Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Maintained Research Institutes' Libraries in India: Towards Digitization and Networking

P.K. JAIN[*]

ABSTRACT

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established for development of social science research in India. It provides grants to 27 research institutes and six regional centers in India. These institutes have established close links with scholars in the region through activities such as seminars, workshops, training, and consultancy programs. Some of the institutes are closely associated with national and state level planning development agencies and have thereby strengthened the links between research and policy-making. The present study includes 22 institute libraries and three regional libraries in different Indian states. The study analyses their annual acquisition of books; periodicals; CD-ROMs; annual budgets; computerization; hardware and software; Internet; library network; and interlibrary loan and photocopy facilities available in these libraries. Digitization provides a solution to traditional library problems such as conservation, preservation, multimedia documents, and remote access to information, collection, and storage space. ICSSR institute libraries are replacing conventional storage and network systems with digital systems. The progress is a bit slow. Only a few ICSSR institute libraries are subscribing to electronic journals and having electronic documents. ICSSR institute libraries have started computerized operations and are making vigorous attempts to have digitized collections. However, these libraries are required to understand literature growth and use patterns in the social sciences.

*Assistant Librarian, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi Enclave, Delhi 110007. India. E-mail: pkjain@ieg.ernet.in

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, with a rich cultural heritage. The country has a long tradition of research and writing. Social science research or, more specifically, writings on social philosophy and normative social thought, dates back to the second or third century B.C. One prominent example was Manu's *Dharmashastra* (i.e. treatise on ethics), a comprehensive study of Indian society, as it existed at that time. Another example was Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (324–296 B.C.), a treatise on statecraft, which described in detail the political and economic structure and functioning of Indian society.

Modern social science began to develop in India during the 19th century under the aegis of British rulers. Since the British were unfamiliar with Indian society and culture, they started collections of extensive data and information on Indian society. The objective was to obtain a better understanding of the Indian people, their culture, traditions, customs, and beliefs. After independence, the need for accurate economic information became important for the purpose of socio-economic planning. The purpose of planning was to ensure that the government was making the correct choices, which would lead to balanced economic development. As a result of this, a number of economic research institutes came into existence in the 1950s. Some of the well-known institutes founded during this period were (i) the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi; (ii) the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta; (iii) the National Council of Applied Economic Research, Delhi; and (iv) the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. Apart from these, 11 agro-economic research centers were also set up at this time by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture (Government of India).

The growth of social sciences in India can be attributed to the government's need for social science research in the formulation and implementation of its development plans and the importance of social science research in solving India's innumerable social and economic problems.

The social sciences in India today are thus relatively well established with a large number of research institutions and individual researchers and several large and well-stocked libraries.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Government of India founded the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1969. It marked a turning point in the development of social sciences in India. The primary objective of the ICSSR was "to promote research in social sciences and to facilitate its utilization". ICSSR

decided to support research proposals on any subject or theme having a significant social science orientation. It recognized the following disciplines: economics, education, political science, public administration, business administration, social work, commerce, management, psychology, international relations, sociology, criminology, anthropology, demography, geography, history, law, and social linguistics.

The ICSSR has played a very significant role in promoting social science research and teaching in India, not only by encouraging individual researchers but also by encouraging the growth of social science institutions. The ICSSR provides a recurring grant to these institutes. In the 1970s, many research institutes were established which have been able to maintain high standards of research. These include the Institute for Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, the Mardras Institute for Development Studies, the A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies at Patna, the Sardar Patel Institute of Economics and Social Research at Ahmedabad, and the Giri Institute of Social Sciences, Lucknow. Also, old and well-established institutes like the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Bombay and the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in Pune receive support from the ICSSR. One of the important activities of the ICSSR is to survey research done in different social science areas to identify trends and gaps in research, determine priorities, and select programs for special promotional efforts.

The main objectives of the council as specified in the International Directory of Social Science Organizations are:

- To review the progress of social science research and give advice to its users;
- To sponsor social science research programs and projects and administer grants to institutions and individuals for research in social sciences;
- To institute and administer scholarships and fellowships for research in social sciences;
- To indicate areas in which social science research is to be promoted and to adopt special measures for development of research in neglected or new areas;
- To give financial support to institutions, associations, and journals engaged in social science research;
- To co-ordinate research activities and encourage programs for interdisciplinary research;
- To develop and support centers for documentation services and the supply of data;
- To organize, sponsor, and finance seminars, workshops, and study groups;

- To undertake the publication and assist with the publication of journals and books in social sciences;
- To advise the Government of India on all matters pertaining to social science research as may be referred to it from time to time; and
- To take such measures generally as may be necessary from time to time to promote social science research and its utilization.

