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Libraries in India:
Great Potential and Options for the Future

India's knowledge society is beset by inequalities, contradictions, and poverty (Liang, 2005). Despite a roaring economy, the Indian state has been unable to provide adequate social services to marginalized groups throughout the country (Madon & Sahay, 2002). In particular, India's public library system is in a state of disrepair and unable to provide meaningful library services to disadvantaged groups (Bhattacharjee, 2002). However, revitalized libraries have potential to bring about positive change, (NKC, 2007), complement the formal education system, and improve literacy and reading skills (Knuth, 1994). One option for Indian library revitalization is to look towards libraries created by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as those created by the Hippocampus Reading Foundation (HRF), an NGO based in Bangalore (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). NGO libraries may be viable alternatives to the state's neglected library system and can be more effective in providing library services to the disadvantaged. While the public library system in India has failed to provide for marginalized groups of the population, revitalized libraries have the potential to promote literacy, reading, and educational change.

This research paper will incorporate key themes from a recent three month internship I completed with Hippocampus Reading Foundation in Bangalore and will be supplemented by personal reflections, observations, and experiences from my time in India. As a Master of

Library and Information Science student from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, I was privileged to work with HRF as a librarian intern on several projects and to assist HRF in its mission to set up successful school libraries and encourage disadvantaged children to develop a love of reading (HRF, 2013).

Research Setting: Bangalore, Karnataka

With India's booming economy, growth, and wealth, the country stands on the verge of economic and social prosperity (Pyati, 2009). As hundreds of millions of Indians enter the ranks of the wealthy educated middle class, global industries have sprung up throughout the country. Bangalore, Karnataka, an enormous city in southern India and the location of my internship with the HRF, has emerged as India's paramount information city (Liang, 2005). Home to information industries, Bangalore has been identified and romantically mythologized as India's Silicon Valley. Symbolically, Bangalore represents the ideal vision and accomplishment of India's knowledge society (Pyati and Kamal, 2012).

Despite the advances of India's knowledge society, the country is beset by enormous challenges, inequalities, and contradictions (Ghosh, 2004). Cities across the developing world, like Bangalore, aggressively participating in the global information economy are often beset by enormous poverty levels (Madon & Sahay, 2002). Bangalore's development as a global information city has, in part, prompted a massive migration of rural poor from the countryside to Bangalore's urban slums. In the face of this migration, the state has been unable to provide adequate social services or public infrastructure to the disadvantaged and marginalized (Pyati, 2009). Currently, in Bangalore there are over 700 slums containing over 40% of the city's population (Liang, 2005). The wealth being generated by India's booming knowledge economy

has not been equitably distributed and has not benefited Bangalore's poor (Pyati, 2009). As such, India is "a country of one billion people where millions of Indians are connected to the internet but millions more are not yet even connected to electricity," (Ghosh, 2004).

Kempson's argument, in her article "Information for Self-Reliance and Self-Determination: The Role of Community Information Services," allows us to draw the conclusion that, in addition to the inequitable distribution of wealth, access to information is also not equitably distributed in developing cities such as Bangalore (Kempson, 1986). Typical avenues developed to provide information access to the population have often been designed to meet the information needs of the wealthy and educated. Disadvantaged groups, like those living in Bangalore's slums, largely lack access to the information require to further educate themselves.

In "The Other Information City," Liang explores the sometimes tenuous intersection of Bangalore's expanding middle class and expanding population of urban poor (Liang, 2005). As the middle classes wealth has grown, so has the middle classes desire for apartments and malls. Poor neighbourhoods and other neglected areas of the city, which Bangalore's poor inhabit are frequently demolished to make room for the consumptive desires of the middle class. Little thought or concern is granted to these poor inhabitants. In January 2013, a Bangalore development company demolished an enormous slum in the Ejipura district of the city, home to over 1,500 families and hundreds of permanent structures, to make way for a mall and apartment complex (The Hindu, 2013). Ejipura residents, who were legally paying rent to live in the area, awoke to the sound of bulldozers and were given almost no advance warning to collect their belongings and evacuate. They were left with nowhere to go, and were given no option to redress the destruction of their homes. As a relief volunteer at Ejipura following the

destruction, I witnessed firsthand the conflict, and inequality that sometimes characterizes life in India's Silicon Valley. As bulldozers demolished the remaining dwellings and homes, workers quickly erected tall metal fences around the former Ejipura slum, in an apparent effort to hide the visible destruction from public view.

