

Report of the Library Committee 1975-76

First Report

(Presented to the Assembly on the 23rd April, 1976)



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**West Bengal Legislative Assembly Secretariat
1976**

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COMPOSITION OF THE LIBRARY COMMITTEE, 1975-76

Chairman

Shri Harasankar Bhattacharyya

Members

Shri Asamanja De

Shri Puranjoy Pramanik

Shri Sankar Das Paul

Shri Bhawani Prosad Sinha Roy

Shri Kashinath Misra

Shri Satya Ghosal

Secretariat

Shri D. N. Banerjee, *Secretary.*

Shri S. Maitra, *Deputy Secretary.*

Shri P. K. Maulick, *Registrar.*

Shri G. Banerjee, *Section Officer.*

Shri A. K. Chakrabarti, *Librarian.*

Shrimati Susmriti Roy, *Assistant.*

Shri B. Dutta, *Assistant.*

Shri T. K. Banerjee, *Assistant.*

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Library Committee, having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on its behalf present this the First Report of the Committee.

2. The Committee is grateful to the Hon'ble Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly who, in spite of his various preoccupations, was kind enough to inaugurate the first meeting of the Committee and advise the Committee whenever the Committee was in need of the same. A summary of the speech delivered by the Hon'ble Speaker at the inaugural meeting of the Committee will be found in Appendix I to this Report.

3. The Committee wishes to express its thanks to the officials of the Secretariat of the Committee for their assistance and wholehearted co-operation.

HARASANKAR BHATTACHARYYA,
Chairman,
Library Committee.

CALCUTTA:
The 22nd April, 1976.

REPORT

Ever since the Committee was constituted in May last, it had been its primary task to look into the affairs of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Library. The Committee was keen to know the present system of cataloguing of books and journals in the Library, the strength of staff of the Library, and the annual allotment of fund for the Library.

2. With a view to making a comparative assessment of the Library of our Legislature, the Committee visited the Calcutta University Library, the Jadavpur University Library, and the National Library at Belvedere, Calcutta.

3. The Committee feels that the West Bengal Legislature Library is but a poor specimen of a modern Library. It lacks in many modern equipments which a modern Library should be possessed with.

4. The foremost of the major obstacles that stand in the way of the expansion of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Library is the inadequate fund. There is also no technical hand at present in the Library. The existing space of the Library is also too inadequate to meet its requirement.

5. The Committee discussed all these problems in detail and decided to meet the Hon'ble Chief Minister to hold a discussion with him in the matter. Because, however, of the urgent pre-occupations of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the meeting could not materialize. Hence the Committee submitted a written Memorandum to the Hon'ble Chief Minister. A copy of the said Memorandum will be found in Appendix II to the Report.

Recommendations of the Committee

The Committee recommends that—

- (1) there should be a trained Librarian not below the rank of the Librarian of the West Bengal Secretariat at Writers' Buildings who should also act as the Research Officer in the Library and also one Deputy Librarian and one Assistant Librarian should be provided for the Library. Besides two more Record Suppliers one Duftry and four more Assistants are required in the Library to improve its functioning;
- (2) the fund for the Library should be increased to at least Rs. 1,50,000 per annum of which no less than Rs. 1 lakh should be kept apart only for the purchase of books and journals;
- (3) more space should be provided to the Library so that the existing acute congestion is removed; and
- (4) there should be a Research Division and also a Reference Division so that the Library can effectively cater to the needs of the members of the House.

CONCLUSION

The Committee observes that a good Library is a must for any parliamentary institution. The standard of deliberations in the House much depends on how a Legislature Library functions. In the process of law-making also library plays a vital role. An endeavour should, therefore, be made to make the West Bengal Legislature Library a living organism.

HARASANKAR BHATTACHARYYA,
Chairman,
Library Committee.

CALCUTTA:
The 22nd April, 1976.

D. N. BANERJEE,
Secretary,
West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

CALCUTTA:
The 22nd April, 1976.

APPENDIX I

Summary of the address by the Hon'ble Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly to the members of the Library Committee on the 19th June, 1975.

Library is an inseparable part of a Parliamentary institution. In fact, it is the most vital part without which a Parliamentary institution cannot function. It has a definite purpose to serve and an unenviable role to play in Parliamentary affairs, especially in the deliberations of the House and in the process of the law-making.

The importance of Legislature Library can somewhat be gauged by the fact that in the House of Lords, the Librarian is regarded as one of the officers of the Lords and "is appointed by the House on the recommendation of the House of Lords' offices Committee. He is responsible for the maintenance and growth of a library of printed books for the use of the House in its legislative and judicial capacities".

So far as the House of Commons is concerned, "Since 1st August, 1967, the Library has been a separate Department of the House. The Librarian is appointed by the Speaker". He is also an officer of the Commons. The "other staff in the Department are appointed by the Librarian. Other officers include the Deputy Librarian and two Assistant Librarians in charge of the Parliamentary and Research Divisions respectively. Candidates for Library clerkships are recruited through the Civil Service Commission, as nearly as possible, in accordance with the rules governing the recruitment of Assistant Keepers of the British Museum, but with modifications to meet specialized requirements of the House of Commons".

The Librarian of the House of Commons "directs the Commons' Library in close consultations, as regards policy matters, with the Library Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services)".

The two Divisions of the Department of the Library of the House of Commons render specialized services.

The Parliamentary Division "is responsible for the intake, processing and arrangement of the main collections of books, periodicals, etc., for the preservation and indexing of all British Parliamentary Papers and of many other official publications, domestic and foreign; and for the maintenance of a number of special indexes and press cuttings services. Staff also answer enquiries (other than procedural) from Members not involving lengthy or specialized research."

The Research Division "is organized in four sections—Economic Affairs, Home and Parliamentary Affairs, Scientific Affairs and Statistics. Staff perform research for individual Members, assist certain Select Committees and their Clerks, and compile annotated bibliographies (reference sheets) and factual background papers on topics of current concern to Parliament."

It will be interesting to note that the Speaker of the House of Commons has ruled that "the Library should make available to Members all documents placed in the Library which relate to their work in the House, including those marked confidential".

In the matter of expert assistance and consultation, both Houses of the British Parliament have, in the past, been given "unusual powers to secure assistance when it appeared necessary for them to consider and evaluate complex technical or professional evidence". Following this practice, "since 1966-67 a Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) has had the assistance of the Librarian". This certainly amounts to the recognition of the valuable services that an expert Librarian may render to a Parliamentary Committee.

In the Parliament of India, the Parliament Library serves both the Houses. The Library Committee is there to aid and advise the Speaker in the matters concerning the Library including selection of books, framing of rules, future planning, etc. This Committee consists of the Deputy Speaker and five members from Lok Sabha nominated by the Speaker and three members from Rajya Sabha nominated by the Chairman of Rajya Sabha. The Deputy Speaker is the ex officio Chairman of the Committee. The functions of the Committee are the same as those of your Committee. But there is one difference. The Parliamentary Committee appoints a Sub-Committee to which are generally referred recommendations or suggestions regarding addition of books to the Parliament Library and other relative matters concerning the Library.

The Parliamentary Committee serves, so to say, as a connecting link between the members of Parliament and Library. It helps members in the use of the materials available in the Library and also in availing of the services of the Library staff. It invites suggestions from the members for the all-round development of the Library including its Reference Service.

Compared to this the Assembly Library is definitely lagging behind in many respects. At present there are no technical personnel in the Library. A major objective of a library is to see that optimum use is made of its collections by its readers who should have as direct an approach to the materials that they need as possible. This requires the imposition upon the books and other materials of a library one or more forms of subject control. One such form is classification. It requires the intense efforts of specialists in librarianship and in subject classification. Librarians all over the world have generally found it advantageous to follow one of the already existing book classification systems, the best known of which is the Decimal Classification of Dewey. It is the oldest and most widely used. The system is highly technical and specialized and requires the full-time occupation of an expert in Library-science.

The Assembly Library has no Research Division and no Reference Division. One of the objectives of Research Division should be to acquire, organize and preserve all the materials falling within its scope. It has to keep itself well-informed of the progress of the various sciences with which it is concerned. It must be well-equipped to offer to the scholars unexplored materials from which they could develop new facts and fresh surmises.

Referencing must also be up-to-date and to the point. There should not be any scope for groping in the dark. No library can function well unless its Reference Division is well-arranged and free from technical defects.

And, as to Documentation, it 'is a term brought into use within the last 30 years or so, to denote the old idea "Bibliography". This verbal change has been made to indicate a shift in emphasis from macro thought and macro document to micro thought and micro document, from thought of the past to

current nascent thought, and from service to the generalist to service to the specialist seeking data, correlation of data, facts, knowledge, and modes of developing knowledge within a severely restricted region of the universe of knowledge in which he is working and to which he aims to contribute new thought. It may be stated that, generally speaking, macro thought is embodied in a document of its own, forming a separate physical entity such as a book or a whole volume of a periodical. Micro thought, on the other hand, is embodied in a document forming a part of a host macro document. It may be an article in a periodical, or a chapter or a section of a book or a reprint of any of these, in a pamphlet of equivalent size and of small extension in idea. It may also be stated that macro thought is of great extension and slight intension; whereas micro thought is of deep intension and narrow extension.'

It will now be appreciated that much remains to be done in the Assembly Library. Above all, the fund for the Library is too inadequate to meet the growing demand. Unless the fund is increased commensurate with the increase in the demand, all talks for the development of the Library will be a far cry.

APPENDIX II

Copy of the Memorandum, dated the 6th October, 1975, addressed by the Library Committee to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, West Bengal

6th October, 1975.

To

The Hon'ble Chief Minister,
West Bengal.

SIR,

We, the members of the Library Committee of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, have the honour to approach you with the following facts for favour of your information and necessary action.

2. On the 19th June, 1975, the Hon'ble Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly delivered the inaugural address at the first meeting of the Library Committee. A summary of his speech is enclosed for favour of your kind perusal.

3. A reading of the enclosed summary of the speech given by the Hon'ble Speaker will no doubt convince you at once that compared to the Library of the House of Commons in England or of the House of the People (Lok Sabha) in India, the Library of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly is far below the standard of a good and effective Library. In our opinion, three prime factors are responsible for this, namely :

- (1) There is no technical hand in the Library ;
- (2) The fund is too inadequate to meet the demand of a Legislature Library ; and
- (3) There is acute shortage of accommodation.

4. Unless these deficiencies are made up immediately, the Library cannot be expected to provide efficiently such service as is needed by the members of the Legislative Assembly.

5. We, therefore, appeal to your goodself to be kind enough to look into the matter personally and take necessary steps for—

- (1) the creation of a post of a Librarian-cum-Research Officer in the Library ;
- (2) the increase of the fund of the Library to Rs. 1,50,000 per annum ;
and

(3) the shifting of the office of the Commission of Inquiry from the Southern Annexe of the "Assembly House" to some other place so as to enable the Assembly Secretariat to shift a portion of the Library from its present position to the Southern Annexe and thus help remove the present acute congestion in the Library.

6. And for this act of kindness we shall remain grateful to you.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

1. Sd. Harasankar Bhattacharjee, Chairman
2. Sd. Puranjoy Pramanik, Member
3. Sd. Sankar Das Paul, Member
4. Sd. Asamanja De, Member
5. Sd. Bhawani Prosad Shigha Roy, Member
6. Member
7. Member

*Library Committee,
West Bengal Legislative Assembly.*