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1. Introduction:

Connemara Public Library is at Egmore in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. This is one of the oldest libraries in the country. This library is one of the four National Depository Libraries which receive a copy of all books, newspapers and periodicals published in India.

It is located in the Government Museum Complex on Pantheon Road, Egmore, which also houses the Government Museum and the National Art Gallery. This contains a huge collection of Books (8,50,000). The library contains mainly books in English and Tamil. Also the library contains books in languages such as Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali. There are many rare books available in the library. The library is a repository of centuries-old publications, wherein lie some of the most respected works and collections in the country. It also serves as a depository library for the UN.

2. History

2.1:Origin

In recognition of the importance of the Library Service, it was decided to establish a First True Public Library in Tamil Nadu during the 19th century by an enlightened Administrator Lord Connemara, the then Governor of Madras during 1886-1890. The Foundation Stone for the Library was laid on 22nd March 1890 and was formally opened on 05-12-1896. The Library so founded was named after Lord Connemara to perpetuate his memory in Madras In recognition of his efforts.

2.2:Building :

Designed by H.Irving, the Consulting Architect to the Government of Madras, the Connemara Public Library is a Semi-Circle End oblong building constructed in Indo-saracenic style. It is a magnificent hall with a splendid reading room and beautiful teak wood book-shelves. To watch its ceiling is an aesthetic appearance to our eyes. The Roof is truncated semi-circle. The truncated top has a wooden ceiling but the two curved sides are made by colored glass pieces artistically cemented to one another. Ornamental acanthus leaves and flowers adorn with marble slabs brought from Krishna District through the Buckingham Canal in boats. This Building is renovated by the Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai with an expenditure of Rs. 1.21 crores, to preserve the cultural heritage of India, with the financial assistance from the State and Central Governments.

To cope up with the increasing stock, a three-storied building with 71, 700 sq.ft. was constructed in 1973. Further to accommodate the increased stock of books another three-storied building with 21, 823 sq.ft. was added in 1999.

2.3:Growth:

The Library became the State-Central Library with effect from 1st April 1950 under the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Public Libraries Act, 1948. And from 10th September 1955, it became one of the Four Depositories for Indian Publications under the Provisions of Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act of 1954, as amended. In 1955, the Library became UNESCO Information Centre to serve as Depository for selected Publications of UN and its allied agencies. It also serves as Depository for Asian Development Bank Publications since 1992.

3. Services

3.1:Staff:

The Library has 112 positions sanctioned till for efficient management of different sections and of these almost half are occupied now. Also library employees temporary staff on contract basis.

3.2:Manager:

The library is presently headed by the Librarian Mr. P. Meenakshi Sundaram.

3.3:Information :

The library is making optimum use of technology. The different sections are networked together and internet facility is available. All important sections are under CCTV surveillance. The library is fully automated with KOHA, Open Source ILS. OPAC is available online for public. Digitization is going on since 2006 and more than 5800 digital resources are already available. Public is provided with Kindle devices for reading these digital documents. These digital resources are also available over premises network. Other electronic equipment like printers and Xerox facility etc. is also available.

3.4:Working hours:

Connemara Library, Chennai

The library offers its services through out the year except three National holidays, i.e. Republic Day, Independence Day and Gandhi Jayanthi and a few selected festival holidays, i.e. Pongal, Tamil New Year, Pooja Holidays, Deepavali and Christmas.

The library work hours are as under (no break),

Monday to Saturday 9:00 am to 7:30 pm

Sundays 9:30 am to 6:00 pm

3.5:Collection:

Connemara Library, Chennai

The library being a National Depository under the Delivery of Books and Newspaper Act, 1954 is very rich in resources. The library has rich collection of 7,22,000 + books. Apart from Delivery of Books Act the library also receives publications under the Madras Public Library Act. UNO and Asian Development Bank has also contributed their own publications to the library. The library has some special Collections like Dhanakoti Collection and more than One Lakh rare books on its collection.

3.6:Some another services of Connemara public library :

In addition the library receives 3500+ periodicals and 160 newspapers.

The library collection has been automated using state-of-the-art open source library management system Koha. The OPAC is available at, <http://connemara.tnopac.gov.in/>

The library is also in the process of digitization of some of its collections especially Tamil ones. The job is being done inhouse. More than 5875 documents have been digitized. Library visitors are provided with Kindle reading devices to access these digitized documents, which is a rare venture in India. The process of digitization is on and more documents will be available in future. The digital library collection can be accessed on

premises through intranet at <http://192.168.1.100>. In addition the library has 300 CD-ROMs on its collection.

- The Connemara Public Library is drawing attention of many books lovers in the city to its rare collection of old books dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries as these publications are on public display as part of the World Book Day celebrations.

The book repository was a boon to many book lovers, particularly researchers and scholars. “The library houses several erstwhile books, which are on high demand now as about 70 people visit every day, most of them are researchers and scholars,” says a library official.

- The library conserves one of the oldest Bibles in the world, published in 1608. The book had been preserved for more than 100 years. It is said that this Holy Bible is older than the one in the United Kingdom.
- Also known as the Geneva Bible, it was first published in Geneva in 1560 and was the first English edition to introduce verse numeration.
- It is popularly known as the Breeches Bible. The copy with Connemara library was printed at London by Robert Barker in the year 1608.
- Similarly, another book called the Refutatio Alcorani , published in 1698 by Ex Typographia Seminarii, is the text of the Koran in Arabic with Latin translations and has a commentary by Ludovico Mamaccio Lucensi.
- It was the second major translation into Latin, following that of Robert Kettenensis in 1143 — both were the basis of numerous subsequent editions and translations into

Modern languages.

- Besides books in Latin, there were a rare collection of books on Tamil language as well. A grammar of the high dialect of the Tamil language called Centamil was the centre of attraction for many book lovers who visited on Sunday.
- This book was authored by Beschi Castantino Gueseppe in Latin and later translated from the original Latin book by Benyamin Guy Babington in 1822.
- It is the grammar of classical Tamil with examples in Tamil.
- Similarly, the library also has the oldest Tamil book called Rituale published in 1781 at Trangambaricum, near Nagapattinam, at the first printing press of Tamil Nadu.
- The oldest book that the library has is the Omnesquae Extant, a Latin book authored by D Heronymi Strido. The content of the book unknown as it is in Latin, said a library official.
- In order to conserve the collection, the books are fumigated every six months and public access to the books is restricted to avoid any physical damage to the books during the public visit. However, people can glance through these books for reference on request.
- According to the library administration, the then governor Lord Connemara shipped most of these books, which are rare to find now in the market, during British rule after the library opened in 1886.

4:Importance:

Modern society has various needs such as education, research, cultural advancement, information, spiritual and ideological pursuits, pastime and recreation.

- Society has founded various institutions to serve these needs, among them the library occupies a prominent place; the library is able to meet all of them in equal measure.
- The public library is the local centre of information making all kinds of knowledge and information made available to its users.

- The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social group.
- A public library as enunciated in the UNESCO Manifesto (1994) is expected to play the libraries role in three main areas like information, education and culture.
- The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how the public libraries support and guides the digital and modern world.

Within time.

- ICT and related technologies have made it essay and convenient to reach the unreached users with better facilities and level of satisfaction guaranteed.
- Library professionals have to identify these opportunities by understanding their responsibilities towards society and act accordingly.

5:Comparison between Connemara and Anna public Library:

Connemara is one of the four national depository libraries in India; Anna is one of the biggest in south Asia

T. Ramakrishnan

- After Connemera Library was opened in December 1896, it became one of the sought-after places of Chennai. | Photo Credit: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

• After a parliamentary career of 18 years in Britain, Robert Bourke (1827-1902), later Baron Connemara, became Governor of the Madras Presidency in 1886. Unlike many of his predecessors and successors, he interacted freely and cordially with people of all classes. In no time did he develop an admiration for Indian students and realised not many were able to afford the books they needed. As part of his efforts to address this need, he laid the foundation in March 1886 on Pantheon Road in Egmore for, what he called, a “free public library”, which later came to be called Connemara Public Library.

- After the library was thrown open to the public in December 1896, it became one of the sought-after places of the city. “Even today, you can see scores of youngsters at the library complex, staying put throughout the day. The salubrious natural environment is a major complementary factor,” points out N. Avadaippan, former director of the Connemara Public Library.

- Virtually endorsing the former director’s words, R. Thangathurai, a long-time user of the library, says that during his recent visit, he found several youngsters at the library browsing the net and collecting materials as part of their studies.

- “It is not just at the Connemara Library but also at the Anna Centenary Library (ACL) at Kotturpuram that you can find scores of young men and women filling a couple of floors and doing their studies. The ACL [own book reading section] commences only at 8 a.m. every day but, at 7.30 a.m., the youngsters are waiting for the library to open,” says M. Rajendran, former Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil University and now the chairman of a high-level committee to tone up the services of public libraries.

- Invariably, the young crowds that throng the two libraries are either students, pursuing higher studies, or candidates, preparing for competitive examinations. What is more significant than the utilisation of the libraries is that the authorities have found that despite the growing trend of using online services, there exists the need for a greater number of libraries with all the state-of-the-art facilities than what is available today.

- Mr. Avadaippan, a member of the high-level committee and who has also worked as special officer at the ACL, says the proposed Kalaigai Library in Madurai will take care of the requirements of the youth in the southern districts.

- Housing over nine lakh books, the Connemara Library, with a membership of about 1.46 lakh, is one of the four national depository libraries in the country. All those books, whose copyrights have been acquired by the government, and Tamil books, published before 1950, have been digitised and preserved, considering their importance. Regarded as one of the big libraries in south Asia, the ACL, declared open by former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi in September 2010, has a collection of 6.14 lakh books on various subjects

and caters to the needs of different sections. The library's Braille section consists of 2,600 Braille books and 1,050 audio books. Unlike the older one which lends books to its members, the ACL is only a reference library.

- The Government Oriental Manuscript Library, which was functioning on the campus of the University of Madras, has been shifted to the ACL with its entire collection of ancient and rare manuscripts. As the ACL was caught in a political controversy with the change of regime in May 2011, it was left to fend for itself nearly for 10 years. After the DMK came to power 10 months ago, it is getting revived. Apart from carrying out repairs and providing new equipment, steps are being taken to make the library accessible to people all over the world digitally

6.Conclusion

We see that public libraries are not limited to any specific arena of social life, where it is important but it play positive role more or less in all spheres of social life whether it is economic development, lifelong education, cultural exchange or utilization of leisure time etc. The umbrella of public libraries in social development is very vast, covers almost all areas of social life. In this situation public libraries and librarians have to change themselves and adopt new techniques to fulfill new demands of the society through their professional competencies and working culture. Public libraries were always concerned with local and national history. Political, economic and social circumstances create, shape and develop libraries. The promptness and new kinds of emerging library services and techniques are boon for library professionals to understand users' need and fulfill it

7:Refrence:

- 1) <https://www.connemarapubliclibrary.org/history.html>; Introduction & history of Connemara public library
- 2) <https://www.thehindu.com/society/memories-of-chennais-connemara-library/article27012824.ece> ; services & comparison between Connemara and Anna public library
- 3) https://ijrar.com/upload_issue/ijrar_issue_1669.pdf ; importance and conclusion

