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Serving the users in a multilingual library: a case study of Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India

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Abstract:

India is a diverse country with 28 states and 7 Union Territories, where more than 20 languages are officially spoken.

The presentation is aimed to show how the library staff of Punjabi University and Punjabi Reference library is providing access to users seeking information and literature in languages other than English. A survey is planned and interview method will be used to know the opinion of the library staff serving in Reference Section, General Book Section of both the libraries.
The problems, challenges faced by them will be analyzed and suggestions will also be made for improvement.

Introduction

India is an exceptional multilingual country with diverse cultures; it has 28 states and 7 Union territories where 22 languages and 11 scripts are officially recognized. India is world's second largest populated country and it has 550 million people below the age of 25 years which has created a huge demand for higher education. The 2011 Census indicates that the literacy level in the country has gone up to 74.04% from 65.38 in 2001. Current Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India is 12.4% which is nearly half of what it is for the developing countries. The approach for 12th   Five Year Plan (2012-17) is planned for inclusive growth and 100% adult literacy, increase in GER by 20% by March 2017.

Punjab is one of the most prosperous states which lies in the north of India. The Punjabi language also known as Gurmukhi is the official language of Punjab. Key dialects of Punjabi are Majhi, Doabi, Malwai, and Powadhi. The standard Punjabi dialect is Majhi and standard written Punjabi is based on this dialect. In India only 2.73% of population speaks Punjabi language. Other languages spoken in Punjab are English, Hindi, Urdu and Bihari. Punjabi is the most spoken immigrant language in England and fourth most spoken language in Canada according to official census. Among the world languages, Punjabi is the 11th most spoken language in the world.

India is known for having been a pioneer in higher education. Taxila University, which is oldest in the world, has been in existence during 414 A.D. in the city of Gandhara in northwest India (now in Pakistan). At present there are 563 universities in India including central, state, deemed, and private universities. Punjab state has 12 universities and 380 colleges.

Punjabi University, Patiala

Punjabi University, Patiala is named after a state language, the second University in the world to have such a distinction. It was originally conceived and started in 1962 as a unitary multi-faculty teaching and research university and primarily meant for the development and enrichment of Punjabi language and culture. However, sensitive to the social and educational requirements of the state, it grew into an affiliating one in 1969. It has since developed in significant dimensions and acquired a unique character among the centres of education and research in the country. Punjabi University library was renamed after the famous Punjabi lexicographer and encyclopedist Bhai Khan Singh of Nabha city which is close to Patiala. The library was established with two main objectives (a) to build a basic minimum collection of essential publications (including current periodical publications) relating primarily to subjects in which the University was starting postgraduate teaching and (b) to organize the publications with a view to facilitating and promoting their use among students and teachers.

Bhai Khan Singh Nabha, Punjabi University Library is a centre of academic and research activities. It is housed in a large modern building and stocks around 4, 96,815 volumes including 4, 44, 215 books and 52,600 bound periodicals. The latest books are added regularly every year. Besides those in English, the collection is in different languages as per the following:

Language	Collection
Hindi	25, 360
Punjabi	24, 240
Urdu	1, 800
Sanskrit	2,100
Persian	180
Greek	225
Russian	360
Bengali	480
Assamese	20
Kashmiri	40
Marathi	100
Gujarati	50
Hebrew, Arabic, etc.	60
Dravidian (Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, etc.)	200

Introduction of information communication technologies (ICTs) and its use in library operations has changed information needs and behaviour of the users especially for those who want the information in the multi-disciplinary and multi-lingual nature. The library is fulfilling the aims and objectives of Punjabi University, its parent institution, by purchasing two copies of any book published in Punjabi language. The acquisition section of the library is not directly involved in the selection of multilingual books as it mainly procures the books which are recommended by the respective departments. On purchase, the discount rate for Urdu, Persian and Sanskrit titles is 20%, for Punjabi titles 10-30% and for Hindi titles 10-25%. There is a library professional in the library, who is well conversant in Urdu language and he records all the Urdu titles, accessions, classifies and catalogues them. He is going to retire soon and the library is not having any replacement but the Librarian informed the author during interview that a requisition has been sent for having a library professional proficient in Urdu language. English, Punjabi and Hindi languages are taught at school and college level hence it is easy to process documents in these languages. The accession registers in the library are maintained subject wise.

For classifying the documents the library is following Colon Classification 6th edition. Authority file is also maintained by the library whereby numbers which are not available in the Colon Classification are recorded for further usage. Cataloguing is done using the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Ed.2 code. English, Hindi and Punjabi titles are recorded in the respective language but Urdu and Sanskrit titles are transliterated and recorded in English. While classifying the translated documents, the Call number comprises of the Class number to which it belongs and the Book number which further specifies the medium of the document.

