There was a time when libraries used to be the storehouses of printed materials, especially books and the librarians as custodians to keep the books just like a storekeeper of a warehouse does. Now time has come to redefine the role of libraries and librarianship. Because of information technology, traditional libraries and librarianship have become nearly obsolete in the western countries. The libraries of developing countries like that of Nepal, have also been greatly affected. Today, a new concept of virtual library has emerged where there are no printed materials, but computers with Internet linkages, online databases, CD-ROM workstations, Audio-Visuals and other non-print materials. This is because of all these things, libraries are quite different these days and the duties and responsibilities of librarians have also changed accordingly.

**Publication Without Paper**

A couple of decades ago no one had thought that there would be publication without paper. Although microfilms/microfiches and audio-visuals were already existed by then. But the real publication without paper, i.e. electronic publication came to be known soon after the advent of CD-ROMs. Actually, CD-ROM has revolutionized the information storage and dissemination process. For example, a single CD-ROM weighing not more than a couple of ounce can accommodate all the information contained in a printed multi-volumed encyclopaedia. It means save of storage space, save of time in the retrieval process, ease of handling, economy in reproduction etc. Moreover, it saves a lot of space in the library. A lot of databases/information in various subject fields are now available in CD-ROM version. Because of this, libraries have begun to purchase CD-ROMs. Therefore, the librarians must keep themselves abreast of new developments in this field and learn necessary skills to run CD-ROMs, to find the desired articles contained in them and thus should be able to help the library users in their search and study pursuits.

The another and perhaps the most popular form of publication without paper is the Internet. Due to its effectiveness and popularity, it has got other names too, viz., Information Superhighway, Cyberspace, Unbound encyclopaedia, WWW etc. It is omnipresent i.e. present anywhere, anytime and it is also omnipotent i.e. so potent that any type of information can be found in the Internet. The Internet databases/Information can be downloaded, or get printed. The modern libraries have started Internet service for their clientele and subscribe to various online databases in various subject fields. There are
hundreds of thousands of Internet sites, commonly known as Homepages, i.e. electronic brochures/publications. For example, the complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica can also be found in the Internet (www.britannica.com). Many business enterprises, government offices, educational institutions have their own websites and even thousands of personal websites are in the Internet.

Internet has become an indispensable means of Information, Education as well as Entertainment. Many libraries have been rendering Internet and online database services to their clienteles. The librarians of developing countries like us should keep ourselves familiar with Internet's various aspects, i.e. knowledge of useful websites, navigating skills etc. in order to render latest information service.

Similarly, talking books, i.e. audio also form a part of non-print publication and are heavily used in the libraries by the blind patrons. Video cassettes, microfilms are also kept in the libraries. So, besides books and printed materials, modern libraries have begun to keep these non-print materials i.e. publication without paper devices and the librarians working in such libraries must have to be familiar with and dexter in handling such information tools to render better services to the clienteles.

**Libraries In Nepal : Where Are We?**

The history of Nepal reveals that around 1812 A.D., the then king of Nepal Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah had played a pioneering role in the establishment of library in Nepal. With a royal accent he established a library and appointed Mr. Kedar Nath Pundit as the (first) librarian. Since then to this date it is known that many libraries were established but nobody knows when did they perish. It is because of illiteracy and conservative mentality of the successive governments. During the period of 1846-1946, establishing a library in any part of the kingdom was considered to be a grave crime. All the libraries in Nepal running these days were established only after 1946. Some of them are discussed below.

Soon after the establishment of Tribhuvan University (T.U.) in 1959, a Central Library was also established along with it and later on, in 1962, it came to be known as the Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL). After 1971 all the colleges in Nepal under the umbrella of T.U. also established their own libraries. In Nepal, there are Government libraries, Campus libraries, Foreign mission libraries, Non-government organization libraries, community libraries etc. Among all of them, Tribhuvan University Central Library, British Council Library, American Library, ICIMOD library, AWON Library are the most frequented libraries in Kathmandu. They are dealt in brief in the following paragraphs.

