding its holdings; and the operation of two Help and Reference Service Desks. The library has reached a wide range of people not only in India but also outside of the country.

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