Library is using LIBSYS software which has multilingual support. English, Punjabi and Hindi titles are entered in their respective languages whereas Urdu and Sanskrit are transliterated in English. Languages of these titles are specified in the notes area. Shelving of the books is done according to the class numbers assigned using Colon Classification. The spine indicates the language of the book for facilitating identification by the users and shelf guides are also written in languages pertaining to the collection.

In the Periodical section library is presently subscribing to periodicals in English, Punjabi and Hindi language. The library staff of this section is not facing any problem in providing service to users.

Reference section of the library takes the help of faculty of Urdu department for any assistance required by the users in accessing literature in this language. Manuscripts were also processed by the assistance and guidance of faculty of Urdu department. There is no provision of translation service as a result of which documents in Greek, Russian, Japanese and Chinese language are not being used. The Publication Bureau of Punjabi University is getting important books translated in Punjabi language. Library staff is trained to assist the users in accessing web-based resources in different languages. The Librarian justified the use of multilingual collection as users and researchers from adjoining states visited the library for using the rich collection. The library staff was not aware of any standards and guidelines of developing multilingual collection, as they felt every state in India was trying to promote its own language.

Bhai Ganda Singh Library

Bhai Ganda Singh was a famous historian and the former Punjabi Reference Library is named after him. It forms an integral part of the library housed in an interlinked building with the main building for the convenience of the staff and the users. Punjabi Reference Library was established in 1981 with the objective of promoting Punjabi language and to cater to the needs of the researchers and scholars of Punjabi language and culture. The library has taken a historic step for the growth and development of Punjabi language and act as a bibliographic centre for Punjabi publications. Total Collection of the library is 54, 850.

Language	Collection (%)
Punjabi	52,632 (95.95 %)
English	1, 278 (2.32 %)
Hindi	500 (0.91%)
Urdu	400 (0.72%)
Persian	40 (0.07%)

In recent years the budget for this library has doubled; out of that, 85% is spent on the purchase of books and 15% on journals, magazines, and newspapers. The collection is purchased on the criteria passed by the university authorities which encourages purchase of two copies of books on Punjab history, religion, culture etc. in Punjabi language and only one copy in Hindi, English, and Urdu language. In addition to the purchased collection, there is a Special Collection Section that houses rare collections gifted by 54 different famous historians, writers, singers, artists, theatre personalities etc. in different languages. The books are classified according to Dewey Decimal Classification 21st edition and cataloguing is done according to AACR II.

Majority of the users of this library are researchers and scholars from all over India and even foreign countries who are well conversant with Punjabi language. Library staff feels that the library use is not completely justified due to lack of planning, promotion and publicity of resources of this unique library. Another suggestion given by the library staff was to involve prominent personalities and authors of Punjabi language in forming a committee which could

develop a plan for promoting the resources and services of this Punjabi Reference library all over the world.

Standards and Guidelines for developing Multilingual Collection

Many countries like Australia, Canada, South Africa, U.S.A and international associations like ALA and IFLA have formulated guidelines and standards for developing multicultural and multilingual collections in different types of libraries. Unfortunately, in India there are no such guidelines and standards – yet guidelines and standards are most essential in a diverse country like India. These are simple guidelines that will facilitate in serving multilingual users of any library. Templates have been designed for developing multicultural and multilingual collections that are easy to follow. There is lack of awareness and initiatives on part of library and information professionals in his regard.

Initiatives in India

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC), first of its kind in the world, was set up in 2005 by the Prime Minister of India with the challenging mandate to transform India of the 21st century into a knowledge society. It was to advise on matters relating to knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination and knowledge application within the diversity of the Indian scenario. NKC proposed to set up a National Translation Mission (hereafter NTM) that would urgently take up the task of identifying gaps, promoting good quality translation, training, disseminating information about translation and translators, and co-ordinating ongoing work by public and private organisations. Translation has been going on between different pairs of languages in the Indian subcontinent for a long time. According to the report, "As a passion, translation has seen many great minds in action in different speech communities in India and elsewhere. As a multilingual and multicultural country, and as one of the oldest knowledge bases, India has been leading in translation for many centuries. With many languages and cultures, this country also provides a rich testing ground for all major theoretical initiatives in both literary and machine translation. It is expected that the proposed NTM will fulfill a long-felt need that would satisfy different segments: teachers, learners, language technologists, business groups, newspaper establishments and other media groups, creative writers, readers, those engaged in comparative studies and translation theoreticians. The NTM will have the following objectives:

1. To act as a store-house of information on translation involving Indian languages, and to make information regarding all aspects of translation available – by creating, maintaining and constantly updating information on translations published, training programmes scheduled, translation tools and instruments available and new initiatives, and facilities such as a 'National Register for Translators'.

