

## The Role of Library Professionals in Providing Agricultural Information to Rural Farmers – A Study

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**Abstract** - A community information service rendered by public library is primarily community information and referral service, which includes every thing and any thing required by the member of community. Community information service is for members of the community for their personal development. It consists of information on agriculture, education, employment opportunities, Government welfare schemes and programmes, health services and programmes, etc. required by the community. There are more number of farmers who are not able to take advantage of several agricultural schemes and subsidies provided by the Government due to their ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and lack of adequate agricultural information. Government has to take necessary steps to establish public libraries in rural areas and strengthen the existing libraries with sufficient funds in order to provide required information to farmers.

**Keywords:** Role, Library Professionals, Providing Agricultural Information, Rural Farmers.

### Introduction

India is predominantly a rural country based on agricultural economy and most of the people are in the rural areas are handicapped in several ways. Most of them are barely illiterate and susceptible to political, economic, social and technological exploitation and manipulation. This along with other factors results in their failings to secure appropriate basic educational facilities, health care delivery, employment and other socio-economic benefits.

Library has been regarded as an integral part of social fabric since times immemorial. Public library is playing a vital role in the socio-economic and educational development of the rural people. The rural folk account for a sizeable percentage of population in India. The public library acts as a centre to create awareness in the area of education, information, recreation and culture among rural people. It is possible to change the life style of rural people through public libraries. To be effective, the public library services must be planned to bring awareness regarding agricultural programmes among rural farmers.

Dissemination of information is being widely recognized as an integral part of modern librarianship. Many public libraries are not only rendering the conventional service but also playing an important role by providing the basic inputs to mass communication media - the television, radio and the press.

### Community information

Information is an essential element in the lives of mankind for both survival and progress. The poverty levels of the developing countries can be traced to the ignorance of its citizens. Therefore, there is a need for the public library to assume the role of providing community information services to its citizens.

A community information service rendered by public library is primarily community information and referral service, which includes every thing and any thing required by the member of community. Community information service is for members of the community for their personal development. It consists of information on agriculture, education, employment opportunities, Government welfare schemes and programmes, health services and programmes, etc. required by the community. There are more number of farmers who are not able to take advantage of several agricultural schemes and subsidies provided by the Government due to their ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and lack of adequate agricultural information.

### **Need for the Study**

Majority of the farmers live in rural India. They depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. They require the right information at the right time to produce better qualitative as well as quantitative yield. They also require right information to compete with the farmers of other developed countries in marketing their products. Unless and until their information requirements are better understood, the correct information cannot be provided to them. Hence, the present study is undertaken to investigate the agricultural information needs of the farmers in the rural areas of Chittoor district.

### **Objective of the Study**

- Ascertain the role of Public Libraries in the promotion of agricultural information to rural people.

### **Sampling Design**

Questionnaire intended for librarians consists questions relating to library budget, agricultural information policy, book collection, conducting talks on agricultural topics, organizing agricultural information exhibition and other services provided by the library in promoting agricultural information to the rural farmers. It is given in Appendix F. Copies of questionnaire were posted to 71 librarians of branch libraries located in Chittoor district with stamped self-addressed postal envelopes. However, the investigator received responses from 35 librarians only.

In order to know the role of public libraries in Chittoor district in the provision of agricultural information to rural farmers, a survey was conducted. Copies of questionnaire were sent to all the librarians of 71 branch libraries in the district. Out of them, 35 librarians responded. The replies given by them are analyzed and discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **Annual budget**

A question has been posed to the librarians with regard to their annual budget for the library. The replies given by them are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of libraries according to their annual budget (in percentage)**

Budget in rupees	Number	Percentage
Upto Rs. 25,000	3	8.57
Rs. 26,000 – Rs. 50, 000	14	40.00
Rs. 51, 000 – Rs. 75, 000	5	14.28
Rs. 76, 000 – Rs. 1,00,000	4	11.43
Above Rs. 1,00,000	3	8.50
Budget not mentioned	6	17.14
Total	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is evident from Table 1 that most of the libraries (40%) have the annual budget in the range of Rs. 26,000 to Rs. 50,000. It is also evident from it that 8.57% of the libraries have the budget upto Rs. 25,000 and 8.5% of them have above Rs. 1,00,000. It is also obvious from it that 14.28% of them have the budget in the range of Rs. 51,000 to Rs. 75,000 and the 11.43% of them have the budget in the range from Rs. 76,000 to Rs. 1,00,000.

