Library Use for All: Inclusion of all by Overcoming Diversities and Implementing Equity

Priyanko Sen[*]

Librarian Sitalkuchi College Dist. Cooch Behar St: West Bengal, India

Email id: sen.priyanko1@gmail.com

Pradipta Ghoshal

M.LIB. Student of R.B.U.

Email: ghoshalpradipta1989@gmail.com, *Corresponding Author

ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
	Purpose: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are three interrelated concepts that play a significant role in the social framework. DEI acknowledges that learners possess varying characteristics, which means that equitable arrangements must be implemented to help them achieve their goals. Libraries should establish specific provisions to ensure each individual's objectives meet the highest possible standard. This paper has addressed several pertinent questions that librarians encounter in their efforts to provide optimal service to users, along with highlighting potential solutions to these challenges **Methodology**: This paper discusses the concepts of diversity, and inclusion and states some guidelines to enhance library use in all conditions for all types of users **Findings:** The study recognized various solutions to the diverse challenges that librarians have addressed at multiple levels, including Inclusive circulation service, Services relating to disability, Human library service, Proxy borrower service, Interlibrary loan service,

Bibliotherapy service, Translation service, Virtual reference service, etc

Prologue:

The library serves as a democratic institution, dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole. It functions as a sanctuary of information, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds receive access to knowledge without discrimination based on caste, creed, or colour. Libraries stand as pillars of knowledge, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by facilitating collaborative learning and safeguarding fundamental rights, fostering a harmonious societal environment. Adhering to these principles is essential for libraries, as they establish a standard for equitable service and quality education for all, irrespective of cultural or ethical backgrounds. As emphasized by IFLA/UNESCO, libraries must embrace multiculturalism, acting as gateways to cultural diversity within the realm of knowledge. By nurturing and supporting every member of society, libraries significantly enhance opportunities for all through DEI initiatives. Libraries and information centers should strive to welcome every individual, ensuring impartial service delivery to all patrons while actively dismantling barriers that may impede societal progress. This commitment to creating a universal learning environment promotes lifelong learning opportunities for everyone, driven by a holistic approach that utilizes DEI tools as the cornerstone of library operations, ensuring that no one is left behind

Research Questions

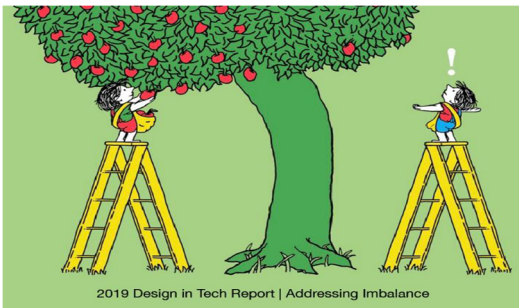The study is based on some of the relevant questions-

- How are diversity, equity, and inclusion related to inclusive education resources?
- What services are to be rendered in reality in nurturing these concepts?
- What ethical role does the library perform in fulfilling the concept of Multiculturalism?
- What challenges are faced by the librarian in providing inclusive library services?

The terms DEI are the three interrelated concepts that can be expressed or defined in various ways by their distinguishing features, such as diversity and inclusion (D&I), diversity and social justice (D&SJ), and diversity, equity, and belonging (DE&B).
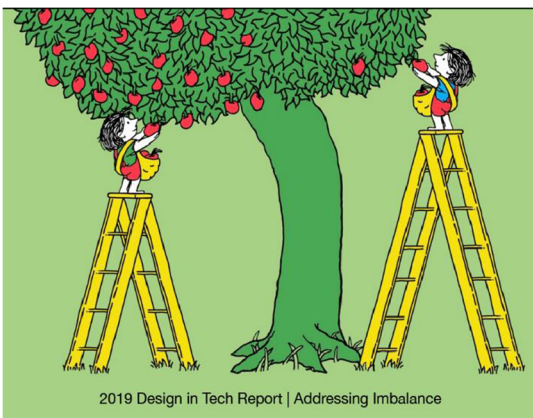
Diversity: The terms diversity and unity in diversity are the two terms that are used in different senses but are interlinked or interconnected with each other. According to the ***Oxford English Dictionary,***

(2021) "diversity" is "the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc." So it may be defined by how people of different characteristics form a group created based on race, caste, language, education, material status, physical appearance, gender, mental ability, and religion that marks differences among various groups of various user communities. Unity in diversity means every person should unite with one another without any variation and form a sense of togetherness or integrity that builds a collaborative work environment among various people in the workplace.