2. To work as a clearing house for all translation activities, both theoretical and practical, in as many Indian languages as possible;

1. To provide links between users of translated material at different levels and in different activities to the public and private agencies and organisations and individuals involved in translation and translation-related activities involving Indian languages;

2. To prioritise the translation of pedagogic materials at all levels (including primary onwards to tertiary education) specifically in natural and social sciences;

3. To project Indian languages and literatures in this region and abroad through high-quality translation;

4. To create and maintain various tools for translation, and to especially encourage the preparation of bilingual and multilingual bi-directional general as well as special-purpose translational dictionaries, word-finders, and thesauri;

5. To promote printed as well as virtual publication of works on Translation Studies jointly or independently for the benefit of all institutions and individuals interested in the field;

6. To provide a forum for dialogue by creating a bulletin board for people to post questions and answers;

7. To provide guidance in the methodology of translation and undertake activities to enrich teaching and training activities in translation studies. (http://www.knowledgecommission.gov.in/downloads/recommendations/ProposalNat ionalTranslationMission.pdf)

Another significant development by Government of India's Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Department of Information Technology (DIT) is the initiative Technology Development for Indian Languages (TDIL) Programme with the objective to develop information-processing tools to facilitate human machine interaction in Indian languages and to develop technologies to access multilingual knowledge resources. The Department of Information Technology has commenced a national initiative called National Rollout Plan aggregated Indian language software tools and fonts. They are being made available through a web based Indian Language Data Centre ILDC. The Department also promotes Language Technology standardization through active participation in International and national standardization bodies such as ISO, UNICODE, World-Wide-Web consortium (W3C) and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), ELRA, to ensure adequate representation of Indian languages in existing and future language technology standards.

The World-Wide Web Consortium (W3C) India has taken a new role in the development of standards and guidelines for developing tools, technologies and web interface accessible for persons with disabilities. The Web Content accessibility guideline [WCAG 2.0] is the key achievement in this direction. In India, though few initiatives have been undertaken towards development and deployment of assistive technologies, still lot more needs to be done in terms of affordable multilingual assistive technology development, adoption of standards, awareness and education, implementation and policy level aspects to provide web based accessible solutions to include these specially-abled citizens towards nation building. Efforts and initiatives taken in India do not directly pertain to libraries.

Conclusion

The efforts need to be consolidated and directed towards libraries. Indian Library Association and library and information professionals should come together to formulate standards and guidelines for developing multicultural and multilingual collection for different types of

libraries. Users of multilingual libraries need to be guided and served properly with maximum information. Cue can be taken from standards provided by various countries, professional associations and templates available. There is no dearth of software with multilingual support are available in India like LIBSYS, SOUL, Shree-Lipi 7.2 software contains various packages, Ankur, Indology and of course the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) is the premier R&D organization of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), Ministry of Communications & Information Technology (MCIT) and one of the products is Multilingual Computing. Since there is enough technical and technological support effort is required to direct and coordinate it with libraries. India must develop a set of standards and guidelines for developing multicultural and multilingual collections to do justice to its diverse users.

Further Readings

Guidelines for Multilingual Materials Collection and Development and Library Services. The Multilingual Materials Subcommittee (ad hoc), Adult Library Materials Committee, Reference and Adult Services Division, American Library Association, June 1990. Access: www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusasections/rss/ rsssection/rsscomm/spanishspeaking/rev_guidelines.doc

Multicultural Communities: Guidelines for Library Services'. IFLA. 3rd ed. 2009. Access: http://www.ifla.org/files/library-services-to-multicultural-populations/publications/multicultural-communities-en.pdf

Multicultural Resources and Services: Toolkit. Library and Archives Canada ISBN 0-662-34817-6 Access: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/multicultural/005007-300-e.html

LIBSYS http://libsystechnologies.com/offerings_libsys7.html

SOUL http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/soul/

Shree-Lipi http://www.modular-infotech.com/html/shreelipi.html

Ankur http://www.modular-infotech.com/html/ankur.html

Indology: Resources for Indological Scholarship http://indology.info/links/soft/

Centre for Development of Advanced Computing http://www.cdac.in/html/products_services.aspx