**M.Lib.I.Sc 2nd Semester**

**Course Code- MLI 201**

**Course Title: Information and Society**

**TOPIC: NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICY**

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1. **Background**

While the world has already stepped into the “Post- Industrial Society”, the society is built upon a sophisticated, information- based and capital intensive production system; people gradually come to appreciate that information is viewed both as power and wealth.

Similar to that of the American society as depicted by Peter Drucker, the world has changed rapidly from an economy of pure goods to a knowledge economy; we have thus entered into the information age in which information is the chief ingredient.

Information, being influential to productivity, modernization to society and to the well being of any individual or group, serves as the foundation for the national development and policy making. UNESCO has long discussed the importance of information as the vital resource for national development. Recognition of the value of information is especially true in countries which are facing national and international crisis.

Information policy emerged as a distinct field during the last decades of the 20th century as one manifestation of the shift from an industrial to an information society, in a manner parallel to the appearance of the micro- and macro-economics of information.

The classical narrow definition of information policy involves such issues as access to government information, but the earliest use of the phrase “information policy” by governments actually referred to propaganda efforts during World War I. During the 1970s and 1980s, national governments around the world toyed with the notion of developing comprehensive “national information policies.” Such discussions marked a significant turning point regarding the importance of information policy. The concept of a national information policy became possible only because political leaders around the world came to recognise that, in fact, laws and regulations affecting information are actually matters of “high policy” of overarching strategic importance.

1. **Definition of National Information Policy**

The term “information policy” has many connotations depending upon different viewpoints and various interpretations: “To some it is that body of statues and regulations that governs the telecommunications industry. To others, it is concerned with the issues of privacy and freedom of information. To still others, it is those laws and policies affecting libraries and government printing and publication.”

“A National Information Policy is a set of decisions taken by a government, through appropriate laws and regulations, to orient the harmonious development of information transfer activities in order to satisfy the information needs of the country. A National Information Policy needs provision of necessary means or instruments such as financial, personnel, institutional, for concrete implementation.” UNISIST II- Main Working Document

As identified by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, information policy should be a policy which governs the way information affects our society. It deals with various components of information which are interrelated and interdependent.

1. **Objectives of the National Information Policy (NIP)**

The main purpose of information is to put knowledge to work, and in turn, to improve the quality of life of people. The vital role of information in national development has, thus, to be perceived in this very perspective.

The primary objective of a National Information Policy is to achieve a progressive upliftment of the socio economic development of the country through the provision of access to and availability of information and knowledge with speed and efficiency to all those who are involved in activities for national development.

1. **Need for a National Information Policy**

By and large nations have realised that the progress of a nation depends upon the information it generates, disseminates to the users, and puts it to work. Lack of information is going to adversely affect the development.

Secondly, the cost of information is directly related to its use or application. Generation of new information needs lot of inputs by way of research, gathering, processing and storage. Information dissemination is governed by the factor of recovery of investments in research, gathering, processing and storage costs. Information dissemination is governed by the factor of recovery of investments in research, gathering, processing and storage costs. The cost of information makes it imperative to share the information in a planned manner and coordination of information activities within a nation.

In almost all countries national governments are the major investors and disseminators of information. As such each country should evolve a national policy of its own taking into consideration the developments at national and international level.

1. **Guidelines for the National Information Policy**

A national information policy should comprehend the following:-

1. Identification of the information needs of different socio-professional groups.
2. Establish priorities in regard to these needs
3. Visualise a ‘National Information System’ with various sub-systems, sectoral systems, etc.
4. Services to be offered and methods to provide the services
5. Keep a watch on the capacity of the national information infrastructure (manpower, material, money etc.)
6. Decide the measures needed to enable the national information system to perform its role and ensure compatibility among the various information systems in the country.
7. Decide as to how the national information system should be further developed.
8. Development and improvement of primary publications and ensure generally of the availability of information and data.
9. Strengthening the collections and improve the accessibility.
10. Policy regarding access to foreign collections of documents and databases.
11. Development of translation services; databases; networks; preservation; dissemination and conservation of documents.
12. Bibliographical control of documents generated in the country.
13. Coordination between various information units and sub-systems.
14. Establishment of standards for information processing and communication of information.
15. Manpower planning
16. Financing of information systems and pricing of the services.
17. Enacting appropriate legislation for regulation of information activities.
18. Promotion of user education and services.
19. Encouragement of education and research in library and information science.
20. Cooperation with other national and international organisations and institutions.
21. **National Policy Initiative in India**

The Department of Culture, Government of India sets up a committee on National Policy on Library and Information Systems (Conpolis) on 7th October 1985, under the Chairmanship of Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyay, the then Chairman Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF).

During the period between December 1985 and February 1986, the Committee toured different parts of the country and discussed with cross-sections of people. Suggestions were also received from several individuals and institutions.

An interim report was submitted in March and the final report on 30th May 1986.

* 1. **Salient features of the Report**
1. The most important task before the Government is to establish, maintain and strengthen the free public libraries in the country and enable them to work as a system.
2. The main thrust in this area should go to the rural public library. A village or a village cluster with an adequate population should have a community library which will also serve as an information centre. Resources of different agencies, engaged in the work of public health\, adult education, local self-government and such others may be pooled to build up this composite centre.
3. An important link should be established between the community library of the village and the village primary school. If the school does not have a library of its own, the community library should provide the children with an adequate book-corner.
4. The community library should also importantly cater for adult education and make adequate audiovisual aids available to attract the illiterate villagers.
5. The district library should serve as an apex library for each district with public libraries at city, town and village levels constituting important components in the district library system. In addition to the usual services to be rendered by it, it should also provide for learning facilities and recreation for the specially abled, wherever possible, district libraries and comparable cty public libraries should provide the literature in Braille. Special services should be rendered to hospitals, prisons and the infirm in their homes.
6. Libraries for special groups should be built in areas of tribal concentration or of minority communities to develop their distinctive cultures. Government will provide all encouragement for such communities to develop their own libraries through voluntary effort.
7. Each public library should have a section for children and, in addition, separate libraries for children with attractive books and audio-visual supporting material should be established wherever possible.
8. The district library will take the leadership in establishing linkages between all other public libraries of the district and work towards resource sharing within the area.
9. The key role of public libraries as chief sustaining agencies of distance education should be recognised and they should be adequately equipped with the relevant resources for this purpose.
10. All the libraries within a state should form part of a network extending from the community library of the village through intermediary levels to the district and to the State Central Library. This state network should eventually be connected with the national level network.
11. The role of the State Central Library is crucial in networking and the establishment of uniform library procedures within the State. The State Central Library r Directorate of Public Libraries has to perform as the co-ordinating agency for public libraries in the state.
12. To bring about the development of the public libraries in a state it is vital that each enacts its own library legislation. The Central Government should revise the Model Public Library Bill which it has already prepared, in the light of experience gained in recent years and urge upon the states the importance of enacting such legislation. Finances for library development, should be funded by each state either from its general revenues or from local taxation.
13. The Central Government should assist the state in the development of public libraries in a larger way than it has done so far. The RRRLF as the national agency for coordinating and assisting the development of public libraries by suitably strengthened enabling it to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

**References**

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