- **Equity**: Equity and equality are two different terms that cannot be synonymous and are used in two different senses. Equity means fairness of treatment among each individual by way of impartiality, i.e., preference should be given on sufficient grounds taking into consideration one's needs and wants. Equality means everyone should be given equal opportunity without considering any particular need he or she lacks. Article 14 of the Indian constitution declares that "the state shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India".

2019 Design in Tech Report | Addressing Imbalance

Equality

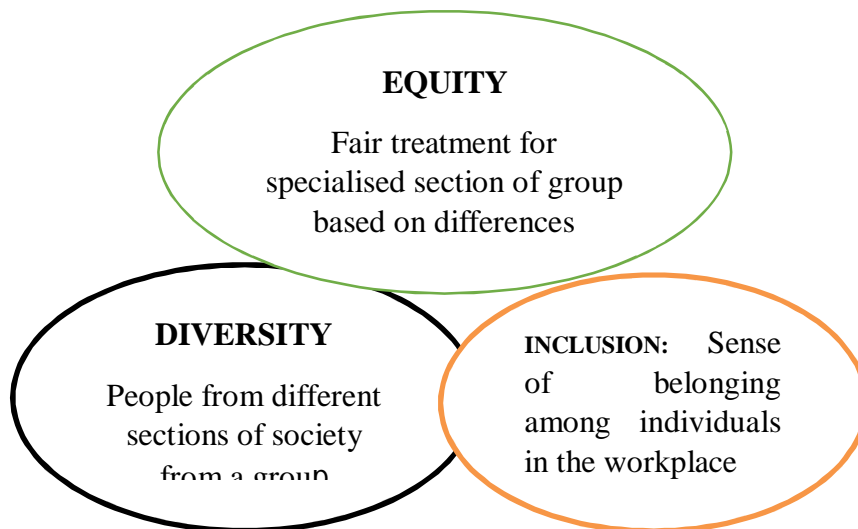2019 Design in Tech Report | Addressing Imbalance

Equity

Figure: 1

Courtesy: "Addressing Imbalance," by Tony Ruth

- **Inclusion:** Inclusion means every individual is welcomed and treated with respect, by giving equal access to opportunity in an organization. "Taking into account differences among individuals and groups when designing something (e.g. policy, program, curriculum, building, shared space) to avoid creating barriers. Inclusion is about people with different identities feeling or being valued and are welcomed within a giving setting**". (Andersen & University of Southern Queensland, 2022**)

- The unity of diversity is how every individual is united, visible, heard, and considered.

  The accompanying image illustrates the interconnected nature of these DEI concepts:

EQUITY

Fair treatment for specialised section of group based on differences

DIVERSITY

People from different sections of society from a group

INCLUSION: Sense of belonging among individuals in the workplace

Figure:2

2 **Core values of librarians concerning DEI**: The four lamps of conduct are:

- Library serves humanity (Diversity)
- Provide special service to the special reader to enhance service (Equity)
- Respect all users by providing equal access to knowledge communicated (Inclusion)
- Develop a workplace for every member of individuals (Belonging)

2.1 **Library serves humanity (Diversity)**: Michael Gorman's first law can be restated in the context of DEI which aims to serve humanity as a whole. The term "humanity" refers to the collective existence of human beings on Earth, each possessing a unique set of characteristics that form a cohesive group.

