

## **Report of the National Seminar on School Libraries & the Educational System**

**19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> November 1998, Trivandrum**

The two-day National Seminar on School libraries held at Priyadarsini Planetarium Auditorium, Science & Technology Museum, Trivandrum was inaugurated by His Excellency Justice (Dr.) Sukh Dev Singh Kang, the Governor of Kerala on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1998. Shri.P.J. Joseph (Hon'ble Minister for Education), Shri.K. Jayakumar IAS (Secretary, General Education Department) and Prof. K.A. Issac, (Patron of KLA) spoke on the occasion. There were altogether Six Technical sessions. The first session on 'National Education Scenario and Libraries in School Education' was chaired by Dr. John Pulparambil, faculty member of the Institute of Management in Govt., Trivandrum. Dr.A.Sukumaran Nair, former Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam made an excellent presentation on the educational scenario in the country and the role of libraries for developing self-study habit of school children.

Four papers were presented in the Second Session on 'School Library Scenario in India'. Smt. Lizzie Jacob IAS was the Chairperson. Dr.B. Vijayakumar, Director of SCERT presented the findings of a survey of School Libraries in Kerala, conducted by SCERT. Dr. S.L. Verma, Head, Library, Documentation and Information Division of the NCERT portrayed report of the school libraries in the country. A status report of the school libraries of Tamil Nadu was presented by Dr.Amudhavalli, Reader, DLIS, University of Madras. The success story of the Parent – Teacher Association of the Cotton Hill Govt. Higher Secondary School for Girls, Thiruvananthapuram, in developing the library was presented by Shri.N. Parameswaran, its president.

‘Promotion of Reading Habits in Children’ was the theme of the third session chaired by Prof. J.V. Vilanilam, former Vice-chancellor of University of Kerala. Several useful suggestions came out of the presentation of Sri.C.G. Santhakumar, Director, State Institute of Children’s Literature. Rev. Dr.T.J. Thomas, Director of the Mar Thoma Counselling Centre, Trivandrum, underline the need for educating the parents about the virtues of reading books. Shri. M. Parameswaran, Reader, DLIS, University of Calicut and Dr. Humayoon Kabir, Faculty member of DLIS, M.G. University presented the findings of two independent surveys of reading habits of school children.

Smt. P. Kala, Research Scholar of the University of Calicut gave an account of the unique experience of Kanavu, the institution set up to educate the Adivasi children and Saraswathi Nilayam, their informal school library in Wayanad.

The activities of the second day started with a special lecture by Dr.B. Bhattacharjee, Director, Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Calcutta on the need of public library – school library co-operation.

The fourth session of the Seminar was on the theme ‘Organizing School Libraries’. It was chaired by Dr.M. Bavakutty, University Librarian, University of Calicut, Dr.G. Devarajan, Head, DLIS, University of Kerala in his paper ‘Manpower in school Libraries in India: present position and prospective requirement, proposed a phased programme for the appointment of adequate professionals in school libraries in Kerala. Lapses and prospects of the technical organization of school libraries in Kerala was the focal theme of the paper of Smt.K.K. Lalitha Bai of the DLIS, University of Kerala. Shri. V.N. Mohanraj, former librarian of the Lovedale Public School, Ooty presented several useful tips for the successful organization of school libraries. Sri.G.Dhanasegara of

Dr.T.P.M. Library, Madura Kamaraj University focused on the objectives, functions and services of school libraries.

The fifth session of the Seminar was 'IT & School libraries'. It was chaired by Sri. Anand Parthasarathy of the Hindu daily. Dr.C.G.Sukumaran Nair, Scientist, Computer Division, V.S.S.C. spoke on the role of computers in school libraries in the storage, presentation and dissemination of information. Portraying a typical school library in Kerala, Dr. Achuth Sankar S Nair of the Department of Computer Science, University of Kerala explained the pre-conditions needed for the effective use of IT in such a set up. Sri.N. Narayanan Kutty, Director, Advanced Information Management Society, examined the need for computerization of school libraries and put forward the details of a cost-effective software. The problems and prospects of library automation were covered by Mr.Shinu Ray, a budding information professional.

The sixth session chaired by Prof. A.B. George former President of KLA, was designed to be an Open Session. Sri.B. Surendran, Librarian of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pangode, Trivandrum, Smt.K.A. Jainamma, Librarian of M.A. College of Engineering, Kothamangalama and Smt. Thara and Smt. Beenamma Jacob of the Education Department of the Sree Sankara University of Sanskrit presented their papers. Representatives of various categories of participants like professional librarians, teacher-librarians, school teachers etc. participated in the discussions that followed.

The Valedictory session of the Seminar on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1998 was presided over by Shri. Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan MLA, (President of the Kerala State Library Council). Shri.K.P. Vijayakumar, (Repporteur – General) presented the report and recommendations of the Seminar. The valedictory address was given by Shri.M. Vijayakumar, Hon. Speaker of Kerala Legislative

Assembly. Smt. Lida Jacob IAS (Director of Public Instruction), Sri.K. Balakrishnan Nambiar (General Secretary, KSTA), Prof. A.B. George (Former President of KLA) and Dr.G. Devarajan, Head, DLIS offered felicitations.

### **Resolutions of the Seminar**

1. The habit of reading has to be inculcated in children at a very young stage, the most impressionable period in their life. This calls for the active functioning of school libraries right from the primary school level.
2. It is high time for the country to phase out the use of out –moded curricular models, instructional practices and evaluation methods. Libraries have to be equipped with new resources, technology and professional manpower in order to promote self-study habit among children.
3. In order to transform school libraries into learning resource centres, they should be scientifically organized by qualified professional so that the libraries may become accessible and usable to the children.
4. The seminar recommends the setting up of a high power committee at the national level by the Govt. of India for studying the problems of school libraries and come out with proposals for a model library system.
5. Parent – Teacher Association (PTA) as agencies vitally interested in the educational advancement and development of the students, should take special interest in strengthening school libraries. Also Parents and Teachers should be convinced of the virtues of reading.
6. The Seminar resolves to urge the Govt. of Kerala to take immediate steps to appoint professional librarians in the Higher Secondary Schools and High Schools.

7. The Seminar strongly recommends to the Govt. of Kerala to provide library services at the Plus Two level by starting new libraries and strengthening the existing ones in schools by laying down norms in the matter of physical facilities, collection, services, staff etc in accordance with the NCERT guidelines.
8. The Seminar welcomes the blue print prepared by SCERT, Trivandrum for improving the lot of school libraries in the State. But Library Association and Library experts in the academic library sector of the state should be associated with the planning process and its implementation.
9. Government in the States and Union Territories should evolve standards for the School libraries. The seminar also urges the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to take the lead in the formulation of school library standards, taking into consideration of the new IT – oriented information environment.
10. Separate library hours should be set apart for students to use the libraries under the guidance of teachers both for curricular and extra curricular reading.
11. A policy for weeding out obsolete and unwanted books to make room for new books added should be evolved.
12. The libraries attached to District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) also have to be organized on scientific lines for conducting full fledged orientation programmes for school librarians.
13. The Seminar strongly recommended to the Govt. to take urgent steps to revamp school libraries by using Internet.
14. Avenues of co-operation between school libraries & Public libraries to fill the inadequacies, wherever necessary should be explored.