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2.1 Bangladesh
Libraries and Librarianship in Bangladesh

Muhammad Hossam Haider Chowdhury
and M. Shamsul Islam Khan

Introduction

Bangladesh is located in south Asia and borders with India, Myanmar (Burma), and the Bay of Bengal to the south. It is a young parliamentary democracy and became a free nation on December 16, 1971 after the war of independence with Pakistan. Its present population is 161,083,804 and is the ninth most populous country in the world. Bengali is the national language of the country (Wikipedia 2012). Like several other countries, libraries are part of higher education, research, and community life in Bangladesh. It is mandatory for higher educational academies and research organizations to maintain and develop libraries to support their mission and central activities. Universities, colleges, research organizations, and various national and international organizations in the country have their own libraries. Many university libraries and research libraries are moving gradually from print-based resources to electronic resources. The progress in access to information resources suggests that these libraries are intending to flourish as hybrid libraries, although an electronic arena of libraries is gaining new momentum.

The collection of printed materials, especially those of foreign origin, and access to priced information resources and databases has been very difficult in most libraries in Bangladesh, mainly due to the scarcity of adequate funds. Internet access helps libraries overcome the immediate need of information access for users. Subscriptions to electronic resources are getting the attention of library professionals and management. Before the introduction of technology, only international organizations, public universities, and a few research organizations in the country were capable of maintaining well-equipped and resourceful libraries for their users.

Recent developments in private universities in the country have visibly influenced the development of good libraries, especially in the use of information technology and with the development of information resources. Interestingly, private university libraries are ahead in introducing electronic resources to their students, faculty, and researchers compared to public university libraries.

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Origin of Libraries in Bangladesh

The history of library development in Bangladesh goes back to the third century BC. At that time, the Buddhist religious centers were places of educational practice, scholarship, and study of wisdom among the disciples. Many ideas have been carried on by word of mouth and from century to century. In architectural and cultural contexts, some evidence and heritage references could be explored after digging or excavating in several places throughout Bangladesh (Ahmed 1984).

Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang, Chinese travelers, visited important Buddhist centers of Bengal, India in the fifth and seventh centuries AD respectively (Ray 1994). Their memoirs help us understand the life and culture of historical Bangladesh. It can be assumed that there was a type of library in these religious communities.

Academic Libraries

Academic libraries generally represent the self-learning section of a formal academy or learning institution where people go for education and receive formal degrees upon the completion of education under the national system. Bangladesh was part of India until 1947 and the country was under the British rule for about 200 years and inherited the British education system along with many academic libraries.

Academic libraries of Bangladesh include libraries of universities, colleges, various types of technical institutes, schools of different levels (such as high schools, junior schools, primary schools, and kindergartens) and madrassa (religious educational institutions) of different types (Alia, Ebtedia, etc.). Many educational institutions are fully supported by the Government, some are partially supported, and others are run with donations and their own income. The English medium schools in the country are mostly dependent on students' tuition fees. Ebtedia madrassas are run with the assistance of the general public Some madrassas also receive people's support in kind, especially during Ramadan and the two Eid festivals. However, only a few madrassas have libraries to support their curriculums. Some colleges mainly offer courses for higher secondary education. As per the rule, a college must have a library to support its study program but a school is not mandated to maintain a library. There are some schools, particularly English medium schools, which maintain libraries. They are mostly famous for their quality of education. The Bangladesh Bureau of Education, Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) regularly publishes statistical reports on education in the country.

Of all the madrassas in Bangladesh, Dhaka Alia Madrassa has the biggest library. It was originally located in Calcutta (now Kolkata), West Bengal,

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India, established in 1780, and it was once the main formal educational institute for Muslims of Bengal. All other madrassas spend very little money for buying books on general education.

University of Dhaka is the oldest research university in Bangladesh, and has the biggest library in the country. It was established on July 21,1921 under the Government of India Act of 1920. It is the largest public university in Bangladesh with an enrollment of over 30,000 students (Wikipedia 2012). At the time of its initial development, the library received a good number of books from the Dhaka College. The University Library has been gradually growing to meet the thrust of knowledge seekers and has also been playing an important role in meeting the needs of many researchers across the country.

Before the establishment of the University of Dhaka, there were some colleges with libraries from the beginning including Dhaka College (1841), Rajshahi College (1873), Jagannath College (1884), Barisal Brojomohun College (1889), and Sylhet M.C. College (1925).

The Kudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission of 1974 made the most favorable recommendations for establishing and running libraries in Bangladesh to improve educational quality in the country, and to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge by the public. The Commission recommended libraries for all schools. Unfortunately, the administrative reform commission known as the "Enam Commission" in 1982 cut the position of school librarians. However, as time progressed, the M. Moniruzzaman Miah National Education Commission of 2003 (Munshi 2005) and Kabir Chowdhury National Education Commission, 2009 again emphasized the importance of libraries at all levels of academia. The *Prothom Alo,* a leading daily of the country, published a report which claimed that the Government would make maintaining a library in every school mandatory in the near future (Ali 2010).

University Libraries

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh has listed three types of universities in Bangladesh: public (31), private (51), and international (2), on their website (http://www.ugc.gov.bd). The chairman of UGC claimed in an interview that there are 33 public and 54 private universities in the country (*Kaler Kantha* 2010). As per the law, every university must possess and maintain at least one library. Some public universities, such as the University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Bangladesh University of Engineering Technology (BUET), Shah Jalal Science and Technology University, and Khulna University have independent large buildings for their central library. Many departments of these universities also maintain separate libraries

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for their respective departmental students, known as seminar libraries. Many public universities are comparatively new and are developing their libraries. The 35th Annual Report of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh (2008) mentioned minimum book collections of 1,094 in a public university established in 2006.