Internal diversity: It denotes those attributes that a human being processes inborn and may be separable or inseparable

- Gender diversity
- Racial diversity
- Physical ability
- Colour diversity
- Age   diversity
- National Diversity
- Language diversity
- ➢ **External diversity**: It denotes those attributes that a human being does not process at born but help in the identification of a person's identity
- Educational Diversity
- Cultural diversity
- Income Diversity
- Religious diversity

 2.2 Equity in library service: Specialised services are to be provided to the special reader as and when needed. A selection of these specialized services is outlined below**:**

- Inclusive circulation service, reference service, News Paper clipping service, etc
- Human library service
- Proxy borrow service
- Inter-library loan service
- Digital service (Email service, Instant messaging service, services through social media, Virtual reference service)
- Bibliotherapy service
- Translation service

2.3 **Equity in library services to the unreached readers**: According to William A. Kartz, "If the user will not come to the library, the library must go to the users," which is an ethical policy that all library professionals must follow. In a knowledge-based society, information is available from a wide variety of sources, and to provide accessibility to sources of information, libraries should reach a diverse range of users so that every person has an equal opportunity to access the resources, despite the differences among the user community. The library should treat every individual fairly, considering the barriers faced by both the users and the library itself. According to **Bertram (2023)** "Books and other reading matter selected for purchase from the public funds should be chosen because of value and interest to people of the community, and in no case should the selection be influenced by the race or nationality or the political or religious views of the writers"

To ensure equitable service, various types of barriers may be encountered by library personnel, which can be classified into two distinct categories:

- Barriers relating to user interface
- Barriers relating to technical interface

- **Barriers related to the user interface**: These barriers are typically encountered by users when accessing library resources, as well as by library professionals when providing services to the users. They can be further categorized as follows

2.4 Barrier to physical accessibility

Definition: The concept of Physical accessibility barrier refers to a medical condition that poses challenges in fully or easily mobilizing a specific part of the body. Disability is defined in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 as "a person with a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others" **(Parliament, 2016)**

2.4.1 Remedial measures:

The library ought to focus on implementing specific measurements and procedures when offering services such as inclusive circulation, reference assistance, and current awareness

The library should take special measurements as discussed below

Assistive Technology/	Devices	Architecture Design

Documents		
Braille Books	Wheel Chair	Automatic Door Opener
Braille Notetakers	Walking stick	Ramp
Daisy format Readers	Hearing aids	Signage
Reading software (CAST e-readers)	crutches	Escalator
Jaws Pro talking software	Wheelchair climber machine	Spacious corridor
Braille Scanning Software – OBR (Optical Braille Recognition) and others		Accessible toilet
		Handrail and others

Table 1

2.5 **Linguistic Barrier**: Language is commonly understood as a structured medium for conveying information, thoughts, viewpoints, or sentiments between two or more individuals. The presence of such a barrier typically arises when individuals are unable to comprehend the preferred language being spoken or presented in written form.

2.5.1 **Remedial measures**:

- Academic libraries and public libraries should gather and safeguard documents in the precise language that corresponds to the library's location, alongside other languages, based on user needs and demands

- The National Library is responsible for collecting and safeguarding documents in all languages that are spoken in the country where the library is situated. For instance, the National Library of India diligently preserves documents in multiple languages, including those spoken locally in a country.

- It is necessary for the library to provide interlibrary loan services and translation assistance in case the desired document is available in another library

  To achieve this, the library should engage translation experts or partner with various translation centers

2.6 **Locational Barrier**: This barrier typically occurs when users cannot access resources because of the distance from their hometown or workplace

 2.6.1 **Remedial measures**:

- The library must facilitate the use of a proxy borrower service, where a user can designate a specific individual who is a member of the library to borrow documents on their behalf and return them accordingly

- It is essential for Special, Public, academic, and National libraries to establish multiple branches across cities and districts to ensure that users can access resources based on their specific demands and needs, while also adhering to Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science.

- The library needs to improve its digital services to ensure that individuals living in remote areas can effectively access resources and the library aims to fulfill the principle of providing the right document to the right reader at the right time.

