BOOK REVIEW

Guha B: A synopsis of the report on the feasibility study on automation and networking of science and technology libraries at Calcutta (CALIBNET) prepared by CMC, Limited, Delhi 1989. (Reviewed by J.K. Ahluwalia)

The Government's concern for the improvement of libraries and library services has been clearly highlighted through setting up of a number of committees since independence. Among these, special mention may be made of the Dr. V.A. Kamath Committee which in its report submitted in 1972, recommended the establishment of science and technology library in Calcutta. This recommendation was considered by several agencies and lead to the organisation of an important meeting at the institute of Radiophysics and Electronics, Calcutta under the chairmanship of Director General, CSIR. In the meeting, it was felt that it would be better to facilitate improved access to the existing resources within the region and thereby recommended automation and networking in the libraries.

National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT), New Delhi took up the responsibility of initiating the network (CALIBNET). CMC Ltd. was entrusted by NISSAT to conduct a feasibility study on computer automation and networking of science and technology libraries at Calcutta. CMC submitted an exhaustive report keeping the following in consideration: (a) Identify information needs of individual libraries in Calcutta, (b) Assess the feasibility of computer network for a library automation system, (c) Arrive at the specifications of hardware, system software, communication and infrastructural requirements for the proposed network, (d) Arrive at an appropriate plan for the proposed network, (e) Prepare an estimate of investment for the proposed network, (f) Estimate the training requirements for the library operational staff. The study covers 35 libraries of science and technology big and small, in the Calcutta Metropolitan Area, i.e. the libraries is Jadavpur, Chowringhee, Rajabazar and Ballygunge areas. Some libraries situated outside this cluster, i.e. National Library, ISI Library and some medical libraries are also included.

The functions that are to be automated included cataloguing, serials control, acquisition, fund accounting, circulation and local user services. The network centre would provide for all services such as current awareness, SDI, Union Catalogue, partial databases and access to national and international networks. Apart from these the reprographic facilities, preservation requirements and document transfer facilities have also been discussed and suggestions are made. The network applications designed to be supported are electronic mail, file transfer, remote logon and database access along with document exchange. The use of P & T lines is recommended as transmission media in phase I. After Phase I, an appropriate choice will be made of the transmission media for WAN networks for inter-city and international lines.

In the proposed scheme, each institution will hold processed information on local computers connected with each other through X.25 packet switched network. It is suggested that computer system at Regional Computers Centre at Jadavpur will be used as central host. The detailed estimate of expected workload for each of the participating libraries has been provided.

The necessary requirement of hardware and software have also been spelt out. Emphasis on deployment of manpower with adequate skill

and motivation to run automated libraries is given. Staff requirements and the need for necessary training are indicated. The entire work is proposed to be carried out in two phases. In the first phase all libraries in Jadavpur University Cluster and some nodes at Rajabazar are to be covered. In the second phase, libraries of Ballygunge Science College, remaining libraries of Rajabazar cluster, libraries of chowringhee cluster, medical libraries, the National library and the ISI library are to be brought into the network.

The cost of entire project is estimated at Rs. 233.8 lakhs out of which Rs. 63.1 lakhs is the expected expenditure in Phase I and Rs. 170.7 lakhs for Phase II. The estimated annual operating expenses are in the tune of Rs. 34.6 lakhs in Phase I and Rs. 80.7 lakhs in Phase II.

The synopsis of the report runs into 55 pages giving sufficiently detailed description about the participating libraries, functions to be automated, traffic load, software, hardware and budgetary requirements in both the phases. The synopsis is a handy publication and furnishes a useful peep into the study conducted and its far reaching significance.