Table 1: Library collection and collection development expenditure in 31 public universities

Universities	Year of Establish-ment	Volume of Books	No of Journal Titles	No of A/V Items	Expenditure in Taka (million)
University of Dhaka	1921	621058	260	5 ?	10
University of Rajshahi	1953	297369	40160 ?	–	7.327
Bangladesh Agricultural University	1961	192426	37511 ?	1750	3.4
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology	1962	126468	17849 ?	–	9.7
University of Chittagong	1966	211860	29441 ?	941	3.5
Jahangirnagar University	1970	104686	12840 ?	–	2.6
Islamic University	1980	78796	16000 ?	464	0.046
Shahjalal Science and Technology University	1986	56055	6881 ?	–	1.075
University of Khulna	1990	30484	4882 ?	216	0.409
National University	1992	35240	176	–	1.188
Bangladesh Open University	1992	33308	309	5	1.267
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Medical University	1998	23883	5222	266	0.475
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University	1998	18725	258	–	0.125

(*Continued*)

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Table 1: Library collection and collection development expenditure in 31 public universities (*Cont.*)

Universities	Year of Establish-ment	Volume of Books	No of Journal Titles	No of A/V Items	Expenditure in Taka (million)
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University	2001	17329	70	–	–
Maulana Bhasani Science and Technology University	2001	4054	80	–	0.432
Patuakhali Science and Technology University	2002	17507	21000	–	0.292
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University	2001	35958	11310	100	0.048
Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology	2003	45651	871	340	0.16
Rajshai University of Engineering and Technology	2003	27060	–	2	–
Khulna University of Engineering and Technology	2003	41230	2500	48	1.18
Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology	2003	32796	801	80	0.312
Noakhali Science and Technology University	2004	3541	56	–	–
Jagannath University	2005	18499	–	–	0.156
Comilla University	2006	1094	20	40	0.53
Jatiya Kobi Kazi Nazrul Islam University	2006	23926	–	–	0.215
Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University	2006	3000	4000	–	0.013

(*Continued*)

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Table 1: Library collection and collection development expenditure in 31 public universities (*Cont.*)

Universities	Year of Establish-ment	Volume of Books	No of Journal Titles	No of A/V Items	Expenditure in Taka (million)
Sylhet Agricultural University	2006	3986	438		1.91 (total)
Jessore Science and Technology University	2008	–	–	–	–
Bangladesh University of Professionals	2008	–	–	–	–
Begum Rokeya University	2008	–	–	–	–
Pabna Science and Technology University	2008	–	–	–	–

A majority of private university libraries in Bangladesh do not have large separate buildings like public universities, but they are housed in separate buildings. Most private university libraries try to provide the flavor of modern services through their libraries. These include use of computers in daily activities, opening cyber cafés or kiosks acquiring current information resources, exploring Internet-based acquisitions, and subscribing electronic resources, etc.

The Islamic International University of Chittagong has the highest number of books (112,683) among private university libraries. Next is the Asian University of Bangladesh (96,000) followed by Northern University of Bangladesh (89,528). The other private university libraryies book collections do not exceed 40,000.

The UGC report also shows that the highest amount, Tk 89,, 300,000, was spent by the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) for procuring learning resources (print and electronic) for its libraries. The next highest amount (Tk 49,006,000) was spent by the Minaret International University, followed by North South University (Tk 22,585,000). Development, collection, and services of some rich university libraries are provided below as examples of modern libraries and their information services.

Dhaka University Library

Dhaka University was established in 1921 and its central library was established with some materials received from the Dhaka College and Aliah Madrasah. At present, this library is the biggest in size with rich holdings. The three-story

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building of the main library is surrounded by open green space. This contributed to the library premises being an attractive place for students, teachers, and other visitors. The university has also a science library with a rich collection located in a separate building. As mentioned at the Dhaka University Library website (www.library.du.ac.bd), the library has a collection of over 550,000 books and bound journals. It also has a good collection of rare books and old manuscripts. Internet connections were established in 1998 (Islam and Islam 2007). The Dhaka University Library started to develop its database using the GLAS (Graphical Library Automation System) but the software lost its functionality in 2000 as the library did not update/renew the software. It is now considering the development of new software locally with the assistance of the Department of Computer Science of the University of Dhaka.

The Central Library, all of the departments, and residential halls, have their own libraries, although they are not well organized enough to provide the necessary services. The five institute libraries of the University of Dhaka: Institute of Business Administration, Institute of Education and Research, Institute of Food and Nutrition Science, Institute of Statistical Research and Training, and, Institute of Social Welfare, are in good shape.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Library

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has been ranked as the number one university in Bangladesh by webometrics.info and varsity.com. The Central Library of BUET has its own separate building, with a space of approximately 20,000 sq ft. It holds over 132,000 volumes and subscribes to 218 periodicals. A good number of CDROMs of books, journals, encyclopedias, etc. are also a part of its collection. It is growing at the rate of 1,500 volumes per year. The Library has facilities for Internet browsing as well. A unique service at the BUET Library is the Rental Library Service. Multiple copies of textbooks are kept in the Rental Library. These books are loaned out only to the undergraduate students for a term at a nominal fee of 10% of the total cost of the books. (Source: http://www.buet.ac.bd/?page_id=9).

