

# **Ranganathan Institute of Library and Information Science, Patna**

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## **Libraries, Documentation and information centres**

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Information dissemination is the objective of modern libraries and documentation and information centers. A number of new types of documentation and information institutions have sprung up as a result of this approach. Traditionally, libraries have been collecting various kinds of publications and holding them in readiness for use by scholars, who generally know what they want. After the World War II, there has been a knowledge explosion and consequently, exponential growth of literature. There has also been complexities in information generation, handling and use. The users have been increasingly feeling helpless due to lack of time and skill to go through the vast amount of literature or to find the information directly. Traditional library services had to be supplemented with more active service provisions. As a result, documentation and information centers began emerging to take care of the changing needs of information users for specialized services. The emphasis first shifted to documentation where periodical articles, etc. were required to be handled and served and then to information where the information contained in the documents became the product of service.

Libraries, particularly special libraries, and documentation and information centers have been known to scan current literature sources, select items of interest to the users, prepare bibliographical entries and maintain a file to offer current and retrospective, literature search services. These files are known as databases. In these files are recorded bibliographic data. A documentation and information centre may create databases in its areas of interest from internal and external sources and also provide on-line access to external databases for providing current and retrospective literature search services.

### **Definitions:**

A organization ,, selects, acquires, stores, organizes a--retrieves specific documents to meet users' requirements, (ii) announces, abstracts, extracts and indexes documents, and (Hi) disseminates documents in "response to requests from users. An of documents alone in providing the service. This is the subtle difference between a documentation centre and an information centre.

### **Libraries**

Document collection is a major function of all information service units. Libraries are traditionally known to be centers for collecting and storing documents. For that matter, documentation and information centers were established initially as extensions of special libraries. This has been particularly so in our country where the documentation and information centers came up around the nucleus of special libraries. Most of the library practices and techniques are extended and refined to suit documentation and information work. Usually, documentation and information centers are set up in specialized subject fields for the benefit of specialist groups of users working in those fields. Initially, when information work was manual or semi-automatic in nature, it was possible for only special libraries to perform the task and

meet the requirements. Besides, the size of both their user community and their collection was relatively small. Thus, special libraries easily and quickly became information centers.

## Types of documentation and information centers:

Documentation and information centers are discussed here under three broad groups. They are:

1. **By ownership** i.e., those centers that are owned, funded and run by government agencies or learned societies or professional associations or private agencies.

- **Public documentation and information system:** Established from public funds, these may not be self-supporting financially. In developing countries, documentation and information centers are set up usually under the aegis of government agencies and they may be attached to or associated with special libraries. They may or may not be accessible to general public.

### **Examples:**

- Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), New Delhi
- Defense Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC), Delhi
- National Informatics Centre (NEC), New Delhi.

- **Semi-public documentation/information centers:** Established by learned or professional societies, trade associations industrial undertakings, etc., they exist primarily for serving the members of their parent institutions, but may be accessible to others also. They may aim at operating on self-supporting basis.

### **Examples:**

- Aslib Information Centre, Aslib, UK.
- Information Centre for Iron and Steel, Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) R&D Centre, Ranchi.
- National Information Centre for Textiles and Allied Subjects (NICTAS), ATIRA, Ahmedabad.

- **Private documentation/information centers:** They belong mainly to private business enterprises, commercial firms, etc., and serve primarily the interests of their own institutions. In developed countries, most of the documentation and information centres function under private management and along commercial lines.

### **Examples:**

- Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia, USA.
- Information Centre, Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), New Delhi.

2. **By specialized interest** i.e., those centers that cater to specialists in different subject areas of research, in mission-oriented projects, and those others interested in special materials, or specific kinds of information.

- **Subject fields** - Documentation and information centers devoted to subjects like science, social science, engineering, technology, etc.

### **Examples:**

- Science and Technology - Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC), New Delhi.
- Social Science - National Social Sciences Documentation Centre (NASSDOC), New Delhi.
- Medical Sciences - Indian Medlars Centre, New Delhi.

- **Mission oriented:** Documentation and information centers devoted to missions, sectors, etc. of national economy.