ICSSR INSTITUTES

ICSSR provides maintenance and development grants to 27 research institutes and six regional centers in India. The sponsoring of research institutes outside the scope of the University Grant Commission has been one of the major programs of the Council. These institutes constitute an important mechanism for implementing the Council's policy and for the building up of research capabilities in the different regions of the country, particularly in areas where social science research is not well developed. These institutes have established close links with scholars in the region through activities such as seminars, workshops, and training and consultancy programs. Some of the institutes work closely with challenged sections of society including women, energy, technology, ecology and the environment, and social, cultural, and institutional aspects of development. Thus, research studies have generated substantial empirical knowledge of the structure of the Indian economy and society and their dynamics both at the national and regional levels.

In this process the institutes have become centers for the treatment of the region's specific issues and have assisted national and state level planning and development agencies and have thereby strengthened the links between research and policymaking.

Each institute decides about its own direction of research which includes a wide spectrum of subjects related to agriculture; rural development and wages, inter-regional differences in levels of development, education, health, and nutrition. In addition, each institution encourages awareness of the nature of development problems and the potential of India as a whole. ICSSR evaluates its research institutes through its review committees every 5 years. These committees generally consist of three to five members. Review committees visit the institutes for a period of 2–4 days. During this period they meet all the members of the staff, both academic and non-academic members and inspect the library, computer center, and other infrastructural facilities. It reviews its publications, academic output, lectures delivered, and seminars held. At the end of its review, it submits its report to the ICSSR.

ICSSR Institutes and their Libraries

The following is a list of ICSSR institutes and regional libraries located in different Indian states, which are included in the study (Table I).

Until recently, the primary objective of these institutes' libraries was to acquire, process, and disseminate published literature. In social sciences, published literature plays a major role. Through the use of published papers, social scientists communicate with one another transcending the barriers of time and space. The selection and use of current literature by social scientists reflects a process of examination, evaluation, and acceptance or rejection of ideas, beliefs, and findings of peers. However, collection development is a difficult task in these social science research libraries. In their analysis and commentary on social life, social scientists in India and other countries of the world use data from a large variety of written records such as newspapers, annual reports, memoirs, governmental records, etc. In fact, literature used by social scientists is wider in scope than the literature written by social scientists. In a restricted sense, social science literature is used to refer to works written by social scientists, addressed to social scientists, and dealing with matters of mutual scientific interest.

In the study, out of 25 libraries, two institute libraries (8.3%) were established before 1960, four (16.7%) during 1961–70, 13 (54.2%) during 1971–80 and five (20.8%) after 1981. Regarding working days, seven libraries (28%) were open 5 days a week, 17 libraries (68%) were open 6 days a week, and only one library (4%) was open 7 days per week. Regarding time, six libraries (25%) were open less than 40 hours per week, 14 libraries (58.4%) were open between 41–50 hours per week, two libraries were open 51–60 hours per week, and two libraries (8.3%) were open more than 61 hours per week.

Table II shows that three libraries (14.3%) have total annual acquisitions of below 500 documents, seven libraries (33.3%) have total annual acquisitions of between 501 and 1000 documents, eight libraries (38.1%) have total annual acquisitions of between 1001 and 2000 documents, and three libraries (14.3%) have total annual acquisitions above those of 2001. It further shows that only nine libraries (36%) have a CD-ROM collection, five libraries have acquisitions of less than 5 CDs per year, two libraries acquired between 6 and 10 CDs per year, and two libraries acquired more than 10 CDs per year.