While some suggest the middle class are not always aware of the plight of the urban poor (Pyati, 2009), my experiences working with educated middle class volunteers at Ejipura suggest they are well aware of the grim situation of Bangalore's poor. These relief volunteers were sincerely committed to making a positive difference in the lives of Ejipura evictees when no one else in Bangalore was willing to. This experience exposed me to the active civil society and grass roots activism that permeates India and stands as a passionate counterpoint to the injustice that led to Ejipura's destruction.

National Knowledge Commission

To address and reduce the inequalities and contradictions present in Indian society and in order to ensure India attains the full benefits of its growing knowledge economy, a National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was created in 2005, (Pyati, 2009). The NKC's goal is to act as "a high-level advisory body to the Prime Minister of India," (NKC, 2007), and to successfully "transform India into a vibrant knowledge-based society," (NKC, 2007), by ensuring all members of Indian society have equitable access to information (NKC, 2007). The NKC asserts this goal underpins India's national progress and will ensure the Indian economy remains competitive in the global information age. Composed of various working groups, the NKC attempted to accomplish this goal by investigating improvement in India's public infrastructure.

Most importantly, the NKC linked public libraries to the successful development of India's knowledge economy, (Pyati, 2009), and identified public libraries "as an extremely important element of the foundation of a knowledge economy," (NKC, 2007). Public libraries have the potential to fulfill a vital NKC goal by making "access to knowledge a reality for all," (NKC, 2007). The NKC explained, "libraries have a recognized social function in making knowledge publicly available to all. They serve as local centres of information and learning, and are local gateways to national and global knowledge," (NKC, 2007).

Given the level of vital significance the NKC has attached to public libraries, this paper will briefly present a history of Indian library development and evaluate the state of India's current public library system.

Indian Library Development - Context and a Select History

Since antiquity, libraries have had a rich, vibrant, and eventful history in the Indian subcontinent (Wani, 2008). While there is evidence of libraries existing as early as the 6th century, Muslim and Mughal rulers created impressive libraries for their kingdoms in the 13th century. Developed via patronage, library admission was limited to the wealthy elite. Modern library development has traditionally been traced by historians to the British period of Indian history (Bhattacharjee, 2002). In 1808, the Bombay city government proposed to register a public library and by mid-century, public libraries, based on the British library model and funded largely by Europeans, existed in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras (Wani, 2008). During the 1930's, major efforts were made to bring libraries to rural India and by the end of the decade; the state had successfully set up thousands of village libraries in remote locations (Bchattacharjee, 2002). Shortly after India's independence in 1947, library growth expanded

significantly with the passage of the Madras Public Library Act in 1948, "the first concerted effort in India to institutionalise, structure, otherwise, co-ordinate and organize library services," (Bhattacharjee, 2002). Two libraries of special interest built after independence includes the National Public Library and the Delhi Public Library (Wani, 2008). Finally in 1972 the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation was formed by the government to act as the primary agency to promote library development and to work with individual state library systems across India.

Despite this lengthy history of library development and the passionate efforts of Indian library scientists, such as the well-known Ranganathan, India's public library system has failed to provide meaningful services to marginalized segments of the population (Pyati, 2009). It is necessary to acknowledge library development in India has faced unique challenges such as high illiteracy, diverse languages, varied cultures, and remote rural areas. It is generally accepted that the library system is gravely lacking when compared to libraries in developed nations (Wani, 2008).

Indian Libraries - Current State

The Indian public library system is currently considered being in a state of disrepair and neglect (Ghosh, 2004). It is not viewed as providing meaningful services to marginalized groups such as the poor, children, elderly, or rural areas (Bchattacharjee, 2002). However, it is difficult to determine the current status of the library system as no consolidated library system exists in the country (Wani, 2008). Library legislation is an individual state responsibility and only 11 of these states have passed library acts (Ghosh, 2004). This lack of legislation has resulted in uneven library development across India (Bhattacharjee, 2002). While some cities, like

