5

BASICS OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

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Structure

Learning Objectives

We hope that after going through Unit 5, you will be able to

❖ Form your own understanding of various aspects of information dissemination.

❖ Share your understanding of the basics of information dissemination with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) organizing adult education projects and programs.

❖ Facilitate the NGOs efforts to develop skills and techniques required for organizing information dissemination services for the benefit of the adult community.

5.1 Introduction

Unit 5 pertains to acquiring skill and applying the same to your professional activities and we hope that Unit 5 will be of especial relevance to your day-to-day work at adult learning set-up. Information dissemination is a proactive

information service designed to educate and inform focused groups of users on social, economic and educational issues, problems, and opportunities of interest to them. It requires systematic planning, collection, organization, and storage of information for its delivery to the target audience using different media and communication means.

Let us now discuss the importance of information dissemination before moving on to a community's information needs.

5.2 Importance of Information Dissemination

It is a fact that survival and self-development are the major issues central to several adults in many communities. The need to raise their socio-economic status is thus necessary and urgent. This requires empowering adults, the under-privileged and economically weaker sections of society with technical skills and education. However, organizing programs meant mainly for raising awareness, education, and training are information and communication dependent. Information dissemination as such constitutes an important and critical factor for the success of adult education and learning programs.

More often than not, organizers perceive information dissemination to be a one-way form of communication, circulating information and advice mainly through mass media in a cost-effective and timely manner. In some cases, the media are posters and pamphlets, while in some others reliance is exclusively on text-based print medium. However, two-way form of communication is relatively more relevant and effective for organizing awareness programs and activities in adult education.

5.2.1 Problem-centered Nature of Adult Learning

Essentially, adult learning is more of a problem-centered rather than content-centered activity. In content-centered learning, the emphasis is on refining knowledge that already exists, upgrading existing level of skills, and nurturing and shaping innate potential and talent of individuals and groups in a society. In problem-centered learning, the emphasis is on applying information/ knowledge as well as skills for finding solutions to the problems and issues confronting the adult community.

Let us look at the special character of information dissemination for adults in a community.

5.2.2 Special Nature of Information Dissemination for Adult Community

In the context of this Unit we have used the phrase 'adult community' to refer to the groups of adult people, who have something in common such as low level of literacy with a higher level of knowledge and skills, yet poor living standards and poor economic conditions. Special features of disseminating information to adult community are as follows:

❖ Information dissemination programs, organized mainly for adult community, need not be always one way such as through mass media alone.

❖ For vitality and impact, adult educators need to organize information dissemination activities in classroom mode and structure them around face-to-face

interactions. One of their aims could be to offer services such as counseling, referral, practical help, advice, advocacy, community education, etc.

❖ Counseling may be on livelihood issues such as employment, occupation, marketing, and new sources of revenue.

❖ Practical help may mean aids such as facilitating and liaison with different government agencies to address day-to-day problems.

❖ The scope of information dissemination could as well expand to training and educational programs to improve employment potential of adult-learners.

❖ The two-way form of communication needs to dominate information dissemination activity, with focus on contents relevant to problems of the adult community.

❖ It is essential that communication with adult community takes place in the language that they understand.

❖ It is essential that information content in verbal and written communications to the adult community should be of a type of interest and relevance to adult community (Type of information content as discussed under Section 5.3.2).

❖ Adult educators may also offer content-oriented services mainly for the benefit of the NGO staff engaged in education, research and training in adult education and learning.

See Box 5.1 on the possible aims of information dissemination oriented programs.

Box 5.1 Aim of Information Dissemination Oriented Programs

Information dissemination oriented programs, for the benefit of the adult community, may pursue the following aims.

❖ To sensitize adult learners on the importance and relevance of information

❖ To give practical information for problem solving

❖ To spread awareness in adult community about their rights and privileges as well as responsibilities

❖ To assist adult community in identifying markets for their produce, products, and skill sets, and introducing and publicizing such produce and products in the identified markets

❖ To supply and popularize among the adult community members relevant market data on best market prices

❖ To educate NGO staff on the intellectual property rights issues and their management (Intellectual property rights refer to protection given by law to intellectual property such as patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets.)

❖ To apprise all NGOs engaged in adult education on recent and major developments in adult learning

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5.3 Customizing Information for Dissemination

For organizing information dissemination programs for the benefit of the adult community, the first step is to assess and understand their

information needs based on issues of relevance to adult community, and to customize the information accordingly for dissemination.