North South University Library

North South University (NSU) Library, established in 1992, is the only university library in Bangladesh where the Library of Congress Classification Scheme is in use. The library has over 60,000 sq ft. and it can accommodate over 1200 students at a time. It has 19 staff members, and 11 of them have an MA in Library and Information Science or higher degrees. The library has over 31,796 books, 5,700 volume of periodicals, 1,277 CD-ROM databases and books, 103 videos, 159 audio-cassettes, and 62 DVDs. It subscribes to 15 local journals, 18 foreign journals, and 12 local magazines. The library also ensures

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easy access to the Internet for its users to browse, download, and print full-text articles from over 10,000 journals from Blackwell, IEEE, JSTOR, HINARI (Health Inter Network Access to Research Initiative), OARE (Online Access to Research in the Environment), AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture), Oxford University Press, Wiley Inter Science, Springer Online databases, etc. The library is a member of the local consortium as well. The NSU library has 44 PCs and the library's cyber center is equipped with 35 computers with broadband Internet connections. It also offers a 14-week course titled 'Certificate Course in Digital and Online Librarianship'. This library uses an information and library system software developed locally (source: http://library.northsouth.edu/ataglance.php).

Table 2: Books in private university libraries

Ranges for books	Libraries
<5000	04
5000 – 9999	16
10000 – 14999	12
15000 – 19999	05
20000 – 24999	04
25000 – 29999	03
30000 – 34999	03
35000 – 39999	01
>89000	03

Source: UGC 35th annual report 2008

Independent University, Bangladesh Library

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), established in 1993, is another private university and has a satellite campus in Chittagong. The Dhaka Campus Library possesses over 20,000 books, subscribes to over 70 periodicals, and also JSTOR, Emerald Full text, ABI Global from ProQuest, etc. and is a registered user of HINARI, AGORA, OARE, Oxford University Press Journals (Chowdhury 2010). It has not yet developed an integrated library management system. It processes all received materials using software WINISIS and circulation work is done using locally developed software. For acquisition MS Access is utilized. The software GENEISIS is in use for making library catalog available through the Internet. There is a training program called Attachment Program that is designed for librarians from outside IUB to provide practical ideas on the use of computers in libraries using WINISIS and MS Access through work in the IUB Library. The library has 45 computers across two campuses, and 42 of those are connected to the Internet. The IUB Library

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System is run by 13 professionally qualified personnel, all of whom have a minimum of a master's degree in Library and Information Science.

Evolution of Public Libraries by Private Initiatives

Initially in Bangladesh public libraries were established on the initiative of the local land lords, known as Zamidar. It is claimed that the Jessore Institute Public Library was the first public library established in the country in 1851. Three more public libraries – Woodbond Public Library at Bogra, Barishal Public Library, and Rangpur Public Library – were established in or around 1854. The Barisal Public Library was established by the district judge Mr. Camp, (Prothom Alo 2006 Sep 13). Zamidar of Kakina Mahima Ranjan Roy established the Rangpur Public Library on two acres of land (*Ittefaq*, 2006 Jul 26).

Rajshahi General (Public) Library was founded in 1884 in its present building. In 1876, historian William Hunter mentioned the name of King Ananada Nath Roy, as the founder of the Rajshahi Public Library in the book titled 'Statistical account'. This library has rare books, some of which are over 200 years old (*Jugantar*, 2006 Dec 06).

Three public libraries were established in 1882. These were Nothbrook Hall Library in Dhaka, Banaripur Public Library in Barishal, and Shirajgonj Public Library. Additional established libraries included: Comilla Public Library in 1885; two libraries – Birchandra Public Library and Ananda Gobinda Public Library in 1890 in Pabna; Kurigram Public Library in 1895; three libraries – Umesh Chandra Public Library in Khulna, Noakhali Public Library, and Sylhet Public Library in 1897. Many other libraries were started during the early twentieth century including the Victoria Public Library in Natore in 1901, Municipality Public Library in Chittagong in 1904, Ramnarayan Public Library in Narail in 1905, Cox's Bazar Public Library in 1906, two libraries Gaibandha Public Library and Ram Mohan Public Library in Dhaka in 1907, Harendra Lal Public Library in Munsiganj in 1908, Alimdad Public Library in Kishoreganj in 1909, and in 1910 two libraries – Kustia Public Library and Pyari Mohan Public Library in Naogoan. These are century-old public libraries of this region (Mannan and Begum 2002, Mazed 2004, Sarker 2005, Rahman 2006).

All of these libraries were established by the enlightened people of each respective area and received public support as well as occasional government grants to run their activities. These libraries did not, however, receive continuous support from any agency or from local patrons.

In some places, public libraries played an important role in mobilizing society. Kabi Nazrul Islam Public Library at Panchagarh (the most northerly district of the country) was established in 1947. Since then, it has contributed immensely in upgrading this area into the level of district. Mannan and Begum

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(2002) reported that between 1947 and 1971 about 80 public libraries were established in this part of then Pakistan, today Bangladesh.

The National Book Centre of Bangladesh is networked with over 500 small libraries of public nature. A survey made by the Centre revealed that there are as many as 883 non-government small public libraries in the country. N.C. Sarker (2005) mentioned in his PhD thesis that there were 1,400 non-government public libraries in Bangladesh. He also gave a picture on the government's nurturing of the non-government public libraries through grants from 2001 to 2005.

Table 3: Government budget for assisting non-government public libraries

Financial year	Total grant in Taka (million)	Number of libraries received financial aid	Average of grants in Taka (thousand)
2000–2001	10	720	13.89
2001–2002	10	872	11.47
2002–2003	10	803	12.45
2003–2004	10	817	12.24
2004–2005	15	941	15.94

Source: Sarker 2005

Some religious places, like mosques, temples, etc, have libraries. The Islamic Foundation has a special program for mosque libraries. It donates its publications to mosques to further develop their libraries. The Islamic Foundation's Central Library has a collection of over 100,000 books and receives journals and magazines regularly. Ach district and division headquarter possesses a model (as they claimed) library. The Foundation established 18,900 libraries throughout the country up to 2001 (Amran and Ali 2003).