### **Examples:**

- Defense Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC), Delhi.
- Environmental Information System, New Delhi.
- Biotechnology Information System, New Delhi.
- Centre for Documentation on Rural Development, Hyderabad.

- **Types of materials:** Documentation and information centers devoted to particular types of materials such as patents, standards, trade literature, translations, etc.

### **Examples:**

- Patent Information System, Nagpur.
- European Translation Centre, Delft, Netherlands.
- National Technical Information Service, Virginia, USA (for reports).
- University Microfilms Inc. Ann Arbor, Michigan (for theses).

- **Kinds of information:** Documentation and information centers dealing with bibliographic information, management information, industrial information, economic and statistical information, hard data, etc.

### **Examples:**

- Bibliographic Information - INSDOC, NASSDOC.
- Management Information - National Informatics Centre.
- Hard Data - National Information Centre for Crystallography (NICRYS), Deptt. of Biophysics and Crystallography, University of Madras.

### **3. By levels i.e., those centers that operate at the global, regional, national, or local levels.**

- **Global information system:** Characterized by decentralized input, centralized processing and decentralized distribution/dissemination of world wide information.

### **Examples:**

- International Nuclear Information System (INIS), Vienna.
- Agricultural Information System of FAO (AGRIS), Rome.
- Development Science Information System (DEVSI), IDRC, Canada.
- International Serials Data System (ISDS), Paris.

- **International Information/Database Centers:** These hold bibliographic databases in subject fields and offer on-line retrospective/current searches to users all over the world. These may be grouped as



- ✓ **International Database Access Centers** which provide to users world-wide online access to various data bases maintained by them.

**Examples:**

- DIALOG - On-line Information Retrieval System, Lockheed, USA (presently called Knight Ridder Information Services, as DIALOG has been acquired by the later).
- ORBIT/SDC - On-line Retrieval of Bibliographic Information, System Development Corporation, USA.
- ESA - European Space Agency - On-line Information Retrieval Service, Frascati, Rome.

- ✓ **International information centers** which offer service on a world-wide basis.

**Examples:**

- International Patent Documentation Centre (INPADOC), Vienna.
- Trade Information Service, International Trade Centre, Geneva.

- ✓ **International database producers/suppliers** who provide off-line and online retrieval services.

**Examples:**

- CA SEARCH, Chemical Abstracts Service, Columbus, Ohio.
- INSPEC, Institution of Electrical Engineers, London.
- MEDLARS, National Medical Library, Bethesda, Maryland, USA.

- **Regional Information Centres:** Towards collaboration and co-operation among countries belonging to a geographically continuous region or to some other interest group, a number of regional information networks, systems and programmes have come about in recent times. They help in the exchange of information and experiences among countries with similar interests.

**Examples:**

- Commonwealth Regional Renewable Energy Resources Information Service, Melbourne, Australia.
- SEAMED Regional Centre for Tropical Biology (BIOTROP), Scientific Information Programme, Bagon, Indonesia.
- TECHNUNET ASIA - An Asian Network for Industrial Technology and Extension, Singapore.

- **National Information Centre/National Documentation Centres:** They perform national level functions and services and are mostly comprehensive in character because of their wide scope.

**Examples:**

- Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, New Delhi.
- Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, (China), Beijing.
- Thailand National Documentation Centre, Bangkok.

- **Regional Documentation Centers (domestic):** In a geographically vast country, besides the National Documentation Centre, there may be a need to set up information centers in different regions in order to mobilize the information resources and facilities and to serve particular requirements of the users.

- **Sectoral Information Centers:** These are devoted to specific disciplines or missions and each are built around the nucleus of certain information centre having already a strong information base. The services are available on a national scale to all institutions and individuals engaged in the concerned discipline or mission.

**Examples:**

- NISSAT Sectoral Information Centres such as National Information Centre for Drugs and Pharmaceuticals (NICDAP), Lucknow.
- National Information Centre for Food Science (NICFOS), Mysore.
- National Information Centre for Leather and Allied Industries (NICLAI), Chennai

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