

The Library Planning and Design of National Library, India (Bhasha Bhavan): A Study

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Abstract:

The libraries are social institutions. They possess organized collection of sources of information aiming to serve the social community. The main focus of any library is generally user driven. According to the 5th law of library science by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan “The library is a growing organism”. This law is directly related to the significance of library buildings and its design. Every aspect of planning a modern library building is done very carefully keeping in mind its physical outlook, aesthetics, type of users, flexibility, space, lighting, hazards and its management, etc. A National library of any country serves as a national repository of information and has the right of legal deposit. Often, their collections include numerous rare, valuable or significant works. The buildings of the National library hold a prestigious position and possess immense significance in the context of any nation. The authors have given an overview of the planning and design of the Bhasha Bhavan building of the National Library of India and the various functional aspects of planning a library building with theoretical representation of different sections of the library.

Keywords:

Library planning,
Library design,
Present status,
Bhasha Bhavan
building of the
National Library
of India.

1. Introduction:

A library is a knowledge hub. The libraries are social institutions. They possess organized collection of sources of information aiming to serve the social community. The main focus of any library is generally user driven. They help to promote literacy and the pure enjoyment of reading. They are also places where people can go to get information, whether it's for leisure, for study or for work.

According to the 5th law of library science by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan “The library is a growing organism”. This law is directly related to the significance of library buildings and its design. Planning and designing a library is important mainly for housing the collections of a library, creating a user friendly environment and for providing effective library services to the users. It is the responsible means of fulfilling future community library needs and the increasing growth of library collections.

At present the libraries are more than a building.^[1] The re-invention of library space

as well as of the library as 'place' to reflect the changing expectations and demands of users in an age of rapid developments in society and in information and communication technology (ICT) has become a major consideration for librarians and library strategists. ^[3] The forms of resources and services are changing. So every aspect of planning a modern library building is done very carefully keeping in mind its physical outlook, aesthetics, type of users, flexibility, space, lighting, hazards and its management, etc.

A National library of any country serves as a national repository of information, and has the right of legal deposit. Often, their collections include numerous rare, valuable or significant works. The buildings of the National library hold a prestigious position and possess immense significance in the context of any nation.

2. Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are:

- To provide an overview of the planning and design of the Bhasha Bhavan building of the National Library of India;
- To observe the various functional aspects of planning a library building;
- To provide a theoretical representation of different sections of the library;
- To analyze the library planning from the observations made.

3. Scope and coverage:

In this article the planning and design of the Bhasha Bhavan building of the National Library of India have been taken into consideration to find out various planning related key points and to identify how the services provided by the library can fit into its physical dimension along with the things those help libraries to plan and evaluate their services and meet the needs of their users in the most effective way their resources will allow.

4. Methodology:

To complete the article observation method has been used by us. Free flow of conversation using unstructured questioners with library staffs are also used to gather information. On the basis of findings analysis has been done and conclusion is drawn at the end of the article.

5. Limitations of the study:

Many parts of the library were inaccessible so they are not taken into consideration. Only the permissible parts for general viewers are considered here.

6. National library, India – a brief overview: ^[2]



The National library is the apex body of the library system of India. It is the largest library in the country with a collection in excess of 2.2 million books. It is an institution of national importance under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The library is designated to collect, disseminate and preserve the printed material produced in the country.

Serving as a public library, it is a permanent repository of all documents published in India. The library has a collection of rare documents. The library has elaborate arrangements for physical conservation of books for repository.

The library is situated on a scenic 30 acres (120,000sqm) Belvedere estate, near Alipore zoo in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta). It is 4 km from Esplanade, 10 km from Howrah station and 20 km from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport.

The buildings in the National library premises are heritage buildings. New buildings have also been constructed. The library building of the National library at Belvedere estate is - Bhasha Bhavan, Annexe building, New annexe building and laboratory building.