A very recent and unique addition in the field of libraries of the country is the boat library. Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha (SSS), a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh, initiated this in 2002 in order to reach remote peoples with information and education. SSS uses indigenous boats to provide free public access to computers and the Internet to residents in impoverished remote communities (Mahmud 2006). This innovative project received the 2005 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Access to Learning Award.

The Government Public Library System

The Government of Bangladesh has a public library network up to the district level. The Department of Public Libraries – an organ of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs – maintains 64 public libraries in 64 districts and four substation libraries. These were established after 1950.

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Table 4: Establishment of government public libraries

Decades	Number of libraries
Before 1960	1
1960–1969	3
1970–1979	0
1980–1989	57
1990–1999	5
2000 and onward	2

Source: Sarker 2005.

The Department has a big library, popularly known as Bangladesh Central Public Library, and was established in 1953 in Dhaka. Libraries located in other divisional headquarters are known as divisional public libraries. Of the four substation libraries, two are located in Dhaka city. In 1982, there was a sharp increase in the establishment of government public libraries. At this time, the then Bangladesh Parishad (Council), which had district-level offices was merged with the Department of Public Libraries, and all district-level offices of the Bangladesh Parishad were transformed into District Government Public Libraries. The Bangladesh Central Public Library was recently renamed as Begum Sufia Kamal National Public Library. However, the government public libraries do not provide any circulation service. These libraries mostly provide reading room services through their collection.

The department had 447 staff members to run the 68 libraries' country-wide library system. On average 300 visitors visit these libraries per day but the central public library alone has on average 5,263 readers per day. Computers are not yet set in any government public library for public use although 15 libraries have computers. These libraries are outdated in regards to developing and accessing databases for their catalog. The central public library has a good children's section in its premises. The Department maintains a website found at http://www.publiclibrary.org.bd/bangladesh_profiles.htm.

City Corporation Library Program

City corporation charters bear the responsibility of establishing libraries under its jurisdiction. Usually, the city corporations are divided into wards with the intention of establishing at least one library per ward. The Dhaka City Corporation maintains 23 libraries in 23 of its 75 wards (Dhaka City Corporation website). Chittagong City Corporation has also established some libraries.

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Special Libraries

A survey of special libraries by BANBEIS in 1990 showed that there are as many as 665 special libraries in Bangladesh (Mannan and Begum 2002). Some of these libraries have good collections and provide modern information services. International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDRB) library has an immense influence in the country for its up-to-date resources on medicine, health, nutrition demography, and modern services. The ICDDRB library, in fact, led the library profession of the country in implementing the computerization of libraries in Bangladesh. It started its computerization program with In Magic in 1987 and continued until 1989 when the Computerized Documentation Service/Integrated Set of Information Services (CDS/ISIS) software was introduced in the country. It organized a two-week training program with the support of UNESCO for developing manpower in the use of the software. This library has migrated from CDS/ISIS to Alice for Windows as the maintenance support for this software is provided from New Delhi, India. Routine, short-term training programs were organized for library users on access, searching, and use of Internet resources. The library successfully uses the WHO provision on free use of online health information for developing countries. This library also arranged an orientation program on the use of Medline/PubMed, HINARI, AGORA, and other free online databases for other libraries. The library is open to the general public, but members must become registered.

Among other important modern special libraries include: libraries of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center, Center of Integrated Rural Development in Asia and Pacific (CIRDAP), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, Bangladesh Institute of Research Rehabilitation of Diabetes, Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders (BIRDEM), Bangladesh Bank, Agricultural Information Centre, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development (BARD), Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BIISS), Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), Bangla Academy, etc. These libraries are resourceful and modern in terms of services with the use of modern equipment and qualified, skilled personnel.

Agricultural Libraries

The Bangladesh population is heavily dependent on agriculture. Most inhabitants of the country are engaged in agricultural activities and contributions of agriculture to our GDP are very high. It would be of significance if attention was provided to the libraries which are directly involved with research and study of this sector. Md.Hanif Uddin (2005) surveyed 18 such libraries (Table 5).

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Table 5: Status of agricultural libraries of Bangladesh

Name of organizations and their location	Year of establishment of library	Area of library in sq ft	Number of books	Number of back volumes of periodicals	Current periodical titles received
Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka (Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University)	1938	4500	30000*	5000	18*
Bangladesh Jute Research Institute, Dhaka	1951	2000	6000	2000	–
Bangladesh Forest Research Institute, Chittagong	1955	1900	20000	1000	–
Bangladesh Tea Research Institute, Srimongal, Sylhet	1957	2000	4040	200	–
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh	1961	44000	165000	35000	151*
Soil Research and Development Institute, Dhaka	1962	600	3000	500	–
Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Dhaka	1963	3000	22000	700	–
Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, Gazipur	1970	2500	13620	4000	400
Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture, Mymensingh	1973	2000	5000	2000	–

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Table 5: Status of agricultural libraries of Bangladesh (*Cont.*)

Name of organizations and their location	Year of establishment of library	Area of library in sq ft	Number of books	Number of back volumes of periodicals	Current periodical titles received
Agricultural Information Centre, Dhaka	1973	–	15000	2500	250
Bangladesh Sugarcane Research Institute, Ishurdi, Kustia	1974	–	3200	1000	–
Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute, Gazipur	1976	2000	22100	7000	–
Putuakhali Agriculture College (now Putuakhali Science and Technology University)	1979		13590	1200	–
Department of Agriculture Extension, Dhaka	1983	6500	6500	100	–
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Gazipur	1983	14500	11000	2000	–
Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute, Savar, Dhaka	1986	1700	3100	2000	–
Fisheries Research Institute, Mymensingh	1987	3000	13000	600	–
Hajee Mohammad	1989	3 storied building	10000	600	–