All the institute libraries have collections in English. Nine libraries (36%) have collections in Hindi and eight libraries (32%) have collections in other regional languages. The ICSSR-SRC has produced an annotated edition in the Telegu and Urdu languages. They have prepared an *Annotated Bibliography of Urdu Books*. For the Urdu book bibliography, a survey was done of 14 libraries and about 10,000 catalogued volumes. They have also

TABLE I

Sl. no.	Name of the institute	Year of establishment
1.	A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Sciences, Patna (ANSISS)	1958
2.	Center for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram (CDS)	1971
3.	Center for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad (CESS)	1980
4.	Center for Multi Disciplinary Development Research, Dharwad (CMDR)	1976
5.	Center for Policy Research, New Delhi (CPR)	—
6.	Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh (CRRID)	1979
7.	Center for Social Studies, Surat (CSS)	1970
8.	Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata (CSSS)	1973
9.	Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi (CSDS)	1963
10.	Center for Women's Development Studies Library, Delhi (CWDS)	1980
11.	Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar National Institute of Social Sciences, Mhow (DBANISS)	1989
12.	G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad (GBPSSI)	1981
13.	Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow (GIDS)	1977
14.	Gujrat Institute of Development Research, Ahemdabad (GIDR)	1977
15.	Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur (IDS)	1982
16.	Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi (IEG)	1958
17.	Institute of Public Enterprises, Hyderabad (IPE)	1964
18.	Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore (ISEC)	1972
19.	Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai (MIDS)	1971
20.	Madya Pradesh Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain (MPISSR)	1983
21.	Nabakrushna Chaudhury Center for Development Studies, Bhubaneswar (NCDS)	1987
22.	National Social Science Documentation Center, New Delhi (NASSDOC)	1970
23.	ICSSR North Eastern Regional Center, Shillong (NERC)	1977
24.	ICSSR North Western Regional Center, Chandigarh (NWRC)	1977
25.	ICSSR Southern Regional Center, Hyderabad (SRC)	1973

TABLE II

Annual acquisition in ICSSR institute libraries

Name of the institutes	Books	Periodicals	Others	CD	Total
ANSISS	—	—	—	—	—
CDS	1600	320	780	03	2703
CESS	1000	150	—	—	1150
CMDR	500	64	115	—	679
CPR	450	150	—	—	600
CRRID	1000	120	220	2	1342
CSS	700	150	50	1	901
CSSS	450	180	375	12	1017
CSDS	500	30	65	—	595
CWDS	—	—	—	—	—
DBANISS	—	—	—	—	—
DGBPSSI	1016	132	4	—	1152
GIDS	1000	160	175	6	1341
GIDR	600	120	300	1	1021
IDS	500	140	238	4	882
IEG	1500	312	700	10	2522
IPE	250	75	360	—	685
ISEC	1000	400	1350	—	2750
MIDS	1500	—	—	—	1500
MPISSR	—	—	—	—	—
NCDS	1000	80	350	—	1430
NASSDOC	500	250	110	20	880
ICSSR-NERC	150	12	40	—	202
ICSSR-NWRC	200	75	100	—	375
ICSSR-SRC	82	38	47	—	167

prepared the "*Annotated Bibliography of Telugu Books in Social Sciences*". The center covered 3000 titles in this survey. They have also published a "*Retrospective Indexes of Social Science Articles from Old Urdu Periodicals*" and the "*Retrospective Indexes of Social Science Articles from old Telegu Periodicals*". ICSSR-NWRC has prepared the "*Bibliography of Punjabi Books in Social Sciences*". They have done a lot of work in the Punjabi language.

Table III shows that three libraries (13.1%) have total annual budgets of less than Rs. 2,000,000, eight libraries (39.1%) have total annual budgets between Rs. 2,000,001 to 5,000,000, seven libraries (30.4%) have total annual budgets between Rs. 5,000,001 to 10,000,000, and four libraries (17.4%) have total annual budgets of more than Rs. 10,000,001.

Table IV shows that out of 25 libraries, only 17 (68%) libraries are computerized. Out of these 17 libraries, only 10 libraries have good hardware, i.e., Pentium. Other libraries have IBM-type 486 personal computers. Software helps to bring hardware into activation and real use. Regarding software, 14 libraries are using CDS/ISIS software developed

TABLE III

Annual budget (in Indian rupees) in the ICSSR institute libraries

	Books	Periodicals	Others	Total
ANSISS	—	—	—	—
CDS	650,000	750,000	100,000	1,500,000
CESS	200,000	300,000	50,000	550,000
CMDR	400,000	200,000	—	600,000
CPR	325,000	—	—	325,000
CRRID	300,000	100,000	50,000	450,000
CSS	175,000	126,000	31,000	332,000
CSSS	125,000	775,000	—	900,000
CSDS	360,000	100,000	260,000	720,000
CWDS	300,000	—	—	300,000
DBANISS	550,000	500,000	50,000	1,100,000
DGBPSSI	300,000	—	—	300,000
GIDS	175,000	350,000	—	525,000
GIDR	105,334	36,768	10,000	152,102
IDS	100,000	200,000	—	300,000
IEG	400,000	500,000	50,000	950,000
IPE	420,000	500,000	80,000	1,000,000
ISEC	500,000	1,000,000	—	1,500,000
MIDS	133,326	356,305	2259	491,890
MPISSR	—	—	—	—
NCDS	300,000	120,000	80,000	500,000
NASSDOC	3,100,000	—	—	3,100,000
ICSSR-NERC	75,000	—	—	75,000
ICSSR-NWRC	330,000	—	—	330,000
ICSSR-SRC	10,000	160,000	—	170,000