6.1. About Bhasha Bhavan: ^[2]



The Bhasha Bhavan is the newly constructed multistoried building. All the departments / divisions / Sections functioning from the main building (Belvedere house) have been shifted to the Bhasha Bhavan

during early 2010. Some departments / divisions / sections have also been shifted from the Annexe building to their designated spaces at Bhasha Bhavan.

The CPWD has submitted plans for a permanent exhibition gallery, which is being examined by the newly formed exhibitions committee. Other services like special toilets for the differently abled have been planned, and the CPWD has been asked to submit estimates. The first of such toilets shall be installed in Bhasha Bhavan. The building plans of the library have been submitted with the fire department and the Alipore police station the same month. Proposal for the closed circuit camera (CCTV) is also given by CPWD.

The outlook of the Bhasha Bhavan building is very modern which attracts the users. The greenery outside the building increases the aesthetic beauty. No noise of the traffic disturbs the users. The ground floor, first floor and second floor are only accessible by the public. The other floors are used for office purposes. The space arrangements are very perfect at Bhasha Bhavan. Corridors are spacious to move. Signs have been posted in the front entrance of Bhasha Bhavan directing wheel chair users and others to the ramp and ground floor access at the rear. Signs have also been planted on the stairs asking users to be careful when the steps are wet. Security Fire exit signs have been put up at all points at the Bhasha Bhavan. The Bhasha Bhavan is centrally air conditioned. The library is well maintained and clean. The building is hazardless.

7. Findings with discussions and analysis [Planning and design of National library, India (Bhasha Bhavan)]

7.1. First floor:

The entrance of the Bhasha Bhavan is in the first floor. After entering there is property counter followed by enquiry and sales counter and membership counter. The first floor also includes the general reading room, the lending section, science and technology division, bibliography division, stock verification division, braille section, english serials division, staff room and office of the assistant library and information officer.

7.1.1. Planning and design of the first floor in Bhasha Bhavan:

- ❑ **Floor plan:** The floors are made of tiles.
- ❑ **Interior decoration:** The interiors of the first floor are well decorated. It possesses exhibition space and special notice boards which provide information about the library and the eminent personalities associated with it. The walls are decorated with pictures of famous personalities which add an aesthetic value to the library. The portion of the walls is made of glass and others are white colored so the lights are reflected properly.
- ❑ **Lighting system:** The glass walls avoid direct sunlight but allow the natural light to come inside presence of fluorescent lights is very much soothing.

- ❑ **Furniture:** There is also a waiting place provided with steel chairs.
- ❑ **Air conditioning:** Air conditioning is mild here.
- ❑ **Space:** The moving place is comfortable.
- ❑ **Security:** The security system at the entrance is very much effective. There is presence of metal detector as well as security guard.
- ❑ **Washroom:** It includes washroom for both men and women. The toilets are properly planned and maintained.
- ❑ **Drinking water:** There is provision for drinking water provided with aqua guard.
- ❑ **Stairs:** The stairs are made of white marble stones.
- ❑ **Elevators:** Two elevators are present at the first floor that leads to all the other floors.

7.2. Main reading room:

The main reading room is at the first floor. The environment of the main reading room is very much inviting. The condition of the reading room is perfect in all the aspects. The room consists of the circulation counter, desk for the library and information officer, help desk, suggestion and complain box, conference room and an e-resource center.

7.2.1. Planning and design of the main reading room in Bhasha Bhavan:

- ❑ **Floor plan:** The floors are made of tiles white in color. At some places the floors are covered with colorful carpets.
- ❑ **Interior decoration:** The interior decoration of the general reading room is quite attractive. The walls are white colored and some parts of the outside walls are made of glass. Different kinds of beautiful murals increase the aesthetic value of the section. Some plants are also placed at the corners of the room in this section.
- ❑ **Lighting:** Natural lights that are daylights are allowed to enter through the large glass walls excluding the harmful direct sunlight. Fluorescent lights have been provided in all the parts of the section. The stack lighting is also very good.
- ❑ **Furniture:** The furniture in this section is made of wood. The furniture includes:
 - ✓ **Stacks:** The height of the stacks ranges between 6-7 feet. The width of the stacks is perfect for keeping books of different sizes. The stacks are properly placed. Separate stacks are provided for the new arrival books and reference books.
 - ✓ **Stools:** Adequate stools have been provided so that the user can have the ease to pick any of the books from any stacks.
 - ✓ **Study tables and chairs:** The chairs and tables are standard in height. The viewing distance between them are perfect. They are properly placed close to the stacks. Plenty of chairs and tables are provided to serve the population of the reading room.

- ✓ **Sofa:** A part of this section is furnished with sofa. They are very comfortable and relaxing for back rest.
- ✓ **Carrels:** Special seats have been allotted in the main reading room for accredited scholars.
- ✓ **Computer desks:** The computer desks are comfortable and adjustable.
- ✓ **Catalogue card cabinet:** Subject card catalogue is very much used in this section. The height of them is not more than 5 feet.
- ✓ **Desks for maps and atlas:** Large desks of medium height and width are provided for using the reference tools like the maps and atlas.
- ✓ **Desks for the office work:** The desks for the staffs are medium in height and are comfortable to work. The suggestion box in the main reading room has also been put back.
- ✓ **Newspaper stands:** Newspaper stands are provided for the current display of newspapers of different languages.
- ❑ **Equipments:** The section is provided with computers separately for OPAC use and internet. Provision of charging mobile and laptops are also a notable feature in this section. The computers and telephones are also used in the office area.
- ❑ **Air conditioning:** 15-25 degree celsius temperature is maintained all the time in the section.
- ❑ **Book lift:** Book lifts are present in the circulation counter of this section.
- ❑ **Toilets:** Separate washrooms for both male and female are provided for refreshment.
- ❑ **Fire prevention system:** Modern fire protection systems like fire extinguisher, fire alarm, fire emergency exits and fire doors are used in this section.
- ❑ **Security:** Security desks with security guards are provided outside the section.
- ❑ **Stairs:** The spiral stair case in this section lead to the Indian author's gallery. The stairs are made of white marble.
- ❑ **Space:** The space utilization is very good in this section.
- ❑ **Flexibility:** Though there is ample space in the section but the furniture in this section is immovable and lacks flexibility.

7.3. Lending section:

The lending section at the first floor of the library lends out books. This section also includes the cash counter. There is a partition made of glass in this section which separates the reading area and the area for office use.

7.3.1. Planning and design of the lending section in Bhasha Bhavan:

- ❑ **Floor plan:** The floors are made of white colored tiles.

- ❑ **Interior decoration:** The walls are white in color and the outside walls are made of glass.
- ❑ **Lighting:** Daylights are allowed to enter through the glass walls. Fluorescent lights are used in this section.
- ❑ **Furniture:** The furniture in this section is made of wood. The furniture includes:
 - ✓ **Stacks:** The height of the stacks ranges between 6-7 feet. The width of the stacks is perfect for keeping books of different sizes.
 - ✓ **Study tables and chairs:** The chairs and tables are standard in height and are close to the stacks.
 - ✓ **Cupboard:** The cupboards in this section are 5-6 feet in height.
- ❑ **Desks for the office work:** The desks for the staffs are medium in height and are comfortable to work.
- ❑ **Equipments:** The section is provided with computers and telephones for office use only.
- ❑ **Air conditioning:** 15-25 degree celsius temperature is maintained all the time in the section.
- ❑ **Book lift:** Book lifts are present in the lending counter of this section.
- ❑ **Fire prevention system:** Fire extinguisher and fire emergency exits are used in this section.
- ❑ **Security:** Security desks with security guards are appointed outside the section.
- ❑ **Space:** The space is well utilized.
- ❑ **Flexibility:** The furniture in this section is immovable.

7.4. Science and technology division:

Following the recommendations of the reviewing committee (1968), the science and technology division was set up in 1972. This division is in the first floor. The basic function of this division is to collect and disseminate the core material in science and technology. At present the division holds about 17,000 books and monographs and 800 current print periodicals. The division provides reading facilities and has an open access stack system. The division also consists of a well equipped room for the library and information officer.

7.4.1. Planning and design of the science and technology division in Bhasha Bhavan:

- ❑ **Floor plan:** The floors are made of white tiles.
- ❑ **Interior decoration:** The walls are white colored which reflects lights properly.
- ❑ **Lighting:** Fluorescent lights are used in all the parts of the section.
- ❑ **Furniture:** The furniture are as follows:

- ✓ **Stacks:** The stacks are made of iron in this section and their height ranges between 6-7 feet. The width of the stacks is perfect for keeping books of different sizes. The stacks are well organized.
- ✓ **Stools:** Stools have been provided so that the user can have the ease to pick the books.
- ✓ **Study tables and chairs:** The chairs and tables are made of wood and standard in height. The tables are of different sizes. The viewing distance between them are perfect. They are placed close to the stacks. Adequate number of chairs and tables are provided to serve the population.
- ✓ **Cupboards:** Steel cupboards are used.
- ✓ **Carrels:** Special seats and cubicles have been for eminent scholars. They are made of wood.
- ✓ **Computer desks:** The computer desks made of wood are comfortable and adjustable.
- ✓ **Catalogue card cabinet:** Subject card catalogue is very much used in this section. The height of them is not more than 5 feet and these are made of wood.
- ✓ **Desks for the office work:** The wooden desks for the staffs are medium in height and are comfortable to work.
- **Equipments:** The section is provided with computers separately for OPAC use and internet. The computers and telephones are also used in the office area.
- **Air conditioning:** 15-25 degree celsius temperature is always maintained.
- **Fire prevention system:** Fire protection systems like fire extinguisher and fire emergency exits are used.
- **Space:** The space utilization is very good in this section.
- **Flexibility:** The stacks are immovable and lack flexibility.

7.5. Children's library:

Children's libraries are special collections of books intended for juvenile readers and usually kept in separate rooms of general public libraries. They are an educational agency seeking to acquaint the young with the world's literature and to cultivate a love for reading.

The National library has a separate division for children at the ground floor. Equipped with books in English, Indian and a few foreign languages, the division provides children with reading material for information and fun.

The newly organized children's library was opened on 31 March 2010 in Bhasha Bhavan. No formal membership is required to use this section. Any child can enter the children's library, sign in a register and use the books. Books from the children's library are not lent out. At present the children's library hold about 28,000 books and many periodicals.

The children's library also consists of a well equipped room for the library and information officer.

7.5.1. Planning and design of the children's library in Bhasha Bhavan:

- ❑ **Floor plan:** The floors are made of tiles white in color. At some places the floors are covered with colorful carpets.
- ❑ **Interior decoration:** The interior decoration is very beautiful. The walls are very colorful that attracts the children. Different kinds of beautiful murals, pictures, colorful cartoon characters are painted on the walls. Some plants are also placed at the corners of the room in this section which makes the section more attractive.
- ❑ **Lighting:** Fluorescent lights have been provided in all the parts of the section. The stack lighting is also very good. Fancy lights are also used in some parts of the section.
- ❑ **Furniture:** The furniture in this section is made of wood. The furniture includes:
 - ✓ **Stacks:** The height of the stacks is low and ranges between 3-4 feet. Some stacks are curved. The width of the stacks is perfect for keeping books of different sizes. The stacks are properly placed. Separate stacks are provided for the new arrival books and reference books.
 - ✓ **Stools:** Adequate stools have been provided so that the children can have the ease to pick any of the books from any stacks.
 - ✓ **Study tables and chairs:** The chairs and tables are low in height. Some tables are curved and round shaped. These are adjustable. The viewing distance between them for children are perfect. They are properly placed close to the stacks. Plenty of chairs and tables are provided to serve them.
 - ✓ **Sofa:** A large cushioned sofa is provided. They are very comfortable and relaxing for back rest.
 - ✓ **Carrels:** Cubicles are also provided in this section.
 - ✓ **Computer desks:** The computer desks are comfortable and adjustable.
 - ✓ **Desks for Maps and atlas:** Large desks of medium height and width are provided for using the reference tools like the maps and atlas.
 - ✓ **Desks for the office work:** The desks for the staffs are medium in height and are comfortable to work.
 - ✓ **Television:** An LCD television and computers have been installed.
- ❑ **Equipments:** The section is provided with computers. The computers and telephones are also used in the office area.
- ❑ **Air conditioning:** 20-25 degree celsius temperature is maintained all the time in the section.
- ❑ **Toilets:** washrooms for children are provided for refreshment.

- ❑ **Fire prevention system:** Modern fire protection systems like fire extinguisher, fire emergency exits are used in this section.
- ❑ **Space:** The space utilization is very good in this section.
- ❑ **Flexibility:** apart from the stacks, the other furniture in this section is movable and possesses flexibility.

There are plans for further additions to make the reading room to more attractive to young users.

7.6. Newspapers and periodicals section:

All the newspapers and periodicals in Indian languages are received and processed in their respective language divisions. The library has a rich collection of late 19th and early 20th century newspapers and periodicals but almost all of them are incomplete sets. There are catalogues for periodicals, newspapers and gazettes available in the library up to 1953. They are kept in bound volume. The newspapers and periodicals section is in the second floor of Bhasha Bhavan.

7.6.1. Planning and design of the newspapers and periodicals section in Bhasha Bhavan:

- ❑ **Floor plan:** The floors are made of tiles white in color. At some places the floors are covered with colorful carpets.
- ❑ **Interior decoration:** The walls are white colored.
- ❑ **Lighting:** Fluorescent lights have been provided in all the parts of the section. The stack lighting is also very good.
- ❑ **Furniture:** The furniture in this section includes:
 - ✓ **Stacks:** The stacks are made of iron and height of the stacks ranges between 8 feet. The width of the stacks is perfect for keeping the newspapers. The distance between each stack is 4 feet. The stacks are properly placed.
 - ✓ **Stools:** Adequate wooden stools have been provided.
 - ✓ **Study tables and chairs:** The chairs and tables are standard in height. The viewing distance between them are perfect. They are made of wood. The width of the tables is standard. Plenty of chairs and tables are provided to serve the crowd.
 - ✓ **Newspaper stands:** Newspaper stands are provided for the current display of newspapers of different languages. The newspapers are kept in polythene bags.
 - ✓ **Cabinets:** Cabinets are used for keeping microform rolls in boxes.
 - ✓ **Catalogue card cabinet:** Catalogue card is the mode of access to the news papers.
- ❑ **Equipments:** The computers and telephones are also used in the office area.
- ❑ **Air conditioning:** 18-20 degree celsius temperature and 50% relative humidity is maintained all the time in the section.
- ❑ **Book lift:** Book lifts are present in the circulation counter of this section.

- ❑ **Fire prevention system:** Modern fire protection systems like fire extinguisher, fire alarm, fire emergency exits, fire doors are used in this section.
- ❑ **Space:** The space utilization is very good in this section.
- ❑ **Flexibility:** Though there is ample space in the section but the furniture in this section is immovable and lacks flexibility.

8. Conclusion:

The Bhasha Bhavan of the National Library of India is a perfect example of ideal modern library building. The planning and design of the library building is significant in all the aspects. This article has helped us to gather a practical experience enriching our theoretical knowledge.

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