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Table 5: Status of agricultural libraries of Bangladesh (*Cont.*)

Name of organizations and their location	Year of establishment of library	Area of library in sq ft	Number of books	Number of back volumes of periodicals	Current periodical titles received
Danesh Agricultural College, Dinajpur (now Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University)					

*Updated form the respective websites
Source: Uddin 2005

National Libraries and Archives

The National Library of Bangladesh started its operation in 1972 after the country became independent on March 26,1971. Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 and was known as East Pakistan and she was a part of India before the partition in 1947. There was a Central Library that was established in 1967 in Dhaka, which was basically a provincial book deposit branch of the Pakistan National Library and became the National Library of Bangladesh immediately after independence. (*Information Science Today* 2009 Dec 6). Under the copyright law, this library receives two copies of each publication of the country. It distributes ISBNs to the publishers of the country and publishes the National Bibliography of Bangladesh. Currently, the library is in the process of creating its own database. It has a collection of 500,000 books and bound volumes. It provides many services, including references, photocopy and microfilm services. It is the country's professional national institution for IFLA, Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) and Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) (Wikipedia 2012). The National Library of Bangladesh and the National Archives of Bangladesh are run under the administrative control and management of the Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Ministry of Cultural Affairs (http://www.nanl.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_contentview=articleid=58Itemid=184).

There are other organizations which serve the nation as well. Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre (BANSDOC), established in 1972, maintains a good collection of science and technology books and journals. It provides various services, including procurement of journal

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articles from foreign countries for the researchers and users from all over the country. The National Health Library and Documentation Centre (NHLDC), was established in 1974. In addition to providing information services to users, it contributes to the development of health library personnel of the country by organizing routine training programs and workshops regularly.

NGO Libraries

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also playing an important role in the development of the country and have a considerable influence on empowering women in particular. Some of these NGOs also maintain libraries that essentially work to support their development workers. One example is the Community Development Library (CDL), established in 1980, for serving development workers and organizations of Bangladesh. It is an independent NGO participating in the development process of the country through this library system. CDL runs 24 Rural Information Resource Centers throughout the country, primarily in the coastal areas. Since its establishment, it has been "striving towards building a society where the gap between the information-rich and information-poor minimizes continually so that unprivileged people have their fair share of all the resources necessary to live a decent life" (http://www.cdlbd.org/index.php).

The most innovative community library program is maintained by Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) – the biggest NGO in the country. It assists the rural population with their economic development and maintains a primary education program, which is recognized as the best education system at the elementary level by the UNESCO. BRAC runs around 2,000 rural libraries throughout the country, and its recent effort to develop rural libraries is certainly very positive. The NGO helps the local community develop libraries for its own use. If the local population can arrange a fund of Tk 25,000 (less than US$400) and a room over 400 sq. ft, BRAC matches that amount, provides 1,000 books, and additional materials in order to establish a library in a specific area or a locality. There are over 1,856 rural public centers and libraries, and nearly 800,000 people receive services from these rural reading centers. Many centers have mobile services and have been serving rural people using bicycle, rickshaw (tricycle), and other types of van. Over 50% of users of these libraries are female and the mobile libraries primarily serve female clients. Librarians of these centers also play an important role in the development of workers. Not only do they circulate books and supervising reading centers, they also arrange for debates, competitions, cultural events, and computer training opportunities, etc. Librarians guide the general public to develop their skills on their respective trades and occupations (Chowdhury 2009).

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Privately-Initiated Libraries

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, established by famous writer, television presenter, organizer, and activist Abdullah Abu Sayeed in 1978 [*New Age*, 2008 Sep 28] in Dhaka, is the pioneer in promoting reading habits amongst the Dhaka population. The Center maintains a fleet of mobile libraries that visit different places within Dhaka as well as surrounding areas. For secondary and junior school levels, the center operates a nationwide reading program and provides books for the students (Wikipedia 2009). There are 1,000 branches of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra all over the country (*New Age*, 2008 Feb 16). Furthermore, the library has a Bangla slogan 'Alokito Manush Chai', meaning 'we want enlightened men'.

The Beraid Public Library was launched in 2007. The Awami League lawmaker and freedom fighter A.K.M. Rahmatullah established this library in his village, called Beraid, near Dhaka city. Lion Muzzamel Haque established 11 libraries in Rupganj under the Narayanganj district. In 1998, he established a library first under the banner of Maruf-Sharmeen Shmrity Snaghstha. M Shamsul Islam Khan, former President of the Library Association of Bangladesh, has established a library – Mabia, Kanak and Daisy Grameen Library – in his village Bangalla under Tangail district in 2008. This village library has been established with a special emphasis on using knowledge and information services by women and children in particular.

Community Libraries

In the greater Mirpur area of Dhaka city, approximately 20 community libraries were established and have been functioning solely with the support of the organizers and individual subscriptions. These community libraries were established purely under private initiatives. They have formed a Greater Mirpur Granthagar Parishad (Greater Mirpur Library Council) to promote library use within the community. The organizers and staff members of these libraries meet each year to discuss how to develop reading habits within the community.

Foreign Mission Libraries in Bangladesh

The British Council Library, Archer K Blood American Center Library, Indian Information Center Library, and the Goethe Institute Bangladesh Library have great influence on the students and civil society of the country. The British Council Library has access to UK based electronic full text databases, facilities. The American Center Library subscribes to many databases including ProQuest Newspaper, ProQuest Research Library, Ebscohost and Lexis-Nexis.

