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Role of DELNET in Bridging the Digital Divide

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The traditional societies are fast realizing the relevance of knowledge in day-to-day life, and trying to get converted into knowledge-driven societies through the use of information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Knowledge-driven societies give rise to knowledge-driven economies. This being a global phenomenon, societies that have less access to knowledge are less privileged and the societies that have fast access to knowledge become privileged and advanced. Among the societies, individuals with poor access to knowledge remain underprivileged. Also, within countries, regions, either remote or tribal in population, people remain less developed owing to lack of knowledge and lack of skills in using digital resources. There are several factors that inhibit people from using knowledge and that is why they become less advantaged. They remain poor, in all respects. Some of the factors that influence people to resist change include;

- a. *Lack of literacy and lack of vision about how digital literacy could help them.*
- b. *Being economically poor.*
- c. *Lack of access to necessary and sufficient information.*
- d. *Control of information by vested parties and individuals, who do not pass it on to those who it the most, etc.*
- e. *Lack of guidance, etc.*

As a result, only information-rich people, societies, countries, industries, etc. grow and give rise to the digital divide.

Keywords: Introduction, Bridging the Digital Divide: Role of DELNET- Technology Support Training Library Professionals-Cooperation-Inter-Library Loan and Document Delivery Services-Data Security, Conclusion

Introduction:

DELNET was started at the India International Centre Library in January 1988 and was registered as a society in 1992. It was initially supported by the National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT), Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India. It was subsequently supported by the National Informatics Centre, Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India.

DELNET has been established with the prime objective of promoting resource sharing among the libraries through the development of a network of libraries. It aims to collect, store, and disseminate information besides offering computerized services to users, to coordinate efforts for suitable collection development and also to reduce unnecessary duplication wherever possible.

Bridging the Digital Divide: Role of DELNET

The library network will have to persevere towards removing inhibitions among its users by bringing the technology closer to them, by training them and by helping them to use and adopt new technologies. The library networks should try to upgrade the professional work at the Internet pace and on a global scale.

The demands of users vary from user to user, they also vary from location to location, town to town or village to village. While we providing E-resources including union catalogued and union lists to researchers, faculty, students and public in thousands of libraries and supplement this with delivery of document, much remains to be done for the general public libraries are governed by state and central governments and as we have been waiting to them not much response has been received by using this regard. However, we understand that we are living in as era that the central and state government will have to appreciate how much a network like DELNET can help public libraries in bringing the digital divide. We also understand that we are inching towards in an era where every type of content will be full-text in digital form and the users will not, necessary, have access to the hard copies. Such collection will have to be in the digital form and presented in an integrated network system.

DELNET is launching the Discovery platform soon to serve the users with all our E-resources, catalogues, Open-access resources, etc, through a single point access. In bringing the digital dive, DELNET can empower public library staff to perform effectively in doing their duties in the digital environment, DELNET can offer to each public library:

1. Networked information and knowledge resources of quality that are sources of quality that are sourced from thousands of libraries which run into crores of records of book journal, articles, etc. on all subject
2. Access to thousands of E-books, E-journals and full text resources.
3. Library management software, easy to use, free of charge.
4. Collaboration in developing appropriate content in regional languages.
5. Management of content for dissemination.
6. Advice on the adoption of the appropriate infrastructure.
7. Promote the use of international standards.
8. Improve communication among libraries and users.
9. Provide consortia facilities.
10. Offer Inter- Library Loan, Document Delivery Services, arrange documents from different parts of the world and promote international cooperation.
11. Contribute to the security and preservation of digital documents, and
12. Arrange training for LIS professionals working in public libraries among other related services.

The capacity of narrowing the digital divide through public and school libraries with the resources available through DELNET CAN BE checked by the following parameters:

The capacity of narrowing the digital divide through public and school libraries with the resources available through DELNET can be checked by the following parameters:

1. Quantifying the use of digital resources through DELNET by its member-libraries and their users.
2. Number of training programmes arranged for staff an users in accessing digital and networked resources.
3. The type of supplementary literature on courses and access to MOOCS. Offered to students and the general public.
4. Providing access to diverse resources with location fate to all type id users, and by
5. The number of documents ordered and supplied from different parts of the world for users in public libraries on topic of their interest.

Cooperation:

DELNET promotes cooperation among libraries and users by:

1. Making accessible the resources available with the participating libraries through union catalogues, union lists, etc. on a single site or diversely through communication channels;
2. Bringing library and information specialists together for exchanging views by organizing national conventions, conferences, seminars, workshops etc.
- 3 By insisting on using common international standards and better communication channels so that the digital divide does not exist due to lack of proper communication facilities of the use of local standards.
4. By promoting collaboration among institutions and individuals by publishing information about each participating institution or by highlighting the biographical sketches of experts. This cooperation can be made possible at various levels, nationally or internationally; and
- 5 By encouraging all forms of cooperation within and without the network.

DELNET has the necessary tools, technologies and experience in converting public libraries into knowledge centers. This job could be undertaken If the state governments or public libraries get interested in converting their public libraries into knowledge centers. DELNET would be glad to collaborate.

Various organizations and government departments that manage libraries, information centers, data banks and also mine information for research, industry and development need to adopt a set of policies that will maximize their access to the latest and appropriate information by public.

Training Library Professionals:

As we advance in the digital era, our LIS staff in public libraries need to be drained in collecting, maintaining and disseminating digital information and knowledge resources printed and MS resources. At this time there is a great dearth of properly trained professionals in public libraries. DELNET arranges training programmers almost every month and special training programmers can be arranged for public libraries as well.

There is a major need to bridge the digital divide that exists now between ICT applications in libraries and non-ICT-skilled public library staff. The staff that have no ICT infrastructure in their libraries and have to contribute to the digital divide in public have to be enthused and encouraged to undergo training in ICT. There have to be graded training programmers introduced for such staff. DELNET arranges training for library staff from time to time. Special programmers could be devised only with the intent of bridging the digital divide through public and school libraries. But it will not work till the trained staff have appropriate infrastructure in their respective public libraries.

Technology Support:

DELNET offers DELOLUS, LAN based library management software free of charge to its member-libraries and also offers the customized version of Koha for libraries. Public libraries can make use of either software for the modernization of there libraries. DELNET would also be willing to store catalogues full-test content, software applications, etc. in the could to bridge the rural-urban digital divide, if a sizable number of public libraries decided to benefit from DELNET services.

Inter-Library Loan and Document Delivery Services:

Inter-library Loan and Document Delivery Services of DELNET for its member-libraries are the best in South Asia. In order to give a boost to reducing the digital divide the public should be able to have access to books, journals and other documents that are available through DELNET from other member-libraries in India and outside. DELNET provides this service effectively and helps in locating specific documents within the country and outside.

Data Security:

In order to reduce to the digital divide, there is a need to maintain digital resources in robust and secure ways. DELNET can help in the security of digital resources related to libraries and information centers. This being

very important for posterity, DELNET addresses a range of technical and legal issues including copyright, privacy rights, intellectual property rights, censorship issues, etc. in consultation with experts which need to be taken into account.

Conclusion:

In conclusion I would like to mention that the digital divide can be reduced fast if each public library takes the following steps to begin with, irrespective of the major published resources available with each library. To reduce costs and increase access to maximum and quality information resources the public should be given access to networked information available with DELNET and the library staff should begin to use this networked information for serving the public. As a result, a network culture will emerge. The following could be the preliminary steps that may be undertaken as early as possible by every public library;

1. Subscribe to DELNET to use DELNET resources and services.
2. Participate in consortia to reduce subscription cost on E-resources.
3. Subscribe to audio books, videos and music databases.
4. Arrange extension programmes for the public to solve their digital training and content needs and reduce the existing digital divide, and
5. Identify provide partners besides the government support who could contribute to reducing the digital divide in society through public libraries.

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(Web resources below were accessed in December 2020)

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