Special Library: A Gigantic Information Centre for Specials

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Abstract: Special Library is unending information kiosks called as blood vessels of the Specials (Special Subject/Special Clientele). It is learnt that the progress speed of any country is mostly depends on educational system and research activity speed of that country. In this direction Special Library plays a pivotal role in research activities for national development and its advancement. At the same time orienting the specials by means and methods of Information Literacy and IT/ICT tools and techniques, is the need of the hour for overall development of the individual and also for national development. The present papers highlights on special (research) library facets which relates to need, types, services, functions and activities in past, present and future trend with more emphasis on present scenario. The functions and services of special library are graphically represented in projected 3K2CM model consists of three basic components-Knowledge Content, Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Management.

Keywords: Special Library, Library Service, Subject, Clientele, Special, 3K2CM

I. Introduction

Library has a collection of books and other reading materials which are available in print and non-print form. These materials are arranged in a systematic manner useful for the reader to carry out their research and academic pursuits. With the changing nature and services of the library, today Library science is not a Library science but it is Library and Information Science. It is observed that with the boost of technology there is rapid development in Library profession.

   Basically library system falls into following four types of libraries which are existed-

1. Public Library
2. Academic Library
3. National Library and
4. Special Library

By the changing scenario, advent of technology, availability of information in e-format and its demand and flow, the following nomenclature is best fitted to the Library

1. Documentation Centre
2. Digital Library
3. Learning Centre
4. Virtual Library
5. Information/ Resource Centre etc

In view of this special attention should be given to learning/information/resource centre as an integral part of special/research library. Many researchers and faculty members have made literary contribution about special library and try to explain what special library is, in different dimensions? The present paper highlights the services and functions of the special library in the present context with 3K2CM architecture and also compare special library facets in past, present and future trend. To make aware the basic and general information about the ‘Special Library’ to the common reader at the center, the present work is being undertaken.

II. Special Library:

Special Libraries are established to serve the needs of ‘special’ clientele group viz. the Scientist, the Technologist, the Planner, the Industrialist, the Economist, the Statistician, the Lawyer, the Doctor, the Engineers, the Traders, the Entrepreneur, the Administrator etc. and its collection is limited to ‘special’ subject (single/cluster of specific subject/ interrelated) through ‘special’ services.

Definition:

There are several definitions of Special Library are available from the different sources of information. Few of them are stated below-

   “Special Library is generally concerned with literature of a particular subject or a group of subjects and extends its facilities to a particular type of clientele” [1]

   According to SIWG (Special Library Working Group), “Special Libraries cater to specific professional or academic groups whose information needs are defined by a particular subject or activity” [2]
Wright has clearly distinguished the role behind special library as, it is almost concerned exclusively with literature of a particular subject or a group of subjects. Further it also includes libraries having collection of a particular form of material.

Considering above definition it is observed that there are 3 “S” in Special Library system. They are-

1. Special Subject
2. Special Service and
3. Special Clientele

Here the term Special Library is used in two connotations.

I. In general, which includes specialized collections of varying types in the specialized field
II. In specific, which includes specialized information service to the specific clientele.

**Scope:**

They are the part of any research, educational, industrial or business institution/organization. Broadly the institutional scope is limited to following fields/areas-

- Business, Industry, Research and Scientific Organizations
- Government Departments
- Corporate sector
- Agriculture, Law, Medicine, Chemistry, Engineering, Social Science, History, Advertisement, Insurance, Military, Music, Theology and News fields etc. They are called ‘special’ because each of these has some distinct characteristics of the others. “But an institution which houses a research collection in one field, such as the library of a philosophical or historical society, may also be termed a special library. If, an institution has many special collections for research it will usually be referred to as a general research library and not a special library, to indicate its diversified character.” [3]

**Types of Special Libraries:**

Considering the special-subject and clientele it is further subdivided into following types.

1. Research And Development Organization Libraries, E.g. BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre) Library, NCL (National Chemical Laboratory) Library, Agricultural Research Institute Library, Pusa etc.
3. Business, Directorate, Trade and Industry Libraries, E.g. RBI (Reserve Bank of India) Library, Trade Authority of India Library, etc.
4. Socio-economic Development Research Institution Libraries, E.g. Center for studies in social science library, IGIDR (Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research) Library etc
5. Other:
   - Law Libraries, E.g. Law schools/University Library
   - Medical Libraries, E.g. Medical School/College/University Library
   - Museum Libraries, E.g. Archives Library
   - Newspaper Libraries, E.g. Local/State/National/International newspaper, E.g. all newspaper libraries of different origin
   - One Person Library (OPL), E.g. Individual specialized collection
   - Nonprofit Libraries etc.