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Use and Application of Information Technology in Libraries

The ICDDRB library has played a vital role, in introducing computers, and CD-ROM technology in libraries of Bangladesh. ICDDRB first introduced CD-ROM subscriptions, such as MEDLINE and POPLINE. Following ICDDRB, the BIRDEM Library also started CD-ROM-based MEDLINE and POPLINE subscriptions. Gradually, additional medical libraries also introduced this technology. In the meantime, agricultural libraries began to accommodate information technology. Agriculture Information Centre introduced AgriIndex in CD-ROM to its collection.

ICDDRB organized a training course with the assistance of UNESCO for librarians of Bangladesh in 1989. This training had an immense influence in introducing computers in libraries of the country. Dr. Wahid, a UNESCO expert from New Delhi, India, trained 18 people on the use of mini/micro-CDS/ISIS. These trainees not only applied their knowledge in their respective workplaces but also assisted many other libraries to introduce this freely-available software for developing databases mostly dedicated for library catalogs. Some of them subsequently became trainers of the software. After ICDDRB, some other organizations, such as BANSDOC, and CIRDAP also organized training programs on this software. Many libraries are using the Windows version of CDS/ISIS which is currently known as WINISIS.

Before the introduction of CDS/ISIS, computers were mostly used for word processing in libraries across the country. CDS/ISIS helped librarians formulate ideas on library databases according to specific work segments and eventually contributed in the development of librarian skill sets. They introduced computer operations as much as possible as their skills allowed to run the libraries.

CDS/ISIS or WINISIS (Windows version of CDS/ISIS) users tried to set a standard in developing databases. Common communication format (CCF) serves as their baseline. Most ISIS databases are CCF-compatible. MARC did not receive the attention of librarians that much. The BRAC University has just introduced the KOHA software for their library system and is trying to convince its librarians to introduce MARC 21 for developing information systems in the libraries of Bangladesh. They arranged several workshops where they demonstrated their database developed using KOHA software to convince people working in other libraries and hope to form a KOHA users group in Bangladesh.

In 1996, Bangladesh was connected with the information highway, i.e. the Internet. Libraries of international organizations and private universities are the pioneers for introducing the Internet in their libraries and exploring this new avenue. Immediately after establishing an Internet connection in 1996, some leading private university libraries had the opportunity to introduce at least a browsing facility with a computer from the library premises. Gradually,

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the number of computers increased. Some areas of the library were dedicated for browsing and named as Cyber Café or Cyber Corner. These university libraries also explored procuring books from amazon.com and from other sources.

The Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) procured the first book from amazon.com using the Internet in 1997. The IUB library established communication with the JSTOR in 1997 but JSTOR informed their inability to give access as that was their first phase, and they were unable to make their resources available to countries outside the USA. The BRAC University was the first university library to subscribe to JSTOR. In the meantime, libraries throughout the country had exploited the opportunity available through the HINARI, AGORA, and OAER aggregators. HINARI became very popular in medical libraries of the country. The ICDDRB library was again the pioneer for making the HINARI database popular in Bangladesh. They organized a national workshop on the use of resources in the HINARI and AGORA databases. Oxford Journals are also available free of charge for developing countries. Many libraries, but primarily two leading private university libraries, introduced the Oxford Journals to the library system and this is the first bundle of journals in digital form introduced in the country. Soon after BRAC University, the IUB, North South University, ICDDRB, East West University, and many other organizations started to subscribe to JSTOR. The IUB library has also been subscribing to Emerald Full text, and ABI Global of ProQuest.

A consortium was formed under the leadership of the Bangladesh Academy of Science (BAS). The BAS concluded an agreement with the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), UK, for subscribing to periodicals from 27 publishers. The prominent publishers that joined this consortium include: EBSCOhost, Springer Link, Wiley Inter Science, American Chemical Society, IEEE, ICDDRB, IUB, and over 30 other organizations.

Although some libraries have made remarkable progress to cope with the new trends in the library profession, there are still many libraries which cannot adopt information communication technology due to lack of adequate funds and skilled personnel. Md. Hanif Uddin (2005) found only eight agricultural libraries withcomputers in the country in his survey. Anwarul Islam conducted a survey on special libraries during 2006–07 for his PhD program. He found that only 67 special libraries were using computers, 34 of them had Internet connectivity, 6 libraries maintained Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and four libraries' circulation were operated using computers (Islam and Panda 2009). It is estimated that approximately 100 libraries in the country possess computers.

Education on Library Management

The first training course on library administration or management was held in 1952. Fazle Elahi, a librarian of Dhaka University Library, organized a

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three-month training program for the staff members of libraries in the University of Dhaka (Sarker 2005, Mannan and Begum 2002). The authorities of the University of Dhaka sent Muhammad Siddique Khan – popularly known as M.S. Khan – the pioneer of the library movement in Bangladesh, to the UK to pursue education on library science (Rashid, Khan 1987). After his return to the country in 1956, he made immense changes in the field of librarianship in Bangladesh. He organized the central library of the University of Dhaka according to the modern system. At the same time, he initiated steps for educating staff members working in different libraries of the country at that time. A certificate course in library science was offered under the banner of Dhaka University Library from the 1955–56 sessions. Several foreigners who were serving in foreign mission libraries came forward to assist him. Students of the initial certificate courses received personal attention and guidance from the foreign and local faculties. The then East Pakistan Library Association, now Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB), introduced a six-month certificate course in library science in 1958 (Foote and Mannan 1996).