Bangalore, have under developed urban library systems, libraries in rural areas are often in a dismal state (Pyati, 2009). Kalpana Dasgupta, director of the Central Secretariat Library in New Delhi, explains that libraries in India can be sorted into six broad types: national, academic, school, public, government, and special (Dasgupta, 2000). Given the individual state responsibility for library development and a lack of statistics and data regarding library development, it is not possible to sketch a single picture of the library system (Ghosh, 2004). This, as Ghosh suggests, "forces us to guess about the state of a vast number of public libraries..." (Ghosh, 2004). Ghosh states, "...it is not hard to imagine the difficulties [libraries] face in facilitating information and library support to the mass of over a billion population spread over 32 lakh square kilometres, with a spectrum of literacy, intelligence, money, cultural, and caste values," (Ghosh, 2004). India's sheer diversity of language, culture, geography, and people has posed a serious challenge for successful library development.

Despite the vital importance the NKC has attached to libraries, few attempts have been made to seriously evaluate libraries in India (Heitzman & Asundi, 2000). In 2000, Heitzman and Asundi conducted a landmark evaluation of the public library system in Karnataka, a southern state. Their study evaluated the effectiveness of the Karnataka library system, gathered information about the characteristics of library users, and their findings allow us to come to an important conclusion about the current state of libraries in the country. Conducting gender, occupation, and income profiles of Karnataka library users, Heitzman and Asundi discovered the typical Karnataka library user is male, middle class, and well educated. Few children, elderly, disadvantaged, or rural people make use of Karnataka libraries. This data suggests a key problem with this library system is it only meets the information needs of a "narrow social

stratum," (Pyati & Kamal, 2012), and is failing to serve marginalized members of Indian society (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). Knuth, in "Libraries, Literacy and Development," asserts India is not alone in failing to provide successful library services (Knuth, 1994). Many library systems across the developing world are experiencing similar challenges. The major problem with libraries in the developing world, Knuth explains, "is that they fail to meet the needs of the majority - the children, the poor, and the rural populations....Children are denied access to books due to the scarcity of children's sections in public libraries....Few libraries exist in rural areas....[and] the poor rarely use existing [library] facilities...," (Knuth, 1994).

Other issues affect the state of Indian libraries. This includes lack of resources, funds, infrastructure and trained librarians (Bhattacharjee, 2002). According to IFLA standards, there are far fewer libraries in India than there should be based on the size and the population (Ghosh, 2004). Personal observations I have made through trips to state libraries in Bangalore suggest many libraries function almost exclusively as reading rooms. Despite these problems, libraries do have enormous potential as the NKC has clearly indicated (NKC, 2007).

The Potential of Libraries in India - Educational Change

Libraries hold great potential to bring about positive change (NKC, 2007). As the NKC has identified, libraries are a crucial component of the Indian knowledge society. They underpin India's national progress, have the potential to address inequalities, and can make information accessible to marginalized segments of Indian society. As Pyati has explored, libraries have "a potential role to play in establishing a more democratic, equitable, and inclusive foundation for an emerging information [society]..." (Pyati & Karmal, 2012). Given the current state of the library system, this potential is currently untapped. During this three

month library internship with HRF, I had opportunity to spend time in schools and libraries, interact with teachers and school librarians, read with school children, and conduct a research project assessing children's reading levels. Given my unique experience with the Indian school system, the following section of the paper will specifically explore the potential of libraries to compliment the Indian education system and promote literacy among children (Knuth, 1994).

Libraries in the developing world are well placed to support formal education systems (Knuth, 1994). In India, libraries have potential to supplement the education system, address gaps in school curriculum's, encourage creativity and critical thinking, and bring about educational change (Pyati & Kamal, 2012).

India's education system has been described as "formal, staid, failing to engage the creativity of children or create opportunities for interactive learning," (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). The focus of the system is almost exclusively on exam preparation and academic success (Knuth, 2004). Students are placed under pressure to do well on state board exams which "determine chances for advanced schooling and thus the student's economic future," (Knuth, 1994). Given this, a significant portion of the school year is devoted to exam preparation (Knuth, 1994). Teachers are often "forced to teach from textbooks and adhere to a syllabus designed to prepare students for examinations," (Knuth, 1994). This takes the form of rote learning and memorization (Knuth, 1994). Knuth explains, education systems focused primarily on exam preparation are common throughout the developing world. Personal observations, time spent in schools, and conversations with teachers, school administrators, and Hippocampus staff have enabled me to reach many of the same conclusions as Knuth.

However, libraries are well positioned to complement the formal, exam based, education system by engaging children in critical and creative ways (Knuth, 2004). Promoting activity based learning, interactive learning, and holistic well-being through stories, arts, crafts, drama and games, libraries can engage children in ways not done through the formal school system (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). As such, Knuth argues libraries can act as agents of educational change by moving educational thinking, "away from textbook learning to active and lifelong learning models," (Knuth, 2004).

Observing a library reading period in a low-income private school in an industrial neighbourhood near Yeshwanthpur, Banagalore, I witnessed the potential of the library to encourage children to think critically and creatively. During the reading period, children were asked to present a summary of the story and explain why they enjoyed that story. The children struggled to understand what it meant to summarize something in their own words. The school librarian clarified that, in the classroom, children were never asked to put concepts in their own words, to think about concepts critically, or to express themselves creatively. Rather, they were simply required to recite facts and prepare for exams. When asked whether they enjoyed a story, children also struggled to express themselves. Again, the librarian explained children were never asked how they felt and were never given any emotional outlet to express themselves in the classroom.

The experience in Yeshwanthpur stands among the most powerful of my experiences in India and vividly illustrates the potential of the library to promote educational change. Numerous challenges must be overcome before this potential can be realized (Knuth, 1994).

Many schools do not have libraries, there is a lack of trained school librarians and funds, and some school administrators view the library as an unnecessary luxury.

The Potential of Libraries in India - Importance of Reading

In addition to positive educational change, libraries hold potential to improve literacy, promote reading for pleasure, nurture a love of reading among children, and increase children's academic performance (Hippocampus, 2013).

Libraries have amazing potential to increase children's academic performance and to enable them to become more effective learners in the classroom (PISA, 2011). PISA, an educational policy group created by the OECD, explains children who read for pleasure, "are more likely than other students to be effective learners and to perform well at school," (PISA, 2011). Linking reading for enjoyment to improved academic performance, PISA determined children who read for pleasure will typically perform one and a half years ahead of children who do not (PISA, 2011). PISA research also demonstrates a link between childhood reading and reading practices as an adult. "Proficiency in reading is crucial for [adults] to make sense of the world they live in and to continue learning throughout their lives," (PISA, 2011). Knuth supports PISA's position explaining that literate adults are more likely to be successful functional members of society and more likely to interact and participate in the world around them (Knuth, 1994). Libraries have potential, "to instill a sense of pleasure in reading by providing reading materials that [children] find interesting and relevant," (PISA, 2011). However, in the context of the formal education system, libraries will need to overcome a number of challenges, including poor school library infrastructure, declining reading levels, and a lack of reading culture if they are to fully realize such potential (Knuth, 1994).

School library infrastructure is in an alarming state (Knuth, 1994). Numerous schools do not have a library while some have libraries that are rarely used. Other school libraries feature an extremely poor selection of children's reading material. This area of school libraries has been described as particularly, "neglected and [needing] immediate and continuous attention," (Dasgupta, 2000). The state of school library infrastructure must be addressed immediately if libraries are to successfully promote reading among children (Knuth, 1994).

ASER, a well known and reputed Indian organization that conducts evaluations of rural schools, asserts children's reading levels are a cause for dire concern and in shocking decline in most states (ASER, 2012). ASER evaluations suggest over 50% of children in class five only read at a class two level while over 60% of children in class three are unable to read a class one text book. While reading levels are a cause for concern in India, a major research project I participated in during my internship with the HRF allowed me to evaluate children's reading levels firsthand and does not support the alarmist concerns raised in ASER's 2012 report. The research project involved travelling to eleven schools throughout rural and urban Karnataka (in Bangalore, Mandya, and Davengere) and assessing the reading levels of primary school children. In each grade level, from standard one to seven, five children were randomly selected and asked to read story books. Children were assessed on their ability to decode the words and asked a series of comprehension questions to ensure they successfully understood the story. The randomly selected children were provided with progressively challenging stories and their reading level was then determined. Finally, reading level data was compiled, assessed, and reported to Hippocampus. While the children's reading levels I assessed were lower than Hippocampus would ideally like to see, declining reading levels were nowhere near as dire or

extreme as the ASER 2012 reports suggests. The reading level data collected during this HRF

research project is confidential, and I am unable to compare it to the reading level data

presented in the ASER 2012. Regardless, children's reading levels trends are a key concern

libraries must continuously monitor especially in rural areas if libraries are to encourage reading

literacy (Hippocampus, 2013).

A considerable challenge libraries must overcome if they are to successfully instill a

reading habit among children is the lack of a reading culture in India (Pyati & Kamal. 2012).

With time spent in Indian schools, through conversations with Hippocampus staff and teachers,

and through a literature review of appropriate research, I discovered reading for enjoyment is a

foreign concept not valued or viewed as worthwhile (Bhattacharjee, 2002). Intensive exam

preparation and text book learning often dominate the curriculum in developing countries like

India (Knuth, 1994). Reading for pleasure is not viewed as an activity that will help students

succeed on exams; hence it is viewed as an unnecessary detriment that would take away from

exam preparation time (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). Among illiterate rural populations, reading for

pleasure is not valued as it is not associated with productive employment (Bhattacharjee,

2002). In the life of India's villages, all family members including young children, must be

employed to earn income for the family.   Reading is not connected to employment or income;

therefore it is not viewed as worthwhile.

Libraries face a particular challenge in encouraging, and carefully nurturing, first

generation learners to read for pleasure (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). At the Shishu Mandir School in

Bangalore, many children were first generation learners and the first members of their families

to attend formal education. As the children's parents were illiterate, the children had never

been exposed to books, reading, or literacy prior to attending Shishu Mandir. "Given this [situation], it is vital to nurture the children's sense of comfort and ownership over books, (Pyati & Kamal, 2012).

A marketing project I participated in during the HRF internship allowed me to observe and experience many of these challenges firsthand. Hippocampus is interested in expanding and bringing its library and reading services to a greater number of schools (Hippocampus, 2013). Along with other Hippocampus employees, I was tasked with creating a marketing presentation that could be presented to school administrators to convince them of the value of Hippocampus, library services and the importance of reading. A difficult endeavor, several trips were made to villages and low-income schools in order to learn more about the challenges HRF faced in successfully marketing libraries and reading. To overcome these challenges and develop an effective marketing strategy, it was necessary, and ultimately critical, to draw an explicit link between reading for enjoyment, libraries, and improved academic performance in the same manner PISA has done (PISA, 2011).

Enabling Libraries to Realize their Full Potential - Options for the Future

While libraries hold a great deal of potential, particularly to complement the formal education system, improve literacy, and inspire children to read for enjoyment, this potential is unrealized given the current state of the library system and the range of challenges that confront library development in India (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). The question raised, is what can be done to enable libraries in India to realize their full potential and to overcome the challenges facing successful library development.

Various solutions have been discussed by this question. The NKC has proposed a public-private partnership model in order to rejuvenate libraries in India (NKC, 2007), Knuth has suggested that a combined library concept might effectively provide library services to the developing world (Knuth, 1994), while others have explored the possibility of transforming libraries into community information centres (Pyati, 2010). Another potential solution to this question is to look towards libraries created by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Pyati & Kamal, 2012).

The Indian government has been unable to provide adequate social services, like public library services, to marginalized groups (Madon & Sahay 2002). Given the state's inability to provide basic social services along with increasing corruption, the population has lost faith in the state (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). This has encouraged the growth of NGOs (Madon & Sahay, 2002). NGOs have begun to step in and provide the basic social services the state has failed to provide and to address and to respond to the needs of marginalized groups. While most NGOs experience alarming issues of sustainability and accountability (Pyati & Kamal, 2012), "...NGOs are often effective because they operate outside the framework of the bureaucratic state apparatus and they are not aligned with commercial interests or political parties," (Madon & Sahay, 2002). However, long term sustainability is a major issue hampering Indian NGOs. This issue must be addressed immediately if NGOs are to provide continuing and successful services on a long-term basis.

NGOs, like the HRF in Bangalore, have stepped in and successfully provided some effective library services to marginalized groups that the current Indian library system has been unable serve (Pyati & Kamal, 2012).

NGO Libraries- The Hippocampus Reading Foundation

The HRF, an organization I have worked with as a library intern over the past three months, is a non-profit charity and non-governmental organization that was founded in 2003 in Bangalore, India (HRF, 2013). HRF's mission is to help children from disadvantaged communities develop a love for reading from a young age, bring books to children in government and low-income private schools, make up for serious gaps in the formal education system, and to increase children's language understanding and comprehension.

HRF works to accomplish this mission by setting up successful school libraries (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). HRF creates partnerships with government schools and low-income private schools across Karnataka. In the HRF partnership model, HRF acts as an expert library consultant and provides an individual partner school with the tools required to create a successful library. This includes training seminars, continuous support, schools visits, activities and curriculum support, and assessment support. Under this model, the individual school holds responsibility to make use of HRF support to build their own library. Working directly with individual schools in this manner may enable HRF to be more responsive to a school's library needs than the current neglected public library system (Pyati & Kamal, 2012).

HRF support is based on a triple pronged approach: books, training, and curriculum (Hippocampus, 2013). Through an understanding of the children's book market in India and relationships with publishers, HRF is able to supply schools with a rotating and renewable collection of books that children will be interested in reading. With its training philosophy of continuous engagement, HRF comprehensively trains teachers or staff members from a partner school to set up and run a successful library based on HRF principles. HRF requires a partner

school to fully integrate the library into the school curriculum with each class having at least one scheduled library period a week. HRF has designed hundreds of reading, comprehension, and creative vibrancy activities that can be used during a scheduled library period to nurture a child's love of reading.

The majority of HRF's success can be attributed to the GROW BY Reading Program, a proprietary book leveling methodology (HRF, 2013). The program is defined by six colour levels, green, red, orange, white, blue, and yellow, which correspond to the difficulty of a book. Books in the library are assigned a colour based on the number of sentences on each page. Green books, the least difficult, may include one or two sentences per page while yellow books, the most difficult, may be lengthy chapter books. Children are assigned a colour based on their reading level and their ability to comprehend a particular book in the GROW BY program. If a child can read and comprehend books at the red level, then their reading level is considered red. Prior to progressing to the orange level, a child must successfully read a number of orange level books and complete comprehension activities to ensure they understand orange books.

Exposing children to books carefully selected and appropriate for their age and reading level, children will be nurtured and encouraged to continue reading for enjoyment rather than becoming discouraged as a result of difficult books (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). As a result, HRF efforts to promote reading for pleasure may help children become more effective learners as the PISA reports suggest (PISA, 2011). By exposing children to increasingly challenging books, reading, language, and comprehension levels can be systematically increased over a period of time (Hippocampus Marketing Presentation, 2013).

HRF library services are not offered for free and schools that wish to partner with HRF must pay a small fee (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). Through personal conversations with HRF employees, I discovered services were initially offered for free. However, employees found free services were not valued. They suggested free services in India were associated with the lack of faith associated with the state and failed public infrastructure. As a consequence, HRF began to charge for services. Fees charged are small and dependent upon how much a school can afford. While HRF is a non-profit charity, it is partnered with a for-profit private library system called the Hippocampus Children's Experience Centre that caters to middle and upper class children (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). HRF also appears to be informally partnered with a for-profit social enterprise called Hippocampus Learning Centre that operates a chain of pre-school and kindergarten centres.

HRF has been fairly successful in setting up functional school libraries and in accomplishing its mission to inspire disadvantaged children to develop a love reading. Currently, HRF has established over 200 functioning school libraries in Bangalore through collaboration with partner schools (HRF, 2013). Comprehensive reading level data and comprehension based activities from these schools demonstrates GROW BY Reading has increased children's language comprehension and reading abilities. HRF's efforts reveal NGO created libraries can be successful in providing effective library services to disadvantaged groups and may be potential alternatives to the state's neglected public library system. Serious questions regarding the long term sustainability of NGOs ability to provide successful services to marginalized groups still exist. These questions must be addressed immediately.

Conclusions

India's information society is challenged by enormous inequalities and poverty regarding wealth and access to information (Liang, 2005). Along with other basic services, the Indian state has been unable to provide meaningful library services to the large population of marginalized individuals in India (Madon & Sahay, 2002). While the public library system is in a poor condition, library revitalization holds potential to complement the education system and improve literacy (Bhattacharjee, 2002). One solution is to explore the libraries created by NGOs, such as the HRF, which I have worked with over the past three months (Pyati & Kamal, 2012). While the public library system in India has failed to provide for marginalized groups of the population, revitalized libraries have the potential to promote literacy, reading, and educational change.

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