by UNESCO, which is almost free of cost for libraries in developing countries. Only three libraries are using *LIBSYS* software. For proper use of library hardware and software, trained staff is a problem for ICSSR institute libraries.

Table V shows that 12 libraries (48%) have Internet access and only four libraries (16%) have library network facilities on the Delhi Library Network (DELNET). It further shows that 19 libraries (76%) have interlibrary loan capabilities and 22 libraries (88%) have photocopy facilities.

- **CPR library** has developed three databases, the *Books* database, the *Periodicals* database and the *News Papers* clipping database.
- **IDS library** has four databases: BOOKS (for books), RM (for research material), ARTI (for periodical articles), and PUB (for in house publication). The IDS library has a total of 11 CD-ROMs.
- The **IEG Library** has seven databases: BOOKS (for books), IELJR (for journals), IELSR (for serials), MD (for microdocuments), AR (for annual reports), APPBKS (for current arrivals), and CD (for CD-ROMs). The IEG library has about 30 CD-ROMs.

TABLE IV

Hardware and software facilities available in the ICSSR institute libraries

	Computerization	Hardware	Software
ANSISS	—	—	—
CDS	Yes	UNIX SERVER	LIBSYS
CESS	Yes	PC486, Pentium	CDS/ISIS
CMDR	—	—	—
CPR	Yes	—	CDS/ISIS
CRRID	Yes	AT486, TVSE 255	INHOUSE
CSS	Yes	PC	CDS/ISIS
CSSS	Yes	PC 486	CDS/ISIS
CSDS	—	—	—
CWDS	Yes	2 Pentium, ONE 486	CDS/ISIS
DBANISS	Yes	PC	CDS/ISIS
DGBPSSI	—	—	—
GIDS	Yes	PC 486	CDS/ISIS
GIDR	Yes	Pentium	CDS/ISIS, LIBSYS
IDS	Yes	Pentium 166 MMX	CDS/ISIS
IEG	Yes	Pentium Novell Netwok/3.11	CDS/ISIS
IPE	Yes	Pentium	CDS/ISIS
ISEC	—	—	—
MIDS	—	—	—
MPISSR	Yes	Pentium II	WINDOWS 97
NCDS	Yes	Pentium	CDS/ISIS
NASSDOC	Yes	Pentium II, PC-486	CDS/ISIS, LIBSYS
ICSSR—NERC	—	—	—
ICSSR—NWRC	Yes	Pentium PC	CDS/ISIS
ICSSR—SRC	—	—	—

- **NASSDOC** is involved in documentation and developed Union catalogues, bibliographies, directories, and cumulative indexes in the social sciences. It has databases of books, research project reports and Ph.D. dissertations available at NASSDOC. NASSDOC has a cyber cafe in the library and conducts training courses and seminars.
- **CDWS Library** has five databases: *Mahila* (literature of women) Database (for books, etc); Database of Periodical Articles and News Clippings; Database of Newsletters and Periodicals; Database of Voluntary Organizations; and *Chitra* database (for audio-visual material).

DIGITIZATION AND NETWORKING

In India, digitization of knowledge artifacts (i.e., manuscripts, archival records, books, periodicals, maps, etc.) and dissemination of electronic information to the common citizen have become part of state policy.