5.3.1 Issues of Relevance to Adult Community

As per local community members' choices, needs, aspirations, an adult educator is likely to arrive at a very specific list of needs. All the same, we may say that broadly the issues of relevance to adult community with diverse cultural backgrounds, cover a wide spectrum, ranging from rights and privileges matters at one end to health, housing, education, market and marketing issues on the other. We find some of the following issues have been widely reported in literature (Venkatappiah 2004, Vashishth 1995, and Kumar 2004).

❖ Community profile including cultural, civilization of the local area

❖ Redressal of grievances – contact points, government agencies/ departments, etc.

❖ Rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities, welfare measures, legal matters

❖ Consumer services, daily necessities, provisions of grains and foods at reasonable rates

❖ Environment information, family, health and safety, government information

❖ Health care information: immunization, hospitals, admission procedures, fist aid, grandma's remedies, sanitation, hygiene

❖ Housing and schemes mainly intended for disadvantaged groups

❖ Government welfare schemes for weaker sections, rural development, etc.

❖ Transport, bus, rail, and other modes

❖ Sources of finance, banks, government subsidies, loan schemes, and other money matters

❖ Privileges of senior citizens, women's issues and their solutions

❖ Youth problems, citizens rights and duties

❖ Education, skill development and training programs, admission procedures, and costs, grants and scholarships

❖ Self-employment schemes and programs, rural development schemes

❖ Sports information, games, arts

❖ Agricultural information such as new farming methods, seeds, insecticides, fertilizers, weather, vermin-culture,

❖ Recycling of waste material

❖ Market information, product, produce prices information

❖ Ongoing trends in the field of adult learning

❖ Content oriented information for education, research, and training

5.3.2 Assessing Information Needs

You may adopt participatory approach to assess the issues and problems confronting the community and to understand their information needs. The adult individuals in the community may not be in a position to articulate their information needs as clearly as research and academic communities communicate. However, by holding interactive sessions with the community members, adult educators can identify topics of relevance to their survival, and accordingly judge/interpret the kind of content going to be of use to them, understand their linguistic concerns and preferences, and their media preferences for communication, etc. You may also use the data in past reports on adult literacy program, research papers published on the subject

to update and supplement findings made from interactive face-to-face sessions with adult community. While identifying information needs, adult educator would assess what types of information contents delivered in the service are going to be of interest and relevance to the adult community in addressing their issues and problems.

Activity 5.1

Identify the issues and problems of unemployed, literate adults in farmer community and the types of information content, media, and language you would plan for their socio-economic development.

5.3.3 Types of Information for Communication

Theoretically, information generated for communication and dissemination is of different types as stated below. However, not all types are of relevance to the adult community. Assessment about usefulness of a particular type of information would differ from community to community given their diverse social and cultural backgrounds. It mainly depends upon the level of their literacy and education, the issues and problems of relevance to them, and their preferences for language and communication media (means of communication are radio and television, newspapers, and magazines that reach or influence people widely). Adult educators would need to customize information for dissemination to adult community or to the team of adult educators according to their needs. You may consider the following different types of information for the purpose.

❖ Bibliographic information
❖ Practical information: markets for local products, produce, new employment opportunities, where to go for addressing grievances, etc
❖ Referral information
❖ Statistical data: adult literacy data
❖ Analytical information: analyzing quantitative data for discovering trends

❖ Condensed information: concise picture of thought contents described in documents such as digests, abstracts
❖ Consolidated information: literature reviews/ state-of-the-art reports to catch with latest developments in the specific areas of interest
❖ Repackaged information: to educate a non-technical person on technical topics such as popular/encyclopedic information sufficient to understand or revive one's knowledge in the subject

Let us discuss in brief each of the types of information contents in the service.

Bibliographic information: It is about the identity and records of books, articles, and other published material. It also refers to listings of bibliographic records, listings of cataloguing records, listings of references, listings of articles, etc. Such information service outputs are of value and relevance for gathering and understanding knowledge in the subject, and generating new knowledge through research studies and investigations.

Practical information: It is the information having value and meaning in problem-solving situation acquired through cognitive process of studying, understanding, and analyzing contents, or knowledge acquired through learning experience.

Referral information: It is the information about experts, people, contacts, or institutions that serve as useful referral sources in gathering practical information, knowledge, or even documentary information.

Statistical information: It is about temporal, spatial, institutional data on various activities and programs in different subject areas. For example, adult literacy data of different geographical regions spread over time.

Analytical information: It is the information generated by analyzing temporal, institutional, and spatial data for discovering trends. For example, quantitative data on adult literacy analyzed on time series basis provide insight about strengths and weakness of adult literacy programs on comparative basis.

Condensed information: It is the information generated to provide a concise picture of thought contents described in documents. Examples include digests, abstracts, synopsis, brief summaries, etc.

Consolidated information: It is the information generated by analyzing and compressing thought contents from documents that have appeared on the subject. It gives a critical and consolidated overview of the topic, assessing and reviewing contributions made in the field over time, presenting complete overview of trends and developments in the field, the latest developments in field, the state-of-the-art in the field, and the highest level of achievement in the field, etc.

Repackaged information: It is the information generated to educate a non-technical person on a subject of importance. It gives a complete but concise picture of the subject easy to understand and comprehend. For example, popular articles, like presentation on the importance and relevance of right to information Act.

5.3.4 Media and Language for Communication

The information dissemination programs and projects, planned for the benefit of the adult community, cannot be effective unless the media and the language used for communication of contents are meaningful to the adult community. The media most commonly used for communication are (i) oral/verbal communication, (ii) written communication, (iii) visual communication, and (iv) multi-media communication.

i) **Oral communication** is by word of mouth when two or more persons meet and talk directly, face-to-face, or by telephone. Both these forms are oral and not verbal.

ii) **Verbal communication** is through words, both written and spoken, such as group meetings and presentations, and informal talks.

iii) **Visual communication** (drawings, photographs, pictures, etc) is more effective than any number of words.

iv) **Multi-media communication** (combining text, visual, graphics, sound, and motion pictures) is still more effective.

Given their low literacy level, yet higher level of language and communication skills, communication to adult community may limit to oral, visual, and multi-media. Adult educators may of course adopt written means of communication when the target audience reaches the requisite level of competence in reading and writing. The community would be able to receive and comprehend the message conveyed only

if it understands the language used in communication. The language used in oral communication is, therefore, of great significance. It has to be the one that the community understands and is comfortable with it in face-to-face interactions.

5.4 Approaches to Information Dissemination

Information dissemination requires systematic collection, organization, and storage of information relevant to the needs of adult community. There are several approaches to capturing relevant information both content-oriented information and problem-oriented information. Some approaches are traditional while some others are innovative. Adult educators can generate a series of services after gathering information through such approaches. Unit 10 will discuss the how or application aspect of information dissemination services. Let us here look at different models of collecting information.

5.4.1 Model 1: Searching Indexed Resources

This model is more suited for collecting content-oriented information. Here we capture information from indexed information resources such as multidisciplinary and specialized databases, library catalogues, repositories, digital libraries, web resources. Information captured from such resources is first stored in the database created for the purpose before it goes to the target audience (see Figure 5.1).
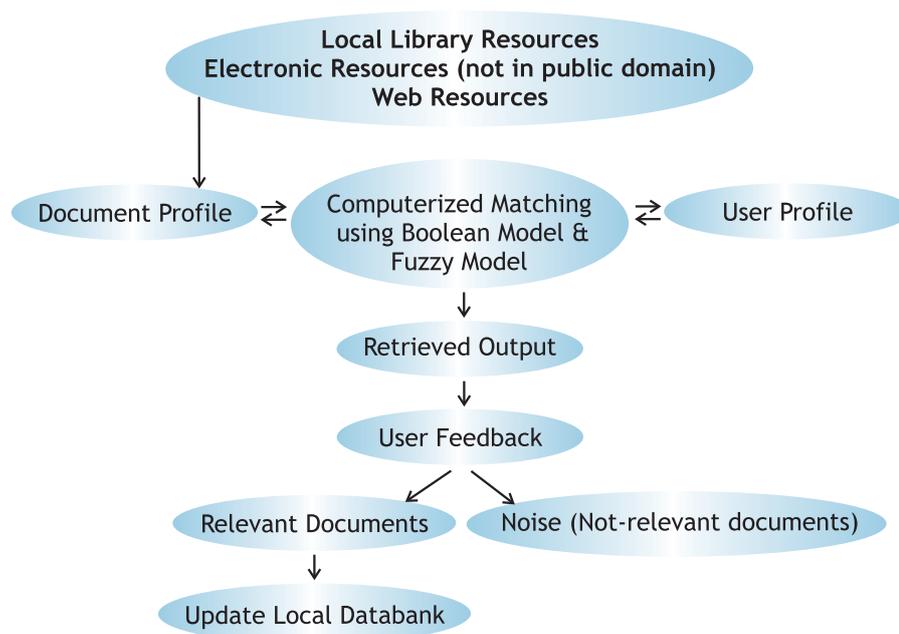
The indexed information resources

**Figure 5.1: Information Dissemination
Model 1: Library Services Generated using Indexed Resources**

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useful for searching content-oriented information are of the following types.

- ❖ Electronic databases and Online bibliographic services
- ❖ Local library catalogues
- ❖ Digital libraries and repositories on the Internet
- ❖ Web resources

We will now discuss each of the types of sources for content-oriented information.

Electronic databases: Electronic databases mainly index primary sources of information such as journals (including scholarly journals, review journals, and popular journals), conference proceedings, and research reports. Such sources of information generally engage in publishing original work in the subject. Journals publish wide variety of papers such as general, review, theoretical, and developmental papers focusing on new developments, economic and commercial information, practical applications, new tools and products, etc. Conference proceedings contain original and unpublished research, covering case studies, and state-of-the-art reports of topical interest. Research reports are institutional reports reporting findings of research projects of social, economic, and cultural relevance. Such sources are excellent sources of information for discovering latest trends or understanding the impact of new measures in the field. Evidently, primary information sources are more useful for updating knowledge in the subject, understanding overall trends in the subject, but not for searching and collecting problem-oriented information.

Consequent upon electronic publishing, multidisciplinary and specialized database have become available online for searching. Some are bibliographic

databases (with or without abstracts) while others are full-text offering access to the original articles in the archives dating back to say 5 to 10 years. By entering in the database search menu, search terms related to a topic, individuals are able to retrieve information about articles of interest. The search outputs from databases categorized as select listings of articles, bibliographies, and full-text articles and papers. Such outputs form the basis for generating analytical information, preparing state-of-the-art reports for latest developments in the subject, etc.

Databases are largely commercial products and are available for online access on subscription basis. However, some databases offer free access online. We have listed below only some of them. You can obtain additional information on free databases by searching the Internet.

- ❖ Ingenta
- ❖ Findarticles.com www.findarticles.com
- ❖ ERIC- World's largest digital library of educational literature http://www.eric.ed.gov/
- ❖ POPLINE® - World's largest bibliographic database on population, family planning, and related health issues. http://db.jhuccp.org/ics-wpd/popweb/

Online Bibliographic Service: Online bibliographic services such as DIALOG, OCLC, BLAISE, ESA-IRS, and Silver-Platter offer online access to commercial bibliographic databases, cataloging databases, trade catalogues, standards and patents on fee basis. Such services are of immense importance to libraries that do not subscribe to electronic databases but do need to access them on occasional basis.

Library catalogues are the tools for accessing library holdings comprising books, journals, reports, etc. Digital libraries on the Internet and Web resources are also useful sources of information on books.


Activity 5.3

List ten online databases in health and medicine using the Internet.

5.4.2 Model 2: Non-Indexed Sources

This model is more suited to meeting needs for problem-centered information. It entails browsing non-indexed sources of information for capturing and storing the relevant data first in the databank created for the purpose and later applying it for problem solving, educating, training, and enlarging the choices of the target users (see Figure 5.2).
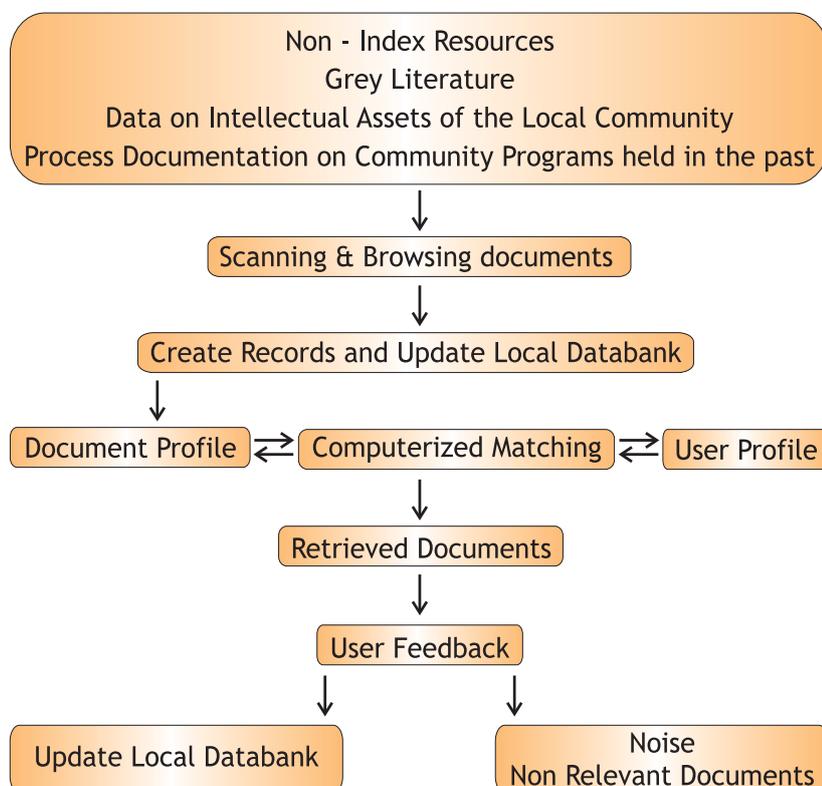
**Figure 5.2: Information Dissemination
Model 2: Library Services Generated using Non-indexed Resources**

You can categorize non-indexed information resources in the following heads.

❖ Grey literature
❖ Reference sources such as product directories
❖ Capturing data about intellectual assets of the local community

❖ **Grey literature:** You can refer it as non-conventional literature. It comprises documents, not published commercially such as census, statistics, government reports, legislations, patents, conference proceedings, theses, preprints, research reports, newsletters,

pamphlets, annual reports, and technical reports. Grey literature also comprises newspapers even though they produced commercially. Such documents are often original and comprehensive sources of information and provide access to the latest research in a particular area. However, these sources of information are difficult to search and access compared to traditional sources for two reasons: (i) typically not collected and acquired by libraries systematically and (ii) not well indexed for retreival. Agencies such as government, academia, business or industry, usually produce them both in print and electronic format.

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Activity 5.4
List information sources on Indian patents using the Internet.

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❖ **Reference sources:** These are typically comprehensive information sources compiled mainly for reference purpose rather than reading them cover to cover. These works are informative in nature and emphasize the documentation of statistical data. Examples of reference works are: almanac, atlas, concordance, dictionary or lexicon, thesaurus, directory, encyclopedia, gazetteer, and handbook, etc.

❖ **Local cultural wealth:** The local communities in several areas are rich in traditional knowledge, traditional art and artistry, cultural resources, natural resources, agro biodiversity wealth, etc. The knowledge about such wealth and resources generally remains undocumented. There is need to capture information about these resources and preserve them for posterity. One can the data needed for the purpose from process documents produced by NGOs, published sources of information, and supplementing this data by field surveys of the area. Procedurally, it is better to first document information about local cultural wealth and resources in the database and later use for information dissemination to support awareness programs, and education and training programs.

5.4.3 Model 3: Establishing Public Platforms for Reaching Out to Community Members (Nicknamed Choupal)

This is an innovative model for establishing communication links with the community for education, learning, and addressing issues of importance to the local community such as right to information, product marketing, health, job opportunities, etc. The basis of this model is on the philosophy of community-based participation, wherein the people from within the locality come together at designated venue for discussion and exchange information. Even this model is novel, but conceptually this approach in not new. Village 'Choupals' have traditionally been the instruments of communication. What is new is the application of the information technology for giving wider reach to the participating communities, enabling them access to new markets over Internet. Secondly, the contemporary 'Choupal' model has the involvement of facilitators such as the

'Non-Governmental Organizations' playing their role as link between the village community on one hand and government and private agencies in the marketplace on the other. States like Tamilnadu, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan have put this conceptual framework into practice. (World Bank Report 2006).   See Box 5.2 for some case studies pertaining to practical application of model 3.

Activity 5.5

Search the Internet to find out information five ICT based projects on poverty alleviation in India.

Box 5.2 Case Studies Reflecting the Application of 'Choupal' Model

Case Study 1 - Information Village Research Project

Information Village Project is the initiative of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, a non-governmental organization founded by Prof. M S Swaminathan. (http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/egov/ifip/feb2006/article3.htm) This project employs technology as a tool for empowering the poor for reaching the unreached, who need access to information that they can immediately use to their advantage Local volunteers collect information from the markets, weather office, government departments, etc. Transmission of this information goes to the nine villages over the local area networks. In villages without steady power supply, the villagers use the substitute of solar energy and charged batteries. The volunteers and representatives of the community meet at a designated place regularly for sharing and exchanging information. The project is known for innovative use of technologies for reaching the so far not-reached communicating to them the information they can use to their advantage and helping them to realize their innate potential. Local volunteers, mostly women, operate the knowledge centers, and gather the locale specific information. It is an example of bottom up approach, demand driven and need-based program for empowering the poor some of them still below the poverty line.

Case Study 2 – Warna Wired Village Project

This project is the initiative of National Informatics Centre undertaken in collaboration with the   Government of Maharashtra, and Warna Vibhag Shikshan Mandal. This is an example of top to bottom approach in information dissemination for educating farmers, cultivators, and others on latest crop cultivation practices in respect of major crops, pest and disease control, marketing information, dairy and sugarcane processing practices. (http://www.apdip.net/projects/2003/in/cases) The NIC has set up village kiosks in the Warna area, computerized and networked for access and sharing of information. Since the people in the area are not literate, kiosk operators lend help to disseminate information to the villager visiting the kiosks. Each kiosk has 8 to 10 computers linked to VSAT for network connectivity through NIC. The project was initiated is 1998 and is jointly organized by the Government of India through the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the Government of Maharashtra and Warna Cooperative Society.

Case Study 3 – E-Choupals and Choupal Sagars

It is an excellent example of private sector participation in marketing services to the farmers for marketing using information technologies. ITC has opened up business model e-choupal telecenters covering 30,000 villages in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. (http://www.apdip.net/projects/2003/in/cases) It is also planning to extend its e-choupal models to cover 100,000 villages across in the next two years and is looking at investing Rs 50 million (or 5 crore) per 50 e-choupals. It was in

June 2000 that ITC began its e-business operations with six e-choupals in Madhya Pradesh. The company plans to set up 'Choupal Sagar', a multiple service centre for every cluster of 50 e-choupals. This multiple service centre will accommodate warehouses, retail stores, a fuel station, a training and health centre. ITC does not employ any marketing or advertising to promote its e-business model. The company's field teams directly go to Indian villages to create awareness for its e-choupals. With the help of audio-visuals, they show the benefits of the project of mutual interest to villagers. After selecting an operator (sanchalak) in a particular village, ITC trains him or her to run the Internet centre. However, the real work still lies in educating villagers to use Internet centers effectively.

Case Study 4 – Gyandoot Project

Gyandoot project in Madhya Pradesh is an example of grassroots level participation of local people at village level for socio-economic development. Under this project, twenty information centres (soochanalayas) have been set up in five blocks of Dhar district. (http://www.apdip.net/projects/2003/in/cases) These are located in the premises of the office of village panchayat (panchayat ghars) for availing of their technical and physical infrastructure such as power, furniture, equipments. The librarian in the centre (called Suchak) provides technical and information support for running activities such as computer literacy, desktop publishing. Interestingly, nearly half-a-million people in Dhar district are using these services.

Activity 5.6

Search the following website for information on impact of e-information village.
http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/egov/ifip/feb2006/article3.htm

5.5 Database Creation

Libraries supporting adult education and learning programs would need to create a database for organizing and storing the data/ information they capture for the purpose of dissemination. Such a database could come handy for disseminating the same information repeatedly, if so required.

5.5.1 The First Step

The first step in creating a database is to create bibliographic records conforming to established bibliographic standards such as the i) standards for bibliographic description, and ii) standards for record format

❖ **Standards for Bibliographic Description**

There is International Standard for Bibliographic Descriptions (ISBDs),

created for different types of publications and media. These include ISBD (M) for monographs, ISBD (S) for serials, ISBD (NBM) for non-book materials, ISBD (ER) for electronic resource (IFLA Committee on Cataloguing. ISBD(G)). These ISBDs prescribe the common way for presenting data elements in the bibliographic record, a pre-defined order separated by prescribed punctuations. The need for establishing standards for bibliographic description had arisen from the fact that without common standards libraries would not be able to exchange bibliographic information. You will find a detailed discussion on these standards in Unit 9.

Bibliographic description is also about syntax for describing the contents of

bibliographic elements. For example, it helps to learn the skill of rendering the name of personal author or corporate author in author field or of writing the statement of responsibility. I may also tell you about the filing elements in a cataloguing record. You can control such syntax related issues by using cataloguing code: Anglo-American Cataloging Code-2 (AACR-2) (American Library Association. 2002).

❖ **Standards for Record Format**

The term record format first came into being when user computers sought it for cataloguing and cataloguing database. Essentially, record format is a standard for representing bibliographic data in machine-readable form for exchanging data between the libraries. Standards provide a common way of organizing machine-readable records so that they users can easily exchