

MAP COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY AND ITS USERS' PATTERN

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Abstract: The authors give a historical survey of this map collection. They describe the type of collection in detail. A discussion regarding the needs, approaches, and characteristics of each user group helps to identify the best user service. Some broad user groups are as follows: Research scholars, students, mountaineers and treckers, casual and a miscellaneous group. It is stated that maps as a special non-book material represent one of the oldest forms of information and communication known and are immensely valuable reference tools.

Introduction

The National Library, Calcutta formerly known as the Imperial Library, Calcutta, is an institution recognised by the Government of India as a very special establishment devoted to the promotion of library services in the country.

The history of the National Library broadly falls into three distinct periods. The first period was the starting of library services by the Calcutta Public Library. The next period was merging of the Imperial Secretariat Library with Calcutta Public Library and forming the Imperial Library. Then in the third phase, just after independence the National Library was formed by an act of the parliament entitled imperial Library (change of name) Act of 1948.

From the early set up of the Calcutta Public Library and later upto the formation of the Imperial Library, maps and atlases were deposited gradually from various sources, which formed the core of the collection. The Imperial Library was declared open for the public in 1903. It was intended that the library should be a place of reference, a working place for students and a repository of materials for future generation. By 1909, the figure of map collection was 936. A catalogue was published in 1910.

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The library has more than two million documents comprising books, bound volumes of periodicals, manuscripts, Indian and Foreign Official publications including maps and atlases. This is a depository library under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954 as amended in 1956 and a repository of all reading materials published in India. The map collection was 1800 in number by the time when the National Library started functioning in 1953 and with the introduction of D.B. Act 1954, the maps were received in great numbers. Today the number is about 80,000 by the help of Act, purchase and gift and exchange.

Formation of Map Division

A separate Map Section was formed in 1959, with an area of 1000 sq.ft. and later on shifted to Annexe Building in 1962. With a space of 2,000 sq.ft. Map Division was formed on the Western side of the ground floor of the building. The Division is surrounded by Rare Book Division towards the East, Science and Technology Division towards the North and Reprography Division towards the South. The ventilation is from the western side through 14 windows. The ground floor has a ceiling height of 8.5 ft. fixed with florescent tubes of 4 ft. throughout the ground floor. The illumination is 40 foot candles per sq. ft. which seems to be rather low. The space of different functional areas are divided into major heads. Under receiving, sorting, packing and mailing only 75 sq.ft. is used while under processing it is 74 sq.ft. Under conservation (mounting & repairing) it is 48 sq.ft. Catalogue area covers 30 sq.ft. The storage area covers highest among all, being 734 sq.ft. The reference table for 4 readers, covers 32 sq.ft. The working staff area covers 500 sq.ft. while Assistant Librarian's working area is only 100 sq.ft. From this it will be clear that there is hardly any space for expansion in coming few years. The staff pattern consists of 3 technical hands and 2 non-technical hands with Assistant Librarian as over all in-charge of the Division. The technical hands have basic library education but without a background of geography or any training in cartography. They are constantly advised by the In-charge in dealing day to day work.

Acquisition

The acquisition policy is to acquire and conserve all significant national production of printed maps and atlases (excluding ephemera). Collection of printed maps and atlases concerning India published outside, comes next in the priority list. Maps of the neighbouring and adjacent countries are also given utmost importance in the acquisition policy. The policy includes the planned and systematic acquisition of foreign maps and atlases.

The budget for the acquisition of the reading materials is Rs. 40 lakh and there is no separate budget earmarked specially for the purpose of the cartographic materials published abroad. The auxiliary materials consisting of gazetteers, geographical dictionaries, catalogues of leading map libraries, and topical updating journals are purchased from time to time.

Type of collection

The collection ranges from 16th century onwards. Some of the maps, published till the end of the 18th century were land surveys especially for revenue and military purposes which were carried out by the British military survey, are in the collection. Indian Topographical sheets of early days at scales of one inch, half inch and quarter inch to a mile have found a place in the collection. The metric equivalent scales are now published and majority of such sheets of Survey of India have been received by this Library. Under the Delivery of Books (Public Library) Act, 1954, almost all the maps published in India are received. The subject coverage is very wide. They include maps on natural resources, population, transport and communication systems, historical events, agricultural production, soil, vegetation, geology, planning and many more. Indian atlases on various subjects are also there.

The collection of mid-eighteenth century manuscripts maps and plans by some of the renowned early surveyers and map makers in India like James Rennell, Anthony Polier, Robert Orme, Bartholomew Plaisted, Dennis Morrison, Robert Barker, Capt. Luis de Gloss, etc., enriched the holdings of the Map Division.

The division has acquired some of the National Atlases either through purchase or from the Gift and Exchange Division of the Library. In the recent years some of the atlases like Historical Atlas of South Asia by Swartzberg, Historical Atlas of Canada, National Atlas of Sri Lanka have been received by the Gift and Exchange Division.

Besides the Map Division a fairly large number of maps and atlases are being kept in the different sections and divisions of the National Library.

Some of the rare maps and atlases along with explanatory notes are kept in the Rare Books Division of the National Library. There are about forty-two atlases in this collection. Nordenskiöld's "Facsimile atlas to the early history of cartography" and "Periplus" are worth mentioning in this collection.

The Asutosh Mukhopadhyay collection has also twenty-three valuable atlases. Jean Baptiste Bouguignon d'Anville's atlas in French of 1769 is of great value. Sir Jadunath Sarkar's precious collection of maps has also increased the value of the

Library's holding. These maps are indispensable for proper appreciation of the geographical basis of the late Mogul and early British periods of Indian History.

Fifty-three atlases on different aspects are kept in the Main Reading Room of the library for ready reference of the users from all walks of life. Government Publication Division holds some important statistical atlases and census atlases published by the Government of India and as well as by the State Governments. Science & Technology, Foreign Official Document Division, Children Library, Punjabi Division and almost all divisions possess few number of atlases.

This Library is a repository for the publications of the UNESCO. Maps and atlases which are sent to this Library under this programme are also added to the collection. This has helped area coverage to a great extent.

Readers Service, Users and their Variation

The general service includes servicing from searching a map in a journal to supplying a base map for a project work. Reprographic services are given by another Division, provided the document is not classified or a large scale map. Special services are also given to the Government of India by lending out a particular map.

Systematic record keeping regarding the user, e.g., name, educational qualification, profession, map consulted and purpose for consulting the map started from November 1980 to study the users pattern and to evaluate it from time to time. Studying the users pattern, taking 450 users into consideration from 1987 to 1991, some broad groups obtained are shown in the following table:

Sl. No.	Level of users	No. of users	percentage
1.	Research Scholars	160.0	35.6
2.	Miscellaneous group 126	28.0	
3.	Students	117.0	26.0
4.	Mountaineers & Trekkers	34.0	7.5
5.	Casual	13.0	2.9
Total		450.0	100.0

A discussion regarding the needs, approach and characteristics of each group is relevant in this connection.

Research Scholars

This group of users mainly belong to geography and geology discipline, of course scholars of other disciplines also use maps. Presently this group forms the major number 35.6% of the total readership. There is marked difference between the scholars of earth and others, mainly in their approach and use.

They have basic knowledge of different types of maps, their characteristics & specific uses. Quite a large section of them can explain, what sort of map containing what particular information they would like to have. The demand may vary from topographical sheets of varying scales to thematic maps dealing with different aspects concerning different areas of India or other regions of the world.

In case of searching of information for topographical sheets, it is the common experience that most of them have very vague idea about the scope and content of such sheets of various scales. They may be able to express how much information in detail they want e.g., about the location of a small place or small hill top or perhaps an ox-bow lake but they are not very sure as to the toposheet of what scale will contain the data of their choice. It is at this point where the map librarian has to play an important part. He may even have to guide the scholars in understanding the map catalogue giving details on coverage of areas of different scales, spot the particular toposheet that will contain the specific information and even help the scholar ultimately in locating the feature on the appropriate toposheet. Normally, scholars of geo-science can then make their way, once they have got the appropriate sheet in their hand and draw their own conclusion.

For seeking information the thematic nature in the form of map, the role of the map librarian becomes more difficult at the same time extremely critical. The demand for the specific information tend to be highly specialised in character and do not often fit squarely among the titles of thematic maps that are available in the catalogue cards. A case may be cited of a researcher who demand map showing existence of "Inter trappian deposit" in India. Obviously the catalogue cards will not reveal anything about the above deposit. The map librarian therefore has to initiate a dialogue with the seeker so as to know exactly what he means by his query, what are the possible topics that may contain some information of his choice and then gradually hunt through the possible references to locate the appropriate map. It is quite likely that in some cases no fruitful result will be achieved, but the map librarian can at least, give the researcher some information on the possible sources for the data that he is trying to obtain.

There are, of course, a large majority of research workers who can name the specific thematic information that they need, they are also conversant of the

limitation of scale and can find for themselves, once the available map on their subject is supplied to them. The map librarian if he can assess the specific need of such researchers, can help them in providing cross-references and also reference for maps, diagrams, etc., about which the researcher may not be aware.

Miscellaneous Group

This group includes retired personnel, tourists, travelogue writers, journalists, business executives and even school teachers. They form about 28% of the total users and have little knowledge of maps which they want to use. They requisition specific map for their purpose and practically they do not have a clear idea about preparing their map either directly or from any other source. They more or less, require small scale maps to serve their purpose. In small scale maps, unnecessary details are often simplified, generalised and at times modified to some extent. The reliability of a small scale map depends much upon the sources of information from where it has been compiled. At this juncture, the map custodian of the Library helps in the right direction for maximum use.

The group requires education of preliminary cartography dealing with scale, cartographic technique, method of representation, methods of reproduction availability of data and multiple uses of a single map. Such education can be imparted while in the Library and the map custodian can educate them having knowledge in geography and long experience in the profession. In dealing with this group simple and complex geographical maps are both to be dealt. A population map with a dot method is a simple map but a map showing density of population per unit area of arable land is certainly a complex map. Similarly coloured maps are to be dealt with some caution for this group.

Students

The students form 26% of the total map user. This group is divided into two clear sub-groups, viz., the undergraduate students and postgraduate students. The requirements of the undergraduate student of geography are very simple. They consult maps of the area related to their field report or of their course of study. As they start learning cartography from this education level, perhaps they do not require any more education on cartography. For their simple demand, they seek the help of the map custodian in their research. They, in terms of education can be encouraged to visit and use the maps as much as possible so that in due course of time they become regular user of maps.

The picture of postgraduate students of geography is slightly different. Not only they visit the Division more frequently for some reference or the other, they use

maps for long duration and at times with number of maps of various subjects. While they choose the map themselves for their particular use, they sometimes incorporate information for their better use. They have developed a taste of using thematic maps and atlases. Being in the present education level they want to fit in themselves for the future days and knowing that thematic maps are now playing an important role in development and planning, they study the technique of modern thematic mapping portraying the complex socio-economic systems.

Regarding the education of the users of this student group much depends upon the course of cartography at their education level. It is a fact, that there is a considerable divergence in approach to cartographic education in Indian Universities. In India, cartography is taught along with geography. Only in recent years, a syllabus has been made for postgraduate degree course in cartography with two years duration. The Survey of India, Hyderabad is imparting training and it is expected that standard of cartography will be at par with international level.

Mountaineers & Trekkers

Among the map users, this group forms 7.5% of the total readership. This number was remarkable high in the eighties. This was due to the fact of acquiring the Mountaineering Atlas of the World vol. II (Japan) in which Himalayan area has been included. From 1985 onwards this number started decreasing gradually. Bhuruka Foundation Trust is an organisation, now largely responsible along with other associations and clubs of the climbers in supporting the mountaineers and trekkers by supplying them the required maps, information and equipments.

The mountaineers may be classed as a special category of map readers because of the fact that they have an intimate knowledge by virtue of their field of the mountainous areas for which they seek further information in the map. What they lack is, an idea about the scale of the map, significance of different symbols, contour patterns, etc., and therefore the concept of the terrain is not very clear to them by having a glimpse at the map. It is on this point that they need the help of the map librarian who can interpret to them the total effect of the symbols and contours. But, once they get to know preliminaries and identify certain spots known to them on the map, they can very quickly thereafter follow the maps in general. However, most of them still need the help of the map librarian in assessing the possible slope pattern, glaciers conditions, morainic platforms so that they can decide upon the routes of trekking or scaling the peak while in the field. The map also gives them an idea of the panoramic view of the area around the peak in which they are interested. This perspective is very helpful in identifying the peak in the field.

Casual

The last group counts only 2.9% of the total user. They include lawyers, bankers, biographers, with a slant towards literature, rural electrification board and trainee air pilot etc. Neither these users know much about the maps nor they are satisfied. They make some notes as per their interest and return the map within shortest possible time. If by chance, they do not get it, they somehow manage their work even without a map. It is somewhat like "Try Your Luck".

It is observed and felt that if this group of users stay a little longer, some arrangements can be made in the Library itself in order to solve their problem. They even can be verbally educated regarding the maps for which they will be benefited.

Conclusion

Maps as a special non-book material represent one of the oldest forms of information and communication known and are immensely valuable reference tools. National Library with its collection of maps can cater to multidisciplinary and diversified research. Automated systems of non-book material can help in strengthening such facilities. The National Library now needs to establish cooperative ventures with other National Libraries and major map collections of India and abroad. Such efforts will broaden the horizon of the present services being rendered within the limited resources and infrastructure. Positive steps in that direction will be the future trend of activities of the National Library.

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