

# Status of Museum Libraries in Delhi: An Overview

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## ABSTRACT

Museums are memory institutions which preserve cultural and historical memories of a society in the form of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Museums are the institutions where citizens of a country can realize both the glory as well as struggle of development of a country. The museums pass on the cultural heritage to future generations through collection of objects. Educational and research values of these cultural institutions depend on what services they are providing to its users. The museum library being special library in nature provides support to its parent museum to carry on different activities by furnishing relevant updated information and in this way explores its potential use. The paper presents the historical development of museums and its libraries in Delhi. It defines the museum and museum library. The aims and objectives of museum libraries are discussed in detail. The status of museum libraries in terms of collection and services has been discussed.

## 1. Introduction

Since from the early days of 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., firstly established in University of Alexandria in Egypt, the museums are preserving the glories of culture of early civilizations. Now these institutions have become an integral part of economy in the world. The concept of museum is now taken as the interesting element of education, community and society in current era. To maintain the glorious spread of museum as a cultural identity, educational and research activities in the field of museums are on the continuous progress at the global level. The ongoing research activities in the museum and museology related disciplines needs a support of specialized library. Libraries are, first and foremost, cultural centers charged with the duty of selecting, acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating the appropriate information to the users, with the aim of informing, enlightening, educating, provision of recreation and inspiring their users through their information holding (Ocholla 1993, 2). Every museum develops a library for its specialized users to continue education and research activities.

## 2. Museums, Education and Research

Museums collect cultural heritage in the form of different artifacts, store and preserve them and prepare records of collected objects by putting formal entry in the inventory, accessioning, cataloguing and indexing etc. Museum is the custodian of the past knowledge. The research on collection is a continuous function in a museum. Researchers collect factual information related to objects for the purpose of research. In a museum all the artifacts and displayed collections have didactic vision and purpose. A museum provides its visitors with learning experiences, amongst other forms of experiences—aesthetic, inspirational, recreational, interactive, etc (Kotler, 2008). The visitors in a museum can be taught through educational tours, entertainment visits, by getting knowledge through labels, shows, brochures, talks, catalogues, museum professionals, guides etc According to

the American Association of Museums (AAM), “museums exist on a permanent basis for essentially aesthetic and education purposes...” Education has now become multidimensional and multidisciplinary. Curriculum has been oriented towards the ICT based material. Hence it becomes necessary to incorporate the museum related activities with educational material to make it more interesting and meaningful to students so that educational system can provide a practical approach to students. Educational tours and visits to museums are always helpful to incorporate lifelong learning skills in students.

### 2.1 Defining Museum

“A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.

- a. The above definition of a museum shall be applied without any limitation arising from the nature of the governing body, the territorial character, the functional structure or the orientation of the collections of the institution concerned.
- b. In addition to institutions designated as "museums" the following qualify as museums for the purposes of this definition:
  - i. natural, archaeological and ethnographic monuments and sites and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature that acquire, conserve and communicate material evidence of people and their environment;
  - ii. institutions holding collections of and displaying live specimens of plants and animals, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquaria and vivaria;
  - iii. science centres and planetaria;
  - iv. non-profit art exhibition galleries;

- v. nature reserves; conservation institutes and exhibition galleries permanently maintained by libraries and archives centres; natural parks;
- vi. international or national or regional or local museum organisations, ministries or departments or public agencies responsible for museums as per the definition given under this article;
- vii. non-profit institutions or organisations undertaking conservation research, education, training, documentation and other activities relating to museums and museology;
- viii. cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity);
- ix. Such other institutions as the Executive Council, after seeking the advice of the Advisory Committee, considers as having some or all of the characteristics of a museum, or as supporting museums and professional museum personnel through museological research, education or training." (ICOM Statutes, 2001).

## 2.2 Museum Library and its Objectives

The Museum Library as defined by Bal Krishan (1980), "The library is the bed-rock on which the super structure of museum research and education is based. It is the fountainhead for research. It also acts as a catalytic agent in arousing interest in the collections and exhibitions of the museum among the literate visitors, the intelligentsia as well as the students who are now visiting museums more often than ever before. For the museum curators and other professional staff, a museum library is a sure means of keeping abreast of studies undertaken in their fields throughout the world and the latest advances in the subject of their specialisation. To them, it provides a forum for self-study".