It can be concluded from Table 6.1 that nearly half of the libraries have the budget not more than Rs. 50,000.

### Policy on agricultural information

A question has been put to the librarians whether the library has a policy on agricultural information for the rural farmers. All the librarians replied that they did not have any policy for providing agricultural information to the rural farmers.

### Demand for agricultural information

The librarians were questioned to know the demand on agricultural information by the farmers. The replies given by them are shown in Table 2

**Table 2: Distribution of librarians according to their replies with regard to the demand on agricultural information**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	62.86
No	13	37.14
Total	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is clear from Table 2 that most of the librarians (62.86%) replied that there is a demand for agricultural information and the remaining (37.14%) of them replied negatively in this regard.

### Budget provision for agricultural information

The librarians were questioned to know whether the libraries had any budget provision for agricultural information. The replies are presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Provision of budget for agricultural information**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	35	100
Total	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is clear from Table 3 that all the branch librarians replied that there is no separate budget provision for agricultural information.

### Book collection on agricultural information

A question has been posed to the librarians to know whether the library possess good collection of books on agricultural information. The replies given by them are shown in Table 4. It is clear from Table 4 that most of the respondents (74.29%) replied that their libraries do not possess good collection on agricultural information. The remaining (24.71%) of them replied positively.

**Table 4: Distribution of librarians according to their replies with regard to book collection on agricultural information**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	9	24.71
No	26	74.29
Total	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

### Use of book collection on agricultural information

In order to know the use of book collection on agricultural information, a question has been put to the librarians who have already replied that their libraries possess good collection on agricultural practices. Seven librarians informed that rural farmers are using the collection and five librarians replied negatively. Again a question has been put to these two librarians to know whether they have taken any corrective measures for the optimum usage of agricultural information. They did not respond.

### Categories of collection

Librarians were asked to indicate the different categories of collection that they systematically collect on agricultural information. Their replies are shown in Table 6.6.

**Table 5: Different categories of collection on agricultural information (in percentage)**

S. No.	Categories	Total respondents	Response by category	
			Number	Percentage
1	Books	9	7	77.78
2	Articles	9	3	33.33
3	Pamphlets	9	5	55.56

**Note:** Respondents were permitted to give multiple answers.

It is evident from Table 5 that most of the librarians (77.78%) replied that their libraries are acquiring books on agriculture. It is obvious from the table that 55.56% of them replied that

their libraries are also acquiring pamphlets on agriculture and 33.33% of them are getting articles on agriculture.

### **Talks on agricultural practices**

The librarians were enquired to know whether they hold any talks on topics of agricultural farming. The replies given by them are shown in Table 6

**Table 6: Holding of talks on agricultural practices**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	34.29
No	23	65.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is evident from Table 6 that 34.29% of the librarians replied that they are holding talks on agricultural topics in their libraries and the remaining of them (65.71%) replied negatively in this regard.

### **Displays / exhibitions on agricultural information**

A question has been put to the librarians to know whether they organize agricultural information displays/ exhibitions in their libraries. The replies given by them are shown in Table 7

**Table 7: Organization of agricultural information displays/exhibitions**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	15	42.86
No	20	57.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is evident from Table 7 that most of the librarians (57.14%) replied that they are not organizing exhibitions/ displays relating to agricultural information. The remaining of them (42.86%) replied positively in this regard. This may be due to the unavailability of pamphlets, posters and charts relating to agricultural information.

### **Voluntary Organizations**

Librarians were asked to know whether the libraries are providing information to rural farmers with regard to voluntary organizations and their role in agricultural information services. The replies are presented in Table 8.

It is evident from Table 8 that most of the librarians (65.71%) replied that they are not providing information to rural people on local voluntary organizations and self-help groups and their agricultural services and the remaining of them (34.29%) replied positively in this regard.

**Table 8: Information provision on voluntary organizations and their agricultural information services**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	34.29
No	23	65.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

### Advertisement of agricultural information services

A question has been posed to the librarians to know whether they advertise agricultural information services of their libraries in various media such as library brochures, newspapers, radio, television, etc. All the librarians did not respond to this question, as they are not advertising agricultural information services of their libraries in any of the media. It may be due to the lack of sufficient budget and lack of awareness on importance of publicity.

### Liaison with agricultural departmental staff

A question has been put to the librarians to know whether they liaison with agricultural departmental staff on agricultural information provision. The replies given by them are shown in Table 9

**Table 9: Distribution of librarians according to their replies with regard to liaison with local agricultural departmental personnel**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	11	31.43
No	24	68.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is evident from Table 9 that most of the librarians (68.57%) replied that they are not liaising with the agricultural departmental staff on agricultural information provision and the remaining of them (31.43%) replied positively in this regard. Librarians, who replied that they were liaising with local Agricultural Departmental Persons for agricultural information, were again asked to know with whom they have liaised for the agricultural information. All the librarians (11 Persons) replied that they are liaising with Agricultural Officers and Agricultural Workers for agricultural information. They also replied that they are not liaising with social workers and local voluntary groups in this regard.

### Use of online searching and inter-library loan services

A question has been put to the librarians to know whether they make use of online searching and inter-library loan services on behalf of the agricultural officers and agricultural extension workers. All the librarians replied that they are not making use of online searching and inter-library loan services on behalf of agricultural officers and agricultural extension workers.

### Provision of audio-visual services

A question has been posed to the librarians to know whether the library provides any audio-visual services. The replies given by them are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10: Distribution of libraries according to their replies with regard to the provision of audio-visual services**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	54.29
No	16	45.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is evident from Table 10 that most of the librarians (54.29%) replied that they are providing audio-visual services and the remaining of them (45.71%) replied negatively in this regard.

### Initiative for the provision of Agricultural Information

Librarians were asked to know whether there is any initiative at local or national level, which would help them in providing of agricultural information to the rural farmers. Their replies are presented in Table 11

**Table 11: Distribution of libraries with regard to initiatives**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	3	8.57
No	32	91.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

It is evident from Table 11 that most of the librarians (91.43%) replied that there are no initiatives at local or national level, which could help them in providing of agricultural information to rural farmers. The remaining of them (8.57%) replied positively in this regard.

### Enquiries on agricultural information

The librarians were asked to know whether there are any enquiries on agricultural information from agricultural professionals, social workers, rural farmers etc. The replies given by them are shown in Table 12

**Table 12: Enquiries on agricultural information**

Reply	Number	Percentage
Yes	25	71.43
No	10	28.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is evident from Table 12 that most of the librarians (71.43%) replied that they are receiving enquiries from agricultural professionals, social workers, farmers etc. on agricultural information. The remaining of them (28.57%) replied negatively in this regard.

### Dissemination of agricultural information

A question has been posed to the librarians to explain their role in disseminating agricultural information to rural farmers. They did not respond to this question.

### Publicity of agricultural information

Librarians were asked to indicate whether they need any extra budget / man power to publicize the agricultural information services in rural areas. All of them did not respond to this question.

### Role of libraries

A question has been put to the librarians to mention the vital role that libraries can play in provision of agricultural information to the farmers. All of them did not respond to this question.

### Conclusion

The survey indicates that most of the villages have no library facility. Mobile library services are to be provided in the villages where there are no libraries. Government has to take necessary steps to establish public libraries in rural areas and strengthen the existing libraries with sufficient funds in order to provide required information to farmers. It is observed from the survey that majority of the farmers (71.29%) replied that they are not reading newspapers/magazines or listening while others are reading. It is suggested that every Village Panchayat should subscribe to at least one or two regional newspapers so that the villagers can get an opportunity to read the newspapers and also know the information published on agriculture. As there are many illiterates in the rural areas, the Panchayats should make necessary arrangements for reading newspapers to illiterates.

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