2.7 **Collection development Barrier**: This barrier arises when the library is unable to meet the user's needs, demands, and desires. In today's information age, resources come in diverse forms and formats, making it impossible for a single individual to preserve all resources. Therefore, libraries must implement various strategies to ensure equity in providing library services

2.71 **Remedial measures**:

- Collaboration between different libraries and information centers is essential for the enhancement of interlibrary loan services.

- Funds for the library are to be raised to purchase a range of resources that align with user needs and demands

- Collaboration among different institutions and information centers is essential for libraries to acquire documents through donations or exchanges

- Digital reference services are to be provided to various users

2.8 **Economic barrier**: This barrier typically arises when users face financial constraints that prevent them from accessing library resources

 2.8.**1 Remedial measures**

- The library should provide free membership to special users who are unable to access the resources due to financial weakness in their daily life
- The library ought to offer a book bank service for users in need whenever necessary.
- Photocopying services at an affordable rate should also be provided to maintain equity in library services

2.9**: Psychological barrier**: This type of barrier is related to the human body and mind and is related to poor listening, information overload, unhappy emotions, and other factors.

2.9.1 **Remedial measures**:

- The human library and bibliotherapy offer effective solutions for overcoming psychological barriers

 2.10   **Technological barrier**: The inability to reach the resources is caused by either technological limitations or the existence of a digital divide
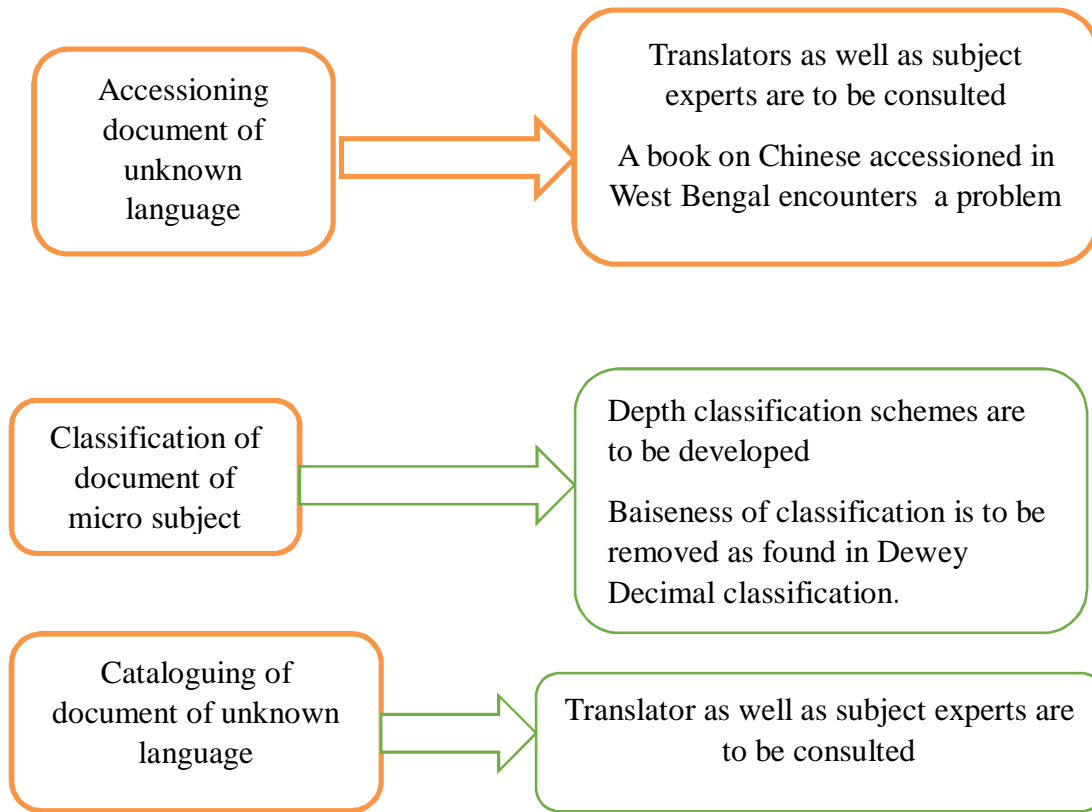
2.10.1: **Remedial measures**