**2.2.1 Objectives of a museum library** has been discussed by Balkrishan (1980) in his article, "An Ideal Museum Library" as follows:

- To build up intensive and judiciously selected collections of books and non-book material relevant to the special collections of the museum and to make it readily available for use through an efficient service based on the principle of "the right book to the right reader at the right time".
- To act as an active study and research centre and to promote research by providing reference and research facilities.
- To aid and to assist researchers by providing requisite literature.
- To compile and supply special bibliographies and to render documentation and reference service.
- To serve as an information bureau and to answer the specialized information needs of museum staff and the research community at large.
- To arrange interlibrary loans with various libraries.
- To whet and satisfy the appetite of the visitors seeking information or deepening understanding of the museum collections.

- To provide necessary forum for self study by the curatorial staff and to keep it abreast of latest research in its special fields

## 3. Role of a Museum Library

Museum library is meant for providing contextual information to the objects of its parent museum collection. When the specific object came into existence? What is its background story? Who invented it etc. are such questions related to objects which are answered through documents like books, journals etc in the library holdings. The activities of museums can be run through the support of libraries. To provide the contextual information to researcher in museum related fields, these libraries play an important link between the objects and its admirers.

According to Bierbaum (1982), "museum libraries serves museum staff by providing research support and general public by providing opportunities to get different educational experiences both and hence act dual functions." General public who are interested in any way to get specific information about the contexts of object or any other material comes to library and the users from schools, universities and colleges also get the required resources for consultation.

## 4. Museums and Museum Libraries in Delhi: A historical development

The culture of India got a momentum after independence due to which many cultural institutions were set up for conservation and promotion of the country's cultural heritage. Presently there are three world sites in Delhi i.e. Red fort, Humayun's Tomb and Qutub Minar, 174 monuments under the ASI and 254 under the state Department of Archaeology. The INTACT states more than 1200 listings of heritage monuments in Delhi. .

As the pioneer of modern museum development in Delhi, National Museum established immediately after the freedom of India in 1949. The museum was an initiative to collect art objects of historical, cultural and artistic values with the objective of preservation, protection and interpretation of Indian culture. It developed library in 1954 and today a good collection attracts users. Now the museum library has a collection of more than 70000 books and journals.

Apart from this, the three academies along with reference libraries were also setup immediately after the independence. National Academy of Letters (Sahitya Academy, 1952), National Academy of Plastic Arts (Lalit Kala Academy, 1953), and National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama ( Sangeet Natak Academy, 1953). The libraries were properly maintained in these institutions.

Archaeological Survey of India (1861) came to function as an attached office of the Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development in this period and started archaeological site museums. Presently it is working under Ministry of Culture. One important site museum is at Purana Quilla, Delhi.

One another landmark towards the field of culture was establishment of Indira Gandhi National centre for Arts, Delhi in 1985. Other major Museum Libraries are Craft Museum, New Delhi (1956) under Ministry of Textile, National Children Museum Library 1956 under Ministry of Human Resource Development, National Philatelic Museum Library (1977) under Ministry of Railways, and Library of National Museum of Natural history under Ministry of Environment 1978.

Along with the efforts of Government, few private societies, trusts and organizations came forward and built various museum including personalia museums. Prominent among these are National Gandhi museum Delhi (1950) , Nehru Memorial and Library ( 1964) , Dr Zakir Husaain Memorial Museum (1969) , Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial (1966), Ghalib Museum and library (1977) and Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Smriti (1984).

## 5. Status of Museum Libraries in Delhi

Status of museum libraries has been discussed to elaborate the picture of these libraries regarding its collections, services and facilities.

### 5.1. Archaeology Site Museum Purana Quilla

The Purana Qila is located on the Eastern side of India Gate and North of Humayun's tomb on Mathura Road. It is also famous as Old Fort. The site is under the control of Archeological Survey of India's administration. Many artifacts as pottery, art and handicrafts works, terracotta material, seals, coins etc. found during excavations are placed in the museum situated adjacent to the Main Entrance.