TABLE V

Internet, network, inter-library loan, and photocopy facilities available in the ICSSR institute libraries

	Internet	Library network	ILL	Photocopy
ANSISS	—	—	—	Yes
CDS	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
CESS	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
CMDR	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
CPR	Yes	DELNET	Yes	Yes
CRRID	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
CSS	—	—	Yes	Yes
CSSS	—	—	Yes	Yes
CSDS	—	—	Yes	Yes
CWDS	Yes	DELNET	Yes	Yes
DBANISS	Yes	—	—	Yes
DGBPSSI	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
GIDS	—	—	Yes	Yes
GIDR	—	—	Yes	Yes
IDS	Yes	DELNET	Yes	Yes
IPE	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
ISEC	—	—	Yes	Yes
MIDS	—	—	Yes	Yes
MPISSR	—	—	—	Yes
NCDS	Yes	—	—	Yes
NASSDOC	Yes	DELNET	Yes	Yes
ICSSR-NERC	—	—	—	—
ICSSR-NWRC	—	—	—	—
ICSSR-SRC	—	—	Yes	—

Many social science research libraries have now developed computerized catalogue databases of their holdings. Apart from this, digitization of old rare books and manuscripts has become a part of their development plans. The Government of India now believes that delivery of digitized information to common masses is now considered important for the success of the market economy, social justice and transparency, and accountability in administration. Advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have effected this change. Now one can develop and disseminate information in various forms and means of media on the local, national, and international levels through means like the Internet and interactive multimedia such as CD-ROMs. The convergence of computational, storage, and networking techniques now has a wider impact on society. Twentieth century interdependence will seem modest compared with the emerging networks of interdependence.

Digitization provides a solution to traditional library problems such as conservation, preservation, access to information collections, and storage

space. Digitization has minimized the gap that exists between libraries and users. Any information pertaining to any topic can be accessed very fast.

The publication of periodicals in electronic forms, even in the social sciences, is now increasing. ICSSR institute libraries are lagging behind in this development. Only a few libraries are subscribing to electronic journals. Most of the libraries cannot afford to subscribe to electronic journals due to financial constraints.

Technological innovations and growth has flooded the world with electronic information. Speedy use of computers and telecommunications technologies favors the networking of libraries.

The National Social Science Documentation Centre (NASSDOC), a constituent unit of ICSSR, provides library and reference services and literature searches from digital databases and CD-ROMs in the social sciences. Digital information/literature search services are based on national as well as international databases/CD-ROMs in the social sciences. Recently they have produced the "*Directory of Social Science Libraries and Information Centers in India*" and the "*Union Catalogue of CD-ROM Databases in Social Sciences Libraries in India*". Both are available in hardcopy and on CD-ROMs also. They have published many directories, indexes, union catalogues, and bibliographies. These are widely used by researchers and librarians. NAASDOC processes proposals for financial assistance on request from scholars as well as from institutions and associations. Researchers examine themes relevant to social science information, documentation, and compilation of reference and information-locating tools (i.e., preparation of indexes, bibliographies, abstracts, and union catalogues). The purpose is to acquaint social scientists with the use of communication and information technology. ICSSR has established a cyber cafe at NASSDOC, New Delhi.

The ICSSR Information Gateway of Social Sciences is an Internet-based, quality-controlled information service providing links to other web sites, data, multimedia files, and numerous sources in the social sciences. The Gateway is an independent unit of ICSSR and coordinates its functions with NASSDOC. Users can either search for information by keyword or browse the resources under subject headings. It is a network of social scientists, information specialists, network operators, and technologists. This Gateway is a cooperative venture of many research organizations and information centers. It covers social science disciplines as recognized by ICSSR. It provides links to websites of social science departments of major universities and social science research institutes. The websites of other existing Indian and international information networks and gateways are also linked to this gateway.

A meeting of the librarians of the ICSSR institute libraries and regional centers was held on 1 February 2002, at New Delhi. It was unanimously

recommended that such meetings should be held annually, if possible. It was discussed that uniform guidelines and standards for starting automation work in ICSSR institute libraries should be developed. One newsletter should be started and circulated about the documentation and information activities and services of the ICSSR institute libraries. A need was also felt for the introduction of information and communication technology and these libraries should be upgraded in terms of hardware and software, staffing, and other research resources.

The Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), New Delhi, has published indexes of selected economic journals in two volumes covering "Economic and Political Weekly" and 16 economic journals. These two volumes were very helpful for social scientists, researchers, and librarians. For the convenience of users, the indexing of articles, including from other journals and newspapers, was brought out in the form of an interactive CD-ROM, titled *ISID Research Reference (RRCD)*. This CD provides information on articles from journals and newspapers, national polity documents, economic surveys, union budget speeches, selected basic statistics, and important website addresses.