Tribhuvan University Central Library has over 4000 members. It is considered as the largest and well organized library in Nepal with a collection of over 2,25,000 documents. The library is staffed with 75 personnel and out of them 9 are professional librarians. Among the various sections maintained by the library, Nepal collection and reference collection are the most notable and most used collections of TUCL. Books on Nepal, books by Nepali writers as well as Ph.D. thesis and dissertations submitted by the Masters degree
level students of T.U. are kept in the Nepal collection section for reference use. The library has over 440 seating capacity. Besides books audio are kept for loan for the blind patrons. TUCL also runs short term training programmes for the clerks working in various libraries. Similarly, the TUCL also holds book exhibition on special occasions.

It is indeed a matter of pride for us that since the last year (1999), the TUCL has been appointed as the national ISBN agency by the International ISBN office in Berlin, Germany to distribute ISBNs to the books published in Nepal. TUCL has also been working as the UN depository library in Nepal and has over 22,000 documents publications of UN and its agencies and other 11 International organizations. All the 2,25,000 documents of the library have been catalogued. In addition to this traditional catalogue system, for the last 3 years, the TUCL has been managing a computer based catalogue using CDS/ISIS software and over 25,000 records have been computerized so far. Two OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) terminals are kept for the users (7 OPAC terminals will be added later this year). Book circulation and other functions are done manually and form this year the process of full automation of the library functions will begin. The TUCL has already been providing Internet and e-mail service to the users. TUCL has its existence also in the Cyberspace (URL: www.panasia.org.sg/nepalnet/tucl/home.htm). The library is trying hard to find sources to train its professional staff to make them skilled in running the library efficiently.

Among other notable libraries in Nepal, Nepal National Library (NNL), British Council library, American library, AWON library and ICIMOD library are worth to be mentioned. British Council library is the only library in Nepal to have adopted/pioneered automated circulation system. It is the most used library (second to TUCL) in Kathmandu and has got the reputation of being the number 1 public library in Kathmandu. Besides books, it also lends video cassettes, offers CD-ROM self access service and internet service.

American Reference Center (formerly American Library) has its own unique characteristic of being an excellent reference library in Nepal. It also conducts talk programmes, worldnet television shows, film shows and also offers Internet and CD-ROM services.

AWON (American Women in Nepal) library, Kopundol is also a popular public library in Kathmandu. It is run by volunteers. School students of Lalitpur areas and a large number of adults (foreigners and Nepalese) borrow books and magazines from this library. Best sellers, fiction, craft books, self-improvement books and books for children form the large part of the collection.

Similarly, ICIMOD library, Lalitpur has also been playing a commendable role by serving the special readers with its specialized collections on mountain area development, environment, etc. It has also created computerized databases of its collections.

It is also relevant to mention here the name of Nepal National Library. Nepal National Library, established in 1956, almost inconspicuous until a few years back has now been struggling hard to make itself known that it has its existence in Nepal. With the grant
assistance of DANIDA, UNESCO, etc. organization, the NNL has been making progress. It has established its branches in different parts of the country. It has opened a new wing of children’s section in its building. Recently, it has published National Union Catalog. It holds almost all the responsibilities of a National Library. Besides this, NNL organizes exhibitions, short term library trainings etc.

Lastly, it is worth to be mentioned that foreign diplomatic missions and non-library organizations in Nepal such as Indian Embassy, American Embassy, Japanese Embassy, READ, CDS/ISIS Society Nepal (CISN), and other non-governmental organizations have also been helping establishing libraries, building collections, conducting and supporting library related training programmes. After the establishment of TU Department of Library Science, in 1995, there is no dearth of professional librarians in Nepal. The department has produced about 60 B.Lib. Sc. graduate librarians, so far. Now the Nepal Library Association is flanked by two other library related professional organizations, namely TULSSAA and CISN. As the number of libraries is growing, so the number of professional librarians is also growing. We hope all the libraries and professional institutions and organizations will flourish and give impetus to national development.