**Need:**

Owing to the importance of special library there is need to set-up Special Library at the various organizations/institutions. The factors affecting to the need are:

1. Changing attitude of research/trend towards front-line research
2. High degree of urgency for nascent (current and updated) information by specials
3. Quest for Up- to-date in the field of interest
4. R & D pursuit of specials
5. To search for the unknown from the available sources
6. Multilingualism, high degree of availability of information in other than English languages, Thesaurus etc
7. Exponential growth of information in electronic form and its services compared to print form
8. Focus on ‘Information discovery’ from ‘Information explosion’ in all forms in all areas.
9. Great inventions and discoveries in all fields affects in increasing specialization in the field
10. Pressure towards work at international level in the field/topic with modern aspects
11. Exponential entrance of users with different nationalities, cultures, field of interest and languages etc mark their place in research area/net which impacts in generation of new research
12. Societal relevance, research is for betterment of the society
13. High Security of information, by means of security measures like Firewall/Proxy/Cryptography/Login name/Password mechanism etc.
14. Rigid and fair nature of information policy
15. Institution mission

Collection (Present):
At present the library collection in typical special library consists of-
Books, journals, abstracts, indices, technical/specialized reports and series, state of the art research paper (article), proceedings, patent, standard, chart, graph, archives, images, records, project and annual report, output statistics, consumer surveys, market research data, bulletin, pamphlet, Government publications, equipment/design manual/specification, directory etc on a special subject/group of subject available in print, digital (online) and or non-print form (Multimedia). So they are referred as “Virtual Spring of the Knowledge” as the collection is dynamic with the changing circumstances. Focus is “Less on books and more on journals/periodicals” principal to acquire the material in both the form i.e print and non print form.

III. Library Services and Facilities (Present):
The library services and facilities provided by the Special Library at present are enlisted below:
- Access to scholarly literature: Journal/e-journal article/paper (free/subscribed), proceedings, books, reports, theses/dissertation etc.
- Reference, referral and bulletin board service.
- Translation, abstracting, scanning, extracting, photocopying and printing services.
- Discussion Forum on current issue/topic/subtopic amongst specials and Document Delivery Service (DDS), sharing of practical/procedure experiences.
- Web 2.0/3.0 tools and techniques: Blogs, wikis, social networking sites, Library 2.0, RSS feeds etc
- Open access initiatives: Journals (Directory of Open Access Journals-DOAJ), Books (Directory of Open Access books-DOAB), Open access software’s/programs etc
- Website management, link to e-resources/digital libraries/institutional repositories (paper published), write up and link to services offered, link to sister/parent organization, web 2.0 tools and OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) services.
- In house article indexing and literature search service/strategy: Boolean, simple, advance, logical, federated and cross filing/reference searching options
- Alerting services: CAS (Current Awareness Service) and SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) services-online/offline (with routing service), news alert, bulletin alert, conference alert, e-alert, current contents etc. To compile and provide continuous updates on the each step of current projects of the ‘specials’ which includes new investigation, events and latest happenings around the world subject to the specials projects
- Automated housekeeping services (Library Automation)
- Multimedia services: Indexing, classification, filings and access to contents of multimedia objects like CD/DVD, photograph, image, audio, video (clips/talks), hypertext etc.
- M-Library services: Instant Messaging/SMS, internet access and download, image capture and retrieval, announcements and reminders etc.
- Bibliometric services: Citation analysis, impact factor, indicators etc and provide imperative compilation, reprints and references
- Access to high-speed Internet connectivity/Wi-Fi system at reading and within campus areas
- Assistance towards exploring the level of research, lacunae, compliances etc if any, on work done earlier which is helpful in finding new problem.
- Arrangement of periodic training/awareness/orientation programs/workshop/seminar/critical review/ conference /demonstration/extension programs etc on e-information services, products and equipments
- To make awareness about Copyrights/IPR issues, patents, standards and consultancies etc in all fields/disciplines.
- Co-operative sharing/application/storage facility: Cloud computing, Google doc etc
- Conservation facility: binding and due care of library holdings as purchase cost of document is high

In this connection, Special Library acts as a centre for policy decision, business advice, information generation, storage, retrieval, and exchange of information and also as intelligent agent.