There is a need to develop a network of ICSSR research institute libraries for promoting resource sharing. To accomplish this, each library would be required to have computers, electronic databases, and connectivity of data communication networks. A computerized database of bibliographical records of library materials is to be created in each of the participating libraries. A computerized union catalogue is also to be developed to provide a broad perspective about information resources available in various ICSSR institute libraries in the network. Creation of bibliographical records in the network environment requires adoption of uniform standards by all ICSSR institute libraries. It will result in resource sharing and cooperation.

ICSSR institute libraries are increasingly replacing conventional storage and network systems with digital systems. The progress is a bit slow. In India there are certain legal challenges concerning digital libraries. These include the use of copyrighted material, the economics of information (i.e., who pays and who gets), privacy issues, reliability of information, and change in the nature of information creation and use. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) laws are not clear. The true meaning of fair use is a matter of debate and personal judgment; one has to wait until the publishers themselves come out with e-documents and offer a multi-user or network license.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The major challenge before social science research libraries is to develop a user-responsive collection, and to design proper bibliographic,

indexing, and abstracting tools so that the use of this collection can be activated.

The demand for information by the social scientists in India has changed dramatically during the past 50 years. Indian independence in l947 started a new era in which development and social justice within the framework of democracy became the national goal. As a result, information on various aspects of the economy and society has become necessary for interpretation of socio-economic conditions and analysis on inputs for policy-making. A large and elaborate network has been built by the government for the collection of data. Apart from the leading statistical agencies, especially the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), all departments of the central government have their own units to compile data, monitor developments, and advise on policy. The Planning Commission has been the lead agency for sectoral strategies, programs, and policies as part of an integrated national plan. Social science research libraries have to establish a closer link with government research units and data collection agencies; which also include organisations like Registrar General of India (RGI) for population census data and Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, for agricultural statistics. Needless to say, the government devotes a large amount of resources for collection of a great variety of data; but this information is not put to effective use partly due to the fact that tabulation, analysis, and dissemination of this data in a convenient user-friendly mode is not considered important by the government. Of late, there is a change in government policy. The government recently decided to make available on CD-ROMs primary socio-economic data collected by the NSSO on variables like education, literacy, employment/unemployment, land holdings, consumer expenditures etc., on CD-ROMs/diskettes. The change in government policy has necessitated many statistical agencies having to release their data in electronic form. Major agencies like the CSO, NSSO, RGI, Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, and the Labour Bureau have developed computerized databases in their establishments for speedy dissemination of data. Social science research libraries are required to negotiate with statistical agencies for a user-friendly mode of dissemination.

Social science research libraries under the banner of the ICSSR are now exploring the possibilities of creating a databank for their scholars. The databank is primarily a device for utilizing data, more or less readily available from different sources, as fully as possible, integrating data into consistent sets, thereby allowing and facilitating access, manipulation, and the correlation of data. ICSSR had established a modest databank in l973 to make available data generated through the ICSSR research studies. Even though the ICSSR diligently stored and maintained the data

generated by its studies, there was not much demand for it because most of the data was micro-level information and was not available in a standard format. At present, ICSSR is in the process of creating a network involving 27 institutes funded by it, the data generating units of the government and its own data bank to make it easier for social scientists to access most of the data they require for their research.

At present, most of the information support for social sciences research is in English. Nonetheless, India has about 15 languages recognized by the constitution. These languages are now used by academicians and state/UT governments in day-to-day administration. Teaching and research work is now increasingly done in these languages. Also, government and local bodies are producing useful sources of information in these regional languages on development-related subjects. These sources are widely scattered in different organizations and available mostly in "gray" form. The term gray literature encompasses a whole range of difficult-to-define publications, not usually available through national book selling channels. As such, they are normally out of the reach of users from other regions. A sincere effort is being made by social science libraries to develop a collection of these unpublished sources with proper bibliographical control.

One cannot deny the fact that an analysis of the growth and use patterns of literature is fundamental to the development of a library collection, its organization, and use. Activities like investigation into user needs, library surveys, citational analysis, and bibliometric studies of the growth of literature are important for planning library collections and services. In the field of social sciences, such analyses often face initial definitional problems regarding the scope of both the social sciences and social science literature. In recent years, no serious attempt has been made to estimate the size, growth, and characteristics of social science literature in India. NASSDOC of ICSSR has made praiseworthy efforts to provide bibliographic services in the social sciences: Abstracting journals, surveys of literature, and union catalogues. But no feedback on their use and value is available. The primary objective of a bibliographical tool is to identify the subject of documents and to facilitate retrieval of bibliographical references on one subject. However, it is generally believed by the experts that the value-impregnated nature of social sciences makes it difficult to identify its subjects as well as its ideological framework for the purpose of indexing and abstracting. Social science researchers give great emphasis to the conceptual and ideological framework of a study. As such, libraries are expected to engage in problem-specific, personalized research (preferably on the basis of a personal interview) for bibliographical or SDI services. This poses a major challenge for librarians.