Under the initiative and leadership of M.S. Khan, the University of Dhaka introduced a one-year Diploma Course in Library Science in 1959. Furthermore, a one-year master's degree course in library science was introduced in 1962. MPhil and PhD courses were launched in Dhaka University in 1976 and 1979 respectively. In 1987, a three-year honors course in library and information science was introduced. This program was elevated to a four-year honors program in 1994. The Department of Library Science was renamed as the Department of Library and Information Science and subsequently in 2001 as the Department of Information Science and Library Management.

The University of Rajshahi has been offering both honors (since 1993) and master's degree (since 1997) programs in information science and library management. The Rajshahi University launched the department with a postgraduate diploma course in 1992 (Foote and Mannan 1996). In addition, the Darul Ihasan University, and under the National University, the Institute of Library and Information Science in Dhaka, and several other institutes have been offering the diploma program in library and information science since 2005. The Asian University of Bangladesh has been offering a master's degree program in information science and library management since 2009. The Darul Ihsan University introduced the master's degree program in library and information science in 2007. The Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) runs a formal six-month certificate course in library and information science through its Institute of Library and Information Science in six divisional headquarters.

There are some colleges, affiliated with the National University, who run this subject as an optional or elective course in undergraduate programs within the Bachelor of Arts degree. The Lalmatia College in Dhaka, under the National University, runs a fully-fledged department for library education. It started with an elective course of Bachelor of Arts in 1997. It has been offering

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a master's degree program in library science since 2002, and a four-year honors course was introduced in 2006. In total, 13 institutes/institutions have been offering courses on library and information science at various levels in Bangladesh.

Training on Information Technology Use

For the first time in Bangladesh, ICDDRB organized a 2-week training program for librarians of this country on the use of mini/micro-CDS/ISIS in 1989 with the assistance of UNESCO. The National Health Library and Documentation Center has also been organizing workshops regularly on accessing and utilizing electronic-based information resources with the assistance of the World Health Organization. The Department of Library Science and Information Management of the University of Dhaka occasionally arranges training on CDS/ISIS for their students.

Consortium Development Efforts in Bangladesh

University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) first initiated the development of a consortium in 2004 to receive maximum benefit in the use of electronic resources by the research and higher-education organizations and institutions in Bangladesh. A four member committee submitted a concept paper on the role of UGC to run such a consortium (Uddin and Chowdhury 2006); however the UGC is still in the process of forming a consortium.

In the meantime, the Bangladesh Academy of Science started to administer a consortium with the assistance of The Program for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) of INASP. The consortium is known as the Bangladesh-INASP-PERI-Consortium and it is currently subscribed to over 25 electronic databases through the INASP. Dr. Abdul Mazed, Director of the Bangladesh Academy of Science, coordinates this consortium with the help of Dr. Abdulah Bin Tariq, a physicist of the University of Rajshahi. Since the initial launch in 2006, this consortium has been working successfully.

The consortium has made it possible for approximately 30 libraries of Bangladesh to access full texts of many databases including: American Chemical Society, Wiley Inter science, EBSCOHOST, Blackwell Synergy, Springer Link, Astronomical Journal, Cochrane Library, American Physical Society, Institute of Physics Publishing, American Society of Civil Engineers, Mary An Liebert, Inc., Publishers Annual Reviews, MinAbs Online, Beech Tree Publishing, Multilingual Matters, Cambridge University Press, Nature Publishing Group, Oxford Scholars, and World Bank Publications.

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Library Associations

M.S. Khan initiated the formation of an association with local working professionals. In 1956, the East Pakistan Library Association now the Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) was established. This association is open to those who work in a library and have a professional certificate, diploma, or degree. At present, it has over 2,000 members and has been publishing the *Eastern Librarian* journal since 1966. It also publishes a Bangla newsletter – *Upatta*. The Institute of Library and Information Science (earlier known as the Library Training Institute) has been run by this association since 1976. The Institute was established to conduct a six-month certificate course on library science to educate people in library management and library services. Later on, in 1989, this course transformed into a modern course for obtaining trained support personnel in the libraries. In 1989 the Association renamed the institute as the Institute of Library and Information Science to run a postgraduate diploma course in library and information science.

In 1986, a few young librarians formed a new forum for professionally qualified people (Chowdhury and Rahman 2009, Mannan and Begum 2002); it was originally named the Bangladesh Association of Young Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalists (BAYLID), but is currently known as Bangladesh Association of Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalists (BALID). The Association offers membership only to individuals having a master's degree or higher in library science. Emphasis is given to recruiting members who have a professional degree rather than only being involved in or affiliated with a library. Over 500 professionals are members of this association. It publishes a biannual newsletter titled *Informatics* in Bangla, twice a year.

Seminars, workshops, and training programs are organized by both associations on a regular basis. These associations play a key role in motivating the Government in the development of librarians, libraries, and information services in Bangladesh.

Problems of Libraries and Information Services in Bangladesh

Some libraries in Bangladesh are in good condition; however, in most cases, libraries suffer from scarcity of funds, space, and highly-skilled manpower with a background in software management. Due to insufficient budgets, only a few libraries can afford to add new collections on a regular basis. Although all academies need to have their own libraries as per the rules of the Ministry of Education, no mechanism exists to keep the institutes and academies under watch and inspection in order to ensure libraries are on the proper track. The government college libraries have a shortage of librarians and most public university libraries do not have head librarians. These universities are mostly run by Deputy or Assistant Librarians or by non-professionals.

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The process of procurement is very slow due to the national procurement rules. It is extremely difficult to update the book collection in public-supported libraries. Research in the field of library services still does not receive much attention; therefore, a scarcity of adequate information for decision-making is prominent. It is challenging to get financial support for conducting research.

The libraries of the country also suffer due to a lack of opportunities for library professionals to become oriented with modern information management systems in developed countries. They also have minimal opportunity to attend regional and international training programs, workshops, and conferences.

There are several efforts in process to implement policies for the development of libraries. Library professionals have been advocating for public library legislation for a long time. There were some initiatives on the part of the government, such as in 1988 when the Government formed a national committee for drafting National Science and Technology Policy (NASTIP). This policy put emphasis on the library legislation (Sarker 2005). In 2001, the Government accepted the National Library Policy but it has still not been implemented or enacted upon. This policy stressed the importance of library legislation for the country.

Prospects for Libraries

The literacy rate in Bangladesh at present is 55.9% (Wikipedia 2012) and it is increasing year by year. Educational institutions are also increasing with both public and private initiatives. Although slow, the number of research organizations is also increasing. The per-capita income of the country is expanding. The present government expects that Bangladesh will be a middle income country by 2021. ICT is getting priority in all spheres. The Government mandated that at least one computer should be available for every school within the next 2–3 years. If we consider the population, including students, interested in educational activity we would obtain a significant amount of prospective users.

Table 6: Educational institutions receiving government grants

Type of institution	Institutions	Teachers	Students
Secondary Schools	18770	211649	6840541
Higher Secondary School and Colleges	1904	32122	384462
Degree Colleges	1266	44354	781204
Degree (Honours) Colleges	95	4584	241660
Masters Colleges	90	6066	541082
Madrasahs	9376	128005	1984626
Technical Education	3590	21664	451871
Total	35091	448444	11225446

Source: Primary report of National Education Survey (Post Primary) 2008

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The recent education policy puts a strong emphasis on libraries including primary schools, although not mandatory. The 2008 survey of BANBEIS for post primary level institutions found 35,091 educational institutions that received government financial support. The survey did not include universities, privately-run schools, colleges, and institutions. There are many schools run by the NGOs; however, these NGO-run schools were also excluded from the survey.

The survey did not include any question on library affairs, but it can be generalized that most madrasah, secondary and higher secondary-level institutions do not have libraries. Libraries in other institutions are not up to the mark in both physical condition and in respect of services. The report mentioned a large number of direct beneficiaries of libraries. As the Government is giving priority for education and the highest budget allocation is provided for educational purposes, the country now can hope to get appropriate attention for the development of its libraries.

The UGC received World Bank funds on loan of over Tk 6 billion (Tk 681.4 crore) under the higher education enhancement project (*New Age* 2010 Apr 22). The UGC is planning to establish a Research and Education Network (REN) to establish a strong backbone for higher education and research using these funds. There are possibilities to have sizable amounts of funds for the purpose of library development and a major part of this library allocation may go to library automation acquisition, and preservation of electronic resources.

The local government's charter has a provision for nurturing education. With this, it can establish libraries at least at the union level (the second lowest tier of the government's administrative unit). The country has 4,498 unions (Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2008), and there are opportunities for each union to have at least one public library. The government is also planning to extend the services of the public library up to union level (Ali 2010).

Librarians may also find good prospects in the near future in the health sector also. The Directorate General Health Services (DGHS) claims on its website that it has made significant progress in providing 24-hour broadband Internet connections to important health points up to upazila (lower next to district administrative unit) level. Librarians will eventually emerge as dependable information navigators for assisting health professionals throughout the country.

The present government maintains a slogan, Digital Bangladesh. To achieve this motto, the government is trying to deliver one computer to each school in order to enable all schools to access the Internet. The government's ICT Policy 2009 announced that the government has targeted establishing a model information access center in at least one school of each union. Although slow, information literacy is also receiving attention by professionals. In 2009, an international workshop was organized at IUB under a project of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to implement the idea of information literacy in the country. Following this, some libraries

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introduced information literacy programs in their own libraries. Recently, the Center for Information Studies (CIS) was launched and it has already arranged three programs on information literacy at three rural schools with the cooperation of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC). Finally, the Education Commission 2009, led by Professor Kabir Chowdhury, indicated the importance of libraries in all tiers of education. It is hoped that very soon a library will be mandatory for every school, including at primary level.

Conclusion

The developments highlighted in this paper show that Bangladesh invested its efforts primarily to support urban-based libraries, although about 80% of the people live in the rural areas of the country. Despite the efforts made by the library associations and library professionals, the scenario of library development in Bangladesh is not satisfactory. A large number of libraries located even in the major cities are still run with traditional systems. The progress in using computers to create databases and accessing web-based resources is still limited to a only few libraries.

A vast number of people, particularly in rural areas, still need to become aware of knowledge-sharing, knowledge-transferring, and the information-receiving networking system through establishing resourceful libraries and information resource centers at the school, college, community and village levels with complete ICT support. ICT has to become the expert driver of knowledge-sharing, knowledge-transferring, and information-receiving networking system in both urban and rural areas. Trained and skilled professionals have to be educated in order to lead the networking system in the country. Also, the government and other concerned bodies need to develop the rural infrastructure to ensure an efficient rural library system that will support the rural people for their socioeconomic and educational development.

The development of an electronic library system is somewhat stagnant in the country because of limited resources to buy books and journals. The use of the electronic access to web-based resources can greatly enhance the use of knowledge and information for the betterment of the people and their socioeconomic progress regardless of whether they are located in cities or villages. It is therefore strongly recommended that both major public and private universities and colleges consider introducing a master's degree program exclusively for the digital library system that will ultimately secure professionals with knowledge and skills in digital librarianship. The next fifteen years will be very challenging with the hope that libraries will improve and join the fast lanes of the super information highway of the twenty-first century.

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