

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRES: CONCEPT AND ROLE IN SOCIETY

Lesson No.	Title of Lesson	Skills	Activities
1	Library and Information Centres: Concept and Role in Society	Desire to serve users, Initiative, Self-Awareness, Societal awareness, Analytical Thinking, Information Technology Literacy	Organising and Browsing materials, Helping users, Circulation of material, ICT skills, Societal role, User education

Summary

A library is a collection of materials, books or media that are easily accessible for use and not just for display purposes. It is responsible for housing updated information in order to meet the user needs on a routine basis.

Besides the above, a library is responsible for collecting, organising, and storing all kinds of print and non-print materials for providing efficient services to users. Libraries provide the means to accomplish the advancement of learning and information.

Advancement of information, communication and networking technologies have completely changed the functioning of libraries.

As gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in society. The resources and services offered by the libraries create opportunities for learning, support literacy and education. Libraries help to boost the new ideas and perspectives that are central to creative and innovative society.

In this lesson, we will discuss the role of libraries and information organisations in the society. We will also study the significance of libraries in education, culture and recreation.

Principal Points

- A library is responsible for collecting, organising and storing all kinds of print and non-print materials for providing efficient services to users. It plays a vital role in promoting socio-economic, cultural and educational development of a society.
- Libraries occupy a prominent place in the society in developing social and educational standard of the common citizen. They provide support in promoting research, cultural, recreational, spiritual and ideological activities of a human being thereby contributing a lot to the nation building programmes.
- Libraries, as repository of knowledge, are used by all types of users to build up a value system for themselves. Libraries provide the means to accomplish the advancement of learning as well as the building up of the nation's soul.
- The use of library by the people make them well-informed citizens of the society and allow them to become knowledgeable and educated in course of time.
- An Information centre is defined as an organisation that (1) selects, acquires, stores and retrieves information in response to requests, (2) prepares abstracts, extracts, indexes of information, and (3) disseminates information in anticipation and in response to requests. Information centres are attached to highly specialised research and development (R&D) organisations.
- New information, communication and networking technologies have completely changed the functioning of libraries. Information is collected, processed, stored and disseminated using sophisticated technologies.
- Users are provided information at their own desks or even in their homes through Local Area Networks (LAN) and Wide Area Networks (WAN). There is no need to visit the library to access information and thus save their time.

Build your Understanding

Libraries play an important role in the educational process of formal and non-formal learning, in research and development, in cultural activities, spiritual aspects, recreation and entertainment.

Libraries are known for not only connecting people to information but also for connecting people to people. They also enable older citizen to remain busy, stay connected and engaged in various activities.

What's Important to Know ?

1. For every healthy community, libraries are essential. This is due to the fact that libraries give people the opportunity to find jobs, explore areas of research, explore new ideas, get immersed in wonderful stories and a place where one feels socially involved.
2. Library is a place where we can find books of all kinds and sizes in their respective places. It is also a place where all possible facilities are provided to users, like, comfortable sitting arrangement with tables, adequate lighting, helpful library staff and guide in shelves to enable them to find materials easily.
3. Library as a social institution is considered as a social necessity for the steady development of an individual being a social being as a part of the society.

Did You Know ?

The first libraries consisted of the archives of the earliest form of writing, that is, the clay tablets, dating back to 2600 BC. About an inch thick, these tablets came in various shapes and sizes.

Andrew Carnegie, an American, was at one time the richest man in the world. He made large donations across United States for the benefit of various libraries. He referred to the libraries as temples of learning, ambition, aspiration and thus funded several libraries.

In the modern information society, libraries and information centres have a new role to play. This is due to increasing use of electronic and web-based information sources and electronic services. Libraries are also being managed in a more democratic way due to flexible communication system and efficient work organisation.

Libraries are still important as not everything is available on the Internet. Also the Internet is not free and access is mostly limited to expensive subscription accounts. The Internet thus compliments libraries but does not replace them.

Evaluate Yourself

1. Highlight the importance of a library in society.
2. Distinguish between a library and an information centre.
3. In which ways have the information technologies influenced the modern libraries ?
4. List the basic functions of the library.

Extend Your Horizon

1. Go to a large public library. Interact with the professionals working in the library to understand its working. Observe the various users visiting the library and try to find out the kind of documents used by them. Record your findings.
2. Visit a college library and get acquainted with its various functions, sections/divisions, collection and services and write a report.