Another problem which needs immediate attention is the lack of trained library staff. Apart from training in the use of IT, librarians need training

in the content and structure of esoteric sources of information. The training needs will vary according to jobs and working environments. Staff members working at service points need to undergo training in the use of software and operating systems. They should be adequately trained to retrieve information from databases (each of which may have different user interfaces) to build search strategies, to refine searches, and to download results in the required formats.

The recently published "*Social Science Research Capacity in South Asia: A Report*" says that access to an unbroken series of periodicals is one of the most pressing needs of social scientists in all of South Asia, and mounting costs have forced most libraries to terminate their subscriptions to most international journals. The acquisition of books will, naturally, have to be selective, and it is best to rely on the advice of research faculty at regional centers to decide how the funds available for the purchase of books should be distributed among the different disciplines and fields. The report has also mentioned that systems of interlibrary loans are very poorly developed in South Asia, and without the growth of mutual trust and responsibility among institutions it is futile to expect the system to emerge overnight. In order to make the resources of the regional libraries available to scholars in the region, the most practical solution seems to be one where research students and teachers may apply for small grants to visit the nearest regional social science library for a few days or weeks.

It is necessary to disseminate information about NASSDOC-produced ICSSRs bibliographic, indexing, and abstracting products and services more vigorously among social scientists and other users of social science information.

There is an urgent need for greater coordination and networking among ICSSR research institute libraries and other data collecting agencies of the government. These latter entries include the Registrar General of India (RGI), the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Office of the Economic Adviser, and the Ministry of Industry.

Conclusion

ICSSR institute libraries have been developed to provide need-based service to researchers. The present condition of these libraries is unsatisfactory due to lack of funds and the indifferent attitude of the authorities. NASSDOC is regularly organizing training programs for the librarians of the ICSSR institute so that sources of information in the area of social science can be exploited properly.

In India, studies of literature use patterns by social scientists are scarce, while social studies of library use have been carried out; their limitations of scope and methodologies restrict their utility and value to a considerable degree.

Abstracting journals, surveys of literature, and union catalogues (which were practically non-existent 20 years ago) have been developed by the ICSSR. But no comprehensive study in terms of their use and value has been conducted. One suspects that their limited scope, time lag, poor arrangement, and quality of information content reduce their utility.

For the sake of better services to Indian social scientists, the libraries are required to understand literature growth and use patterns in the social sciences in India. Social science libraries have started computerized operations, and are making vigorous attempts to have digitized collections. Libraries should first realise that in the social sciences, quality and relevance of content is more important than manner of delivery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dabas, K.C., & Singh, S. (2001) Information management in University libraries in electronic environment *in* Perthan, S. & Jeevan, V.K.J. (Eds.) *Information management in e-libraries*, 365–380.

Ghosh, P.S. (2000) Accreditation of social science institutes: A preliminary note. *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 14, 3729–3732.

Ghosh, P.S. (2001) ICSSR and social science research. *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 17, 528–529.

Goswami, P.R. (2001) Statistical databases in India: Towards a better dissemination. *International Information and Library Review*, **33**, 181–196.

http://www.icssr.org

Indian Council of Social Science Research. Annual Report.

Jain, P.K. (2001) Building capacities—Resource sharing in India: A case study of the Institute of Economic Growth Library. *INSPEL*, **35** (1), 37–41.

Mehra, A.K. (2000) ICSSR and social sciences in India. *Mainstream*, **38** (32), 17–23.

Naik, J.P. (1971) *Role, responsibilities, functions, programmes and organization of the ICSSR: A policy statement and a special report*. New Delhi: ICSSR, 109pp.

Sharma, S. (1992) Social science research in india: A review. *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 5–12, pp. 2642–2646.

Singh, Y. (1970) Indian Council of Social Science Research: Its promise and dilemmas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 18, 671–676.

Vaidyanathan, A. (2001) Social science research in India: Some emerging issues. *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 13, 112–114.