IV. Functions (Present):
Special library functions are stated in line with the services of the library. The imperative function played by Special Library in creation and dissemination of knowledge are-
- Acquisition of books/e-books to enrich subject special comprehensive collection
- Subscription to core journals/e-journals (with perpetual back issue access) of national/foreign origin and purchase of online e-databases/databanks: Science direct, Springer, ACM, SciFinder, JCCC, SCOPUS etc. depending upon the subject scope of the special library
Institutional Membership to all research laboratories, association/societies and bodies within the field; obligation of consortium approach with major agencies like CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research), IIM (Indian Institute of Management), INDEST, (Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Sciences and Technology), FORSA (Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy) UGC-INFLIBNET (University Grants Commission-Information and Library Network) Infonet project etc for scientific information exchange and resource sharing regarding development of common interests/field.

- Filing, abstracting, indexing, categorization of patents, article indexing and documentation activities like licensing, tendering and agreements etc
- Support for technical communication like technical writing, editing, compiling, formatting and publishing (electronic publishing) etc.
- Gathering and updating of user (member/visitor) profiles/user needs and services
- Selection, organization, evaluation, storage and dissemination of special information and data; knowledge management/consolidation and repackaging of information/tailored information.
- Provide pin-pointed, exhaustive, expeditious, current and retrospective services in all and at all level to the users by the adoption and absorption of new technologies within the field.
- To explore the availability of collection on a particular subject from nadir to zenith level.
- To build a strong, qualitative, in-depth and updated reference/special collection
- Organization and participation in up gradation of knowledge, technology/skill improvement programs to remain current in the field.
- Focus towards library automation and networking
- Budget allocation, utilization and reporting
- Purchase of furniture and equipments; hardware, software and its accessories etc.
- Extension and promotional activities mainly publication, arrangement of permanent exhibition reflects institution mission; organization of popular lectures/series of lectures/presentation of eminent guests/scientist/academicians/personalities in the field.
- To carry out stuff exchange program
- Step towards repository library

Thus with these services/facilities and functions of special library, they may responsible for:

i. Knowledge Content

ii. Knowledge Creation and

iii. Knowledge Management

i.e 3K2CM plan

The proposed 3K2CM architecture of Special Library is shown diagrammatically as below:

![Diagram of Special Library Architecture](image-url)
V. Historical Perspective of Special Library in India:

From the available sources it is observed that in India the history of special library is closely related to the development of department/research institutions/organizations. Few of the futuristic events about the development of special library in India are listed below-

1. Previously three types of Library system was started in pre-historic period namely Public, Academic and Government (750 A.D)
2. Matharas begun the organizational aspects of Special Library system
3. Use of Palmleaf (handwritten manuscript) as a Special material (17th Century)
   - Britishers made the foundation of modern Special Library system in India. At the international level prototype (model) of Special Library could be found in 18th and 19th centuries
   - Development of departments and departmental libraries such as Medical Library, Law Library, Secretariat Library etc. So the base of Special Library movement had come from the libraries serving business, industry and government sectors. Then they begun to publish research results and statistics.
   - Formation of Technical and Research Centers: Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttak (1946), Sugar Cane Research Station, Bhuvaneshwar (1948)
5. Post-Independence Period (1949 onwards)
   - Five year plan policy vis a vis library development plan
   - Formation of more departmental library, institutional library and research libraries: (Special Library)
   - Finance department/Finance Library, Industry department/Industry Library, Fisheries department/Fisheries Library etc
6. Now onwards felt that Special Library/ Information center is core to the concerned department/organization serving the needs of specials
   - IASLIC (Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centers) plays an important role in the formation of special libraries in India.

At the international level credit for formation of today’s Special Library goes to John Cotton Dana, Librarian of Newark Free Public Library, America, he and 26 other librarians discussed and suggested the name (1909). “The development of special libraries all over the world started during early 19th century. The youngest special libraries were those of technology and industry. In 1855, the Patent Office (U.K.) established a technological library, which is the oldest of such libraries” [4]. The first technical collection was made by Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, (1895). It is interesting to know the historical development of Special Libraries in U K and USA.

VI. Special Library- Past, Present and Future:

Following table reveals the comparison of some of the library activities of Special Library in past, present and future trend. The past and present period is roughly mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Past (Up to 1980)</th>
<th>Present (1980 onwards)</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nomenclature</td>
<td>Special Library/Technical Resource Centre</td>
<td>Information Centre/Documentation Centre</td>
<td>Learning Resource Centre (LRC), Knowledge Resource Centre (KRC), Virtual Resource Centre (VRC), Virtual Information Centre (VIC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mode of Communication for Acquisition of books and its Finance</td>
<td>Letter with MO/DD/Cheque</td>
<td>Email and E-Commerce</td>
<td>Email, Message and E-Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sources of Information</td>
<td>Primary to Tertiary (Print form)</td>
<td>Primary to Tertiary (Online form)</td>
<td>Primary to Tertiary (Remote/Online form) and collection tools like Collaborative, Mind mapping and visualization etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reading Material</td>
<td>Special subject print Books, Journals/Periodicals, Trade catalogue/directory, maps, travel and business books</td>
<td>Special subject all Print resources, E-Resources, TOC (Table of Content)</td>
<td>Special subject all E-Resources (Online and Offline mode), TOC, Open Access Initiatives, digital most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Main Library Services</td>
<td>Reference Service, Classification and Cataloguing</td>
<td>Documentation, Network (Internet based), Online CAS/SDI</td>
<td>Network (Internet-URL/IP), Online CAS/SDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Technical Processing Job</td>
<td>Library staff and In-depth classification</td>
<td>Research fellows for Organization and In-depth, minute classification</td>
<td>Outsourcing/in-house, Suitable scheme of classification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>DDC Scheme of classification (mostly)</th>
<th>Suitable scheme of classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Major Library Sections</td>
<td>Reference, Acquisition etc</td>
<td>Reference, Acquisition, Scanning, Technical Documentation etc. (Manual and online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Transaction</td>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>RFID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Library Automation</td>
<td>Use of programs/set of programs (in-house) for data handling</td>
<td>Database/Software package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Storage Media</td>
<td>Almirah and Racks (wooden), Microform</td>
<td>Almirah and Racks (wooden and steel), Compact (mobile) storage, Client/Server, Data Bank, Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Access Method</td>
<td>Slow and Direct Access</td>
<td>Fast access, Information Systems/Network/Internet/ Wi-Fi, Login name and Password</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Staff Designation (Limited staff) and Qualification</td>
<td>Class III (Senior) Class III (Junior) Class IV etc etc: Graduate (Science) and degree, diploma or certificate in library science</td>
<td>Scientist-A, B, C, D; Documentation/Technical officer, Head, Information Officer, Information analyst, Knowledge engineer etc; Graduate (Science), Master degree and Ph.D in library science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Sharing</td>
<td>ILL of documents, Attachment / Limited to regional offices, No Networking</td>
<td>Global resource sharing through Network (Internet/Intranet, LAN), Consortia, Interactive connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Publicity</td>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td>Website, E-mail, IM (Instant Messaging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Management/Functioning</td>
<td>Local, Independent, No contribution/ link to state/national level</td>
<td>Global, Participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 ICT Facilities</td>
<td>Computer, Printer, Phone (Landline)</td>
<td>Highly configured Computer/Thin Client, Laptop, Printer, Server, Scanner, Internet, Multimedia, telecommunication, E-book reader etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VII. Subject (Specials) Association and Special Library Organizations/Institutions:**

Major associations of Special Libraries are:
1. Special Libraries Associations (SLA)
2. Association of Special Libraries Information Bureau (ASLIB)
3. Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centers (IASLIC)
4. Association of Medical Librarians (AML)
5. American Association of Law Libraries (AALL)

Few of the leading Special Library Organizations/Institutions of national and international origins are listed below:
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), USA
- Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Delhi
- National Physical Laboratory (NPL), New Delhi
- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi
- Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), Bangalore
- National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune
- R & D Laboratories

**VIII. Conclusion:**

It is observed that in the special library more attention is given on current information/service. Ultimately the trace is given towards e-service/ e-learning to cope up this information at the desktop of specials. The role of Librarian is crucial in special library. He should be a documentalist, an information scientist, a good administrator and a techno person to handle technical facets of Special Library. Some sorts of training/working experience/guiding tour/special course about the Special Library is essential in the curriculum of Library and Information science as a syllabi component to get acquainted with the new technologies and proactive in the
field. At the same time orienting and exposing the specials by means and methods of Information Literacy and IT/ICT tools and techniques is the need of the hour for overall development of the specials and the nation to prove the motto- “Early information, early victory”

IX. References: