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Evaluation of ICT utilization and infrastructure in High Court Libraries across India

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The present study attempts at analyzing the availability of Information Communication Technology infrastructure facilities in high court libraries in India. The court libraries need rapid Information Communication Technology infrastructure and in this context, there is a need for adequate development of electronic resources. This study traces out the nature of electronic resources, internet services, Xeroxing, printing facilities and so on with reference to the selected institutions of India.

Key words: High Court Libraries, information communication technology.

INTRODUCTION

The judicial libraries, serve as the custodians of nation's legal legacy, documentation and repository. These libraries play an important role in the creation, development and dissemination of legal information and have since long been serving the society. In modern age of information explosion, globalization and competition, information management has become an essential requirement, especially for High Court Libraries (HCLs). The phenomenon has put a lot of pressure, especially on HCLs to provide modern set up to its users and to satisfy their information needs in the emerging fields of law (due to the changing concepts of law and society). This has marked a significant shift in the role of HCLs from the traditional ones to modern ones.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is being increasingly used in these judicial libraries for the acquisition, processing and dissemination of information as we find in other types of libraries. Libraries and Information centers have been using ICT infrastructures and services to satisfy the information thirst of its users. However, these infrastructures and services are not utilized fully. Under utilization of these infrastructures has been a cause of concern to librarian worldwide. The use of Information Communication Technology infrastructures

has become increasingly the part of present era.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - or Technologies is defined as an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning. ICT's are often spoken of in a particular context, such as ICTs in education, health care, or libraries. (ICT definition, 2008a)

Turner (2002) observes that information available today in electronic and digital formats have great capacity for storage as well as for transmission of text, audio, graphics and videos. The emergence of this technology (wherein information is available at the press of a button) has greatly revolutionized the scenario of court libraries to embrace ICT.

The effective and efficient ICT applications have greatly enhanced the services in court libraries, thus totally changing the concept. These changes have brought in both challenges and opportunities for the court libraries and their librarians. However, the court libraries in India still witness a snail mail development. Rasheed (Personal

communication, 2010) and Bhatti (Personal communication, 2010) are also of the view that the use of ICT gadgets in HCLs of India has been at very slow rate, making no significant development. Even the use of these gadgets in HCL's is not even sufficient enough to meet the local needs. Mahr (1990) points out that the HCLs in India still execute the traditional operations and modern technology is yet to form a part of the libraries which marks a typical contrast between India and the developed world. Contrary to this, Chander (1998a) points that HCLs are trying to move on the rails of advancement. He further claims that these libraries will take some more time to get fully acquainted with the modern technology.

While the number of issues that need to be addressed in our country seems endless, a strategic framework needs to be developed to focus on the most essential requirements over the next decade. This would enhance the ICT facilities of the HCLs to a more central place in the parent organization. The same may be achieved through by keeping abreast with the changing times and enabling professional manpower for its management.

Statement of the problem

High courts and their information support systems are recognized and accepted as vital institution for the progress and prosperity of justice and democracy. Naturally, there is a need to study the existing ICT facilities. These pave a way to strengthen their foundations with the changing socio- political dynamism. Therefore, the present study is an endeavor to explore the ICT status in High Court Libraries of India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of previous studies have been conducted by various authorities from time to time on law libraries in various parts of the world in order to find the problems related to these institutions, and provide remedial measures for the same. These studies have provided an insight view of law libraries across the globe. The findings of their observations are discussed further.

Stone (1989) made a case study on the law libraries, the findings unveiled that online catalogue services pose same kind of problems and benefits as in other types of libraries. Murley (2009) reviews some of the early technological issues that law libraries addressed. She provides an overview of some of the technological ways that has been used by law libraries to better serve their users. She concludes by encouraging law librarians to try new technologies in order to increase or improve law library services. She further adds that advances in the technology innovations have expanded and stretched the role of law libraries and its staff. Many law libraries now offer email reference and various other references via web, responding to patrons queries electronically.

Byrne (1992) found that online service provide to Court libraries for seeking information is necessary for improving their collections and services. Knobil et al. (1981) stress the need to provide computer terminals to all attorneys that will provide rapid access to a wide variety of database search services and legal forms and keep with the pace of transformation. Thomas (1986) is of the view that the use of new technology in court libraries will improve the law profession and the impact of technology could lead to the development of electronic court libraries.

Taylor et al. (1988) show that the impact of new technology has made law libraries to change their policies of collection development. Melamut (2000) reports that copyright implications also exist for the law collection in electronic reserve. Bunnage (1989a) found that the computer-aided instructions in law libraries have made development and advancement in teaching basic aspect of legal research in libraries. Chander (1998b) shows that in India, the explosion of legal literature necessitated the Supreme Court Judges library and High Court Judges library to introduce the application of computer in its services to judges for accessing databases like JUDIS, COURTNIC etc. Dupont (1983) studied the value added CD-ROM products and defines the potential of CD-ROM technology in legal research. Stephens (1998) discusses the impact of technology on information seeking behavior of legal fraternity and also on the libraries, the author also predicts that electronic resources will supplement rather than replace book.

According to Haugen (2005) the use of technology has led to the globalization of law libraries, which has facilitated the exchange of legal information and ideas across national and international borders. According to Canick (2002) the advent of online of legal research outlets such as find law, west law, LEXIS-NEXUS, and Heion online has reduced the need for printed volume in law libraries to a large extent. Chander (1998c) views that in future the publications of Indian legal commentaries in leading online information system like LEXIS NEXUS and invite Indian Court libraries to subscribe these services and also play a prominent role in comparative legal research. Wu (2005) reports that law libraries have supported legal information in multiple formats for decades, from paper and microforms to audiovisual tapes and CDs. He concludes that abandoning either form would translate into a failure of service to patrons, both present and future

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are to examine the ICT

and other related facilities in the HCLs of India

Scope of the study

India being the second largest populous and democratic country in the present world possess a network of 21 High Courts in its 28 states .The country is divided into eastern, western, northern and southern zone. These High Courts are housed with the libraries known as High Court Libraries (HCLs). The study is limited to the High Court Libraries of northern India which comprise of six states of India. These are (1) Uttar Pradesh, (2) New Delhi, (3) Himachal Pradesh, (4) Jammu and Kashmir, (5) Punjab & Haryana and (6) Uttaranchal. The HCLs in each High Court are of three types, except Delhi High Court which possess only two. The nomenclature of these HCLs is as - High Court Judges' Library (HCJL) meant for government judges and chief justice, High Court Bar Association Library (HCBAL) meant for private advocates, and Advocate General Library (AGL) meant for government advocates and Advocate General. All the three types are included in the study.

METHODOLOGY

The study is planned and executed in a systematic manner. Prior to instigate the study, a review of previous studies was undertaken from relevant and related sources as discussed briefly in the Literature review mentioned earlier. This helped to pave way for conducting survey of existing libraries and information support of the libraries.

Survey method

Accordingly, survey method was adopted for collection of data. The investigator used questionnaire and interview methods for the study. Investigator personally visited all the HCLs of Northern India under the study and approached 21 librarians of 21 different High Court Libraries (HCJLs, HCBALs, AGLs) to gather relevant data.

Interview

In addition to the 21 librarians, the investigator approached other professionals of the HCLs and various law institute library professionals to have an informal interview with them to augment the available information. This proved useful in getting more fruitful information for the study.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The data collected from HCLs of Northern India through interview and schedule method for collection of relevant data was consolidated, classified, analysed, interpreted, correlated and compared with other studies wherever necessary. The collected data is presented with the help of tables. In the light of collected data useful findings, suggestions and conclusions are presented.

FINDINGS

ICT facilities

According to the AALL (2009a), computers with printers should be made available to access commercial online and electronic services, including internet, but in India, the computer systems are not yet penetrated deep in the High Court library system which is clear from the fact that the HCJL of Punjab & Haryana has acquired nine computer systems and five systems by HCBAL of Punjab & Haryana. Besides, most of the AGLs do not possess more than one system. The other libraries lack adequate facilities equally and have not procured or installed more than one system (Table 1)

Internet connectivity or access to internet has been introduced into the HCLs but not yet started by most of them. It is made available through broad band for HCJL staff without any fee. However, judges who are the members of HCJLs get connectivity in their own chambers. The overall picture is portrayed in Table 1. The Table 1 further indicates that it has not taken off in other types of HCLs except in the HCBAL of Delhi, Punjab & Haryana, and the AGL of Punjab & Haryana, through broad band without any charge to its members (private and government advocates). Most of the HCJLs have access to online legal databases like JUDIS (Judgment Information System), INCODIS (Indian Code Information System), Manupatra, SCC online (Supreme Court Cases), however no such sign is seen in almost all of the HCBALs and AGLs.

The findings show that most of the HCLs in Northern India are not in tune with the new type of innovative technology like internet access and access to on line legal databases which act as a guide to judges, lawyers, and other legal faculties in retrieving and disseminating legal information pin pointedly and expeditiously in the present environment. It is on this account that there is lack of infrastructure in terms of professional man power, modern equipments and, above all, ignorance of the court administration towards the advantages of such technology in libraries.

Similar observations are made by Chander (1998d) in his study and shows that most of the Indian HCLs lack internet connectivity/ internet access because of ignorance of the High Court administration about the exploitation and benefits of such technology. He suggests that all those libraries which lack such facilities should be equipped with such infrastructure. Bunnage (1989b) contrary to this shows that in U.S Courts, administrative managers do take an active part in equipping their respective law libraries with online facilities. This has

Table 1. ICT facilities in HCLs.

Territory	No. of computers	Internet connectivity/ internet access	Type of connectivity	Access to on line legal databases	Browsing charge	Types of user
HCJLs						
Delhi	3	Yes	Broadband	JUDIS	No	Library staff
J&K (Srinagar)	1	Yes	Broadband		No	Library staff
J&K (Jammu)	1	Yes	Broadband		No	Library staff
Punjab & Haryana (Chandigarh)	9	Yes	Broadband		No	Library staff
Himachal Pradesh (Shimla)	-	-	-	No	-	-
Uttar Pradesh (Allahabad)	1	Yes	Broadband	Manupatra	No	Library staff
Uttaranchal (Nanital)	1	Yes	Broadband		No	Library staff
HCBALs						
Delhi	4	Yes	Broadband		No	Private advocates and library staff
J&K (Srinagar)	-	-	-		-	-
J&K (Jammu)	-	-	-		-	-
Punjab & Haryana (Chandigarh)	5	Yes	Broadband		No	Private advocates and library staff
Himachal Pradesh (Shimla)	1	-	-		-	-
Uttar Pradesh (Allahabad)	1	-	-		-	-
Uttaranchal (Nanital)	1	-	-		-	-
AGLs						
J&K (Srinagar)	1	-	-		-	-
J&K (Jammu)	1	--	-		-	-
Punjab (Chandigarh)	3	Yes	Broadband		No	Library staff
Haryana (Chandigarh	1	Yes	Broadband		No	Library staff
Himachal Pardesh	1	-			-	-
U.P (Allahabad)	1	-	-		-	-
Uttranchal (Nanital)	1	-	-		--	-

made these libraries faster in the dissemination of legal information. Adding further Byrne (1992) states that the use of ICT in court libraries of Ohio has proved a torch bearer for seeking information for its users and facilitates exchange of legal information and ideas across the globe which has led to progression in their efficacies.

Though not a cure-all, the access to information through ICT has given the law library immense new capabilities and has become a crucial tool in the management of the library itself. ICT provides a potent tool in matters related to data handling: storage, access, searching, relating, and retrieval. As such, it enhances the law library's role as an information center and as a research support resource

It is thus conclude that most of the HCLs in Northern India are underprovided with ICT facilities. In order to transform these HCLs working in traditional environment into the ICT environments, the High Court administration should take keen and fervent measures to outfit these libraries with modern technology and infrastructure in order to meet the challenges, so that the future of our law libraries can be bright. It is also the responsibility of librarians to change themselves, learn to adapt, and use every means at their disposal to be able to control their resources.

Most of the HCLs are not in harmony with the computer based innovative technologies that could facilitate retrieval and dissemination of legal information expeditiously and adequately among the legal fraternity. Most of the North Indian HCLs are at fledgling stage of modern technologies. They are not fully adjusted with effective and attractive technologies as well as electronic gadgets. An encouraging fact is observed that steps are a foot to pass on the hatching stage and embrace the

Table 2. Infrastructural facilities available in HCLs.

Gadgets	HCJLs	HCBALs	AGLs
Xerox machines	Delhi (1) Punjab & Haryana (1) U.P (1) **Total 3**	Delhi (2) J& K (Srinagar) (1) J& K (Jammu) (1) U. P (1) **Total 5**	Punjab (1) J& K (Srinagar) (1) J& K (Jammu) (1) **Total 3**
Printers	Delhi (2) Punjab & Haryana (3) J&K Srinagar (1) J&K Jammu (1) U.P (1) Uttranchal (1) **Total 9**	Delhi (2) Punjab & Haryana (4) H.P (1) U.P (1) Uttranchal (1) **Total 9**	Punjab (1) Haryana (1) J &K Srinagar (1) J & K Jammu (1) U.P (1) Uttranchal (1) H.P (1) **Total 7**
Scanners	Delhi (1) **Total 1**	Delhi (1) **Total 1**	Punjab (1) Haryana (1) **Total 2**
Telephones	Delhi (2) Punjab &Haryana (1) J&K Srinagar (2) J & K Jammu (1) U.P (1) Uttranchal (1) H.P (1) **Total 9**	Delhi (1) Punjab & Haryana (2) J & K Jammu (1) U.P (1) Uttranchal (1) H.P (1) **Total 7**	Punjab (2) Haryana (1) J & K Srinagar (1) J&K Jammu (1) Uttranchal (1) **Total 6**
Fax machines	-	-	Haryana (1) **Total 1**

desired development. Suggestions of how there can be improvement is given below.

Other facilities

The impact of new technology has made HCLs to adapt the applications of modern gadgets liker Xerox machines (photocopier), printers, scanners, telephones, fax machines etc in order to have advancement in providing basic aspects of legal research and services to its users. In an outlook of law library facilities, AALL (2009b) defines that the law libraries should be outfitted with copiers, fax machines, sufficient electrical outlets, and networking capabilities for computer use and internet access.

The application of such gadgets in Indian HCLs is a recent phenomenon. In case of HCLs of Northern India, these modern gadgets are not adequately acquired by all the libraries. The libraries which possess such gadgets are show cased in Table 2. The use of these gadgets in various HCLs of India has shifted them from their traditional law library professional set up to ICT based profession. Similar observations was also found by Thomas (1986) wherein he reports that the use of ICT aided instructions in the traditional law libraries has augmented their potentialities and has highly developed their law library profession. He further reports that such a shift could pave the way for crafting future electronic law libraries.

It is thus concluded that in the HCLs of our country, the use of such gadgets is at a fledgling stage; therefore, these libraries are not fully satisfied with these equipments, but are trying their possible best to provide the basic services, alongside some few other operations

using these gadgets, to their users. In this view it seems that these libraries will take some time to get fully matured with such facilities.

SUGGESTIONS

ICT facilities

The latest configured technological infrastructure need to procured to meet the challenges of ICT revolution. It is also the responsibility of librarians to change themselves, learn to adapt and use every means at their disposal to be wise stewards of their resources.

Most of the HCLs of our country are at hatchling stage of modern technology. However the technological gadgets like scanner, printers, telephones, xerox and fax machines do exist in these libraries. But the fact is that these devices are not equally available in all these libraries and same is the case with the internet connectivity and its other related facilities like access to online legal databases.

Therefore the need of the hour is that all the HCLs should be fully equipped with these equipments and in addition these should also be furnished with latest technologies and technological devices like w-fi internet, digital scanners, RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Device), bar code technology and microfilming etc.

Conclusion

The HCLs of India have the explicit function as a real centre of intellectual effort and as an active legal instrument in legal environment.

Since, we have seen that by the end of last century the development of High Court Libraries in India has taken place at a snail's pace. The traditional methods for organizing, storing and dissemination of information is still in vogue in most of the HCLs, due to which these libraries have not attained a state of relative maturity when compared to our western counter parts in terms of its ICT facilities.

The information communication technology is a highly important to develop and promote technical improvement. The lack of adequate finance is the main reason for not developing information communication technology infrastructure especially in the case of libraries, those that do not receive financial aid from state government. The problem can be solved only through aid from the state as well as central government. In the view of the findings it can be concluded that establishment of information communication technology infrastructure facilities in the HCLs of India can improve the efficiency of information support, the information retrieval and quality of justice as a whole. Then alone can they can claim of being the real

legal information systems in the apex courts at the state level.

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