ASI site museum library is a reference library for researchers in the fields of archeology, museology, art history and conservation etc. The library comprises of nearly 6000 books, journals, CDs, DVDs and reports, conference proceeding etc. in its collection. The library has earned a rapport among the researchers for its outreach services. The books and other reading material are provided through the library at the excavation site by the staff of library on demand. Library has seating capacity of 20 users. The books are issued to the staff, students, research scholars, teachers of ASI and universities, Institute of Archaeology, historians, archeologists etc. Circulation Reference service, Current awareness services, OPAC, and photocopy services are provided to the users of this library.

### 5.2 Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) established in the memory of Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1987 as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, is a cultural centre with a National theatre, concert hall, museum on folk culture, museum on tribal culture, and a library. The main objectives of this centre are to provide material in the form of various resources as written, oral and visual material on arts. The centre comprises of ten divisions, named as Kalanidhi, Kalakosh, Janpada Sampada, Kaladarsana, Cultural Informatica, Media Centre, Adi Drishya, Sutradhara and a Conservation Lab. Kalanidhi division has three units named as

Reference Library, Information and Data Bank and Cultural Archives.

Reference library is a central hub of the centre with printed and non printed material. Printed material includes more than 2.5 lacs of books, reference books, monographs, , catalogues of unpublished manuscripts of Indic and Asian origin, translations, biographies and autobiographies, bibliographies, conference proceedings etc.

Membership is provided to researchers, teachers, art professionals or any individual who is interested in the Arts and its related fields. The reference library receives about 167 scholarly and technical journals on arts and cultural heritage. E- Contents of nearly 700 journals, books and other sources are provided in humanities and arts. JSTOR and J-Gate, Arts and Humanities databases are subscribed regularly. Bibliographies are compiled for the works of particular eminent scholars; particular subject fields etc. IGNCA is providing reprographic services to different institution on demand. Nearly three lacs records in 2200 microfilms rolls have been microfilmed. Indexing and abstracting services are provided to journal articles. Digital contents are archived in Kalasampda, a digital repository.

### 5.3 Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Smiti Museum Library

Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS) was formed in September 1984. It is functioning under the Ministry of Culture; India. The objectives of the Samiti are to promote the Gandhian Philosophy, thoughts and values. Library of the Smiti is well versed with acquisition of books, journals and other material. The library has a collection of nearly 20000 books on Gandhiji and his philosophies. Library subscribes 50 journals, magazines and 20 news papers in Hindi and English. The library provides membership to bonafide students as graduate, post graduate, and researchers, or anybody who is interested to get information from the library. School students and general Children are also welcomed. Reference services, Current awareness services are available. , Inter Library loan, OPAC are major services which are provided in the library. Various activities in the museum go on during the year like conferences, Literature festivals, book talks etc. which are organized with support of this Library. The library reading room has a capacity of 50 seats.

### 5.4 Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Art)

LKA was established and inaugurated on 5th August 1954 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Minister of Education, Government of India as an apex cultural body in the field of visual arts to encourage creative arts such as painting, graphics, sculpture, architecture etc.

More than 6000 art works are preserved in the museum of LKA which provides various shades of Indian history and culture. LKA is committed to encourage and promote study and research in the fields of creative arts. The National Exhibition of Art is the most prestigious annual event of the Lalit Kala Akademi. To fulfill the objectives of academy the library was established in 1954 and presently situated at Rabindra Bhavan (New Delhi).

The library has a good collection on creative arts comprising nearly 10000 books on painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, graphic art, architecture to supply information to its readers. Library is open to students, research scholars, teachers and others who are interested to collect information on Arts. Library membership can be got for a week, month or year for reference purpose by providing ID proof only. On an average nearly 20- 30 users per day use the library. The library provides reference services to users of the library.

Inter Library Loan Service, Photocopy facility, OPAC, Current Awareness Services, Indexing and abstracting services are also available. DELNET e resources are available in the library for consultation.

### 5.5 National Museum, New Delhi Library

National Museum was inaugurated on 15 August 1949 in New Delhi by the then Governor General of India, Shree Rajagopalachari. The objective to open this museum was to collect art objects related to historical, cultural and artistic importance and to exhibit these objects for the spread of historic information to the citizens of India. The museum serves as a cultural institution for interpretation of cultural collections and research activities.

The Library of National Museum collects books and journals related to the fields of history, art and culture of the World for specialized research for reference. It covers a variety of themes such as anthropology, archaeology, conservation, decorative arts, history, literature, museum studies, painting, philosophy and religion. It contains over seventy thousand volumes of books, bound journals as well as several Indian and international journals and magazines. The collection of this library comprises of nearly 70000 books, National and International Journals, magazines and newspapers. CDs and Museum publications are also available in its collection. The library serves nearly 3000+ users annually who are bonafide research scholars, university students, professors, teachers and fellowship holders, students of National museum Institute, students of short term courses running in National Museum, or anyone from any university, college, school etc. Services rendered in the library are Reference services, Circulation, Current Awareness, photography services, Abstracting and Indexing, Open access catalogue etc.

### 5.6 National science centre (Science Museum)

National science centre is situated in Pragati Maidan on Bhairon Road, New Delhi. It is a unit of National Council of Science Museums under the Ministry of Culture. Since its inception i.e. 1992, it has earned its name in Asia for being the largest science centre. Many eminent scientists, museum professionals, science lovers, students, teachers and general public visit this centre throughout the year. To create awareness and attract the visitors towards science, to educate people about science and engage those through various programmes and activities are the objective of this centre. This science museum is famous for providing a platform of number of activities related to science field for the students from class 2<sup>nd</sup> to 12 particularly.

Library collection comprises of 7000 appx. books on science and creative arts. Library has nearly 350 back issues of journals and subscribes 13 newspapers in English and Hindi language. Library has a reading hall with 30 seats for its readers. Non print media as video cassettes and CDs on different science topics are available for the student groups who visit Centre for participation in different activities of the centre. Library is providing various services to its users who participate in science fairs, quiz programmes, talks, lectures, shows, dramas etc organized by the centre. Whenever the centre arranges various programmes, library provides full support through its resources for this purpose. Library renders variety of services as current awareness, SDI, reference, photocopy facilities to the users, Interlibrary Loan etc.

### 5.7 Nehru Memorial Museum & Library

Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML) established in the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964), is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India located in Teen Murti House, which was once a time residence of the first Prime Minister of India now converted into a Museum, a Library, Nehru Planetarium and a Centre for Contemporary Studies. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library portrays the life of Shree Jawaharlal Nehru and his work.

The Library in its holding has a collection of more than 288 thousand printed books and over 200 thousand photographs related to Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian freedom movement. The library has a very good collection of 20,000 microfilm rolls of old newspapers and historical documents in various regional language as well as in English. Approximately 400 periodicals and thirty daily newspapers are being subscribed by the Library.

Services which are rendered by this library are Membership opening services for bonafide research scholars, professors, teachers, students of any university in India as well as abroad in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. Three divisions of library named as Manuscript Division, the Oral History Division and the Research and Publication Division provide material for reference purpose. Library provides current awareness services through the title 'New Arrivals' to its readers. Microfilm and Microfiche section provide reproduction of newspapers, theses, private papers and rare documents in the form of Microfilm rolls and Microfiche plates. This section provides nearly 20000 rolls of microfilms. Microfiches contain books, reports & serials, Census of India reports 1872-1931, Debates & Proceedings - 1854-1947. Indexing and abstracting services are provided to journal articles for the researchers in social sciences. E resource consultation from DELNET database has been subscribed. Preservation and Conservation chamber has been maintained for preservation and to make available the material for a long period. Library also organizes a variety of activities and programmes like Seminars, Lectures, Workshops and Conferences, talks, etc.

### 5.8 Sangeet Natak Academy

Sangeet Natak Academy, New Delhi has become famous as National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama. It was set

up in 1952 and became functional in 1953. Now it is an autonomous body of Ministry of Culture, India. The basic objectives of the Academy are to conserve the traditions of music, dance and drama, puppetry, crafts, folk arts, to provide support; to encourage the research in these fields, and to set up a museum and a library. For the promotion of heritage, "Asavari" a musical Instrument gallery has been set up in 1964, which includes musical instruments representing Indian and Western arts.

The academy has a multilingual reference library which is widely used by the scholars, musicians, musicologists, film directors, producers, theatre artists, folklorists, choreographers, puppeteers, journalists, students, teachers etc. Resources of the library include books, journals, audio visual resources, photographs etc. The library, specialized in performing arts collection comprises of nearly 30,000 books, 150 subscribed periodicals, 10,000 discs, one hundred video cassettes, two thousand audio cassettes and one hundred DVDs in the field of music, dance and drama. Back volumes of journals are also available in library.

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