- It is essential to eliminate the digital divide and provide training in using technological devices to unskilled computer illiterate individuals

- To ensure that there is a free flow of information among the different nations by which any information is processed and transferred in different subject domains of knowledge in more than one nation or state

3   **Barriers relating to technical interface**: This particular barrier arises when library staff encounter technical difficulties while carrying out library tasks, leading to decision-making challenges in the moment. The barriers are outlined:

Barries   **Remedies**

| Accessioning document of unknown language | → | Translators as well as subject experts are to be consulted / A book on Chinese accessioned in West Bengal encounters a problem |

| Classification of document of micro subject | → | Depth classification schemes are to be developed / Baiseness of classification is to be removed as found in Dewey Decimal classification. |

| Cataloguing of document of unknown language | → | Translator as well as subject experts are to be consulted |

Figure : 3

4 **IFLA Core actions**: To enhance the library use big libraries should be multicultural. In other words, libraries should content documents for all users having cultural and language diversities. According to IFLA the multicultural library should:

- "Develop culturally diverse and multilingual collections and services, including digital and multimedia resources

- Allocate resources for preservation of cultural expression and heritage, paying particular attention to oral, indigenous and intangible cultural heritage

- Include programmes supporting user education, information literacy skill, newcomer resources, cultural heritage and cross-cultural dialogue as integral part of service

- Provide access to library resources in appropriate languages through information organisation and access system

- Develop marketing and outreach materials in appropriate media and language to attract different groups to the library" (**"IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto," n.d.**)

5 Challenges faced by the Librarian in providing inclusive library service: The challenges faced by the library professionals are enormous. According to Alemno (1995) are as follows

- Lack of skilled manpower to produce the material needed by the handicapped may result in poor production of the materials. This also affects the operation and maintenance of equipment needed for inclusive library service
- Lack of properly trained library personnel. This problem originated from the library schools. The curricula of most library schools are geared towards conventional librarianship. Library staff are therefore often unable to attend to the needs of the blind
- Importation often poses the problem of obtaining materials that do not bear any relation to the culture and background of the students
- Fund is yet another problem militating against effective library service to the handicapped. The material and equipment needed for efficient services to the handicapped are very expensive to procure

6 **Conclusion:** The library's mission is to serve humanity by offering services to all users at minimal cost while ensuring the highest quality. A library becomes a lifelong companion when its policies are effectively implemented for all community members, thereby upholding the principle of equity by the second law, which advocates for the fullest expression of democracy through its interpretation. As described by **Ranganathan, (1957)**

- Books for children
- Books for Abnormal
- Books for Artisans
- Books for Neo- Literates
- Books for the Last Deciles
- Books for the Men at the Bench
- Books for the Stay Specialist

These interpretations aim to create equitable opportunities for everyone, setting a standard that positions the library as a symbol committed to serving humanity

References :

Alemna, A. (1995) *Library Provision for the Blind in Africa*

Andersen, N. & University of Southern Queensland. (2022). *Enhancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) in Open Educational Resources (OER) Australian Edition*. https://www.oerafrica.org/system/files/2024-08/Enhancing-Inclusion-Diversity-Equity-and-Accessibility-IDEA-in-Open-Educational-Resources-OER-1696908923.pdf

Anon. n.d. "IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto." *IFLA*. Retrieved July 28, 2024 (https://www.ifla.org/ifla-unesco-multicultural-library-manifesto/).

Bertram, C. (2023, June 20). *Exhibit: ALA and Intellectual Freedom – American Library Association Archives – U of I Library*. https://www.library.illinois.edu/ala/2023/06/20/exhibit-intellectual-freedom/

Oxford University Press (2021) Oxford English Dictionary. https://www.oed.com/. Accessed 04September 2024

Parliament. (2016). THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016. In *THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016*. https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15939/1/the_rights_of_persons_with_disabilities_act%2C_2016.pdf

Ranganathan, S. R. (1957). *Library science and scientific method*. http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/28515/1/ALIS%204%281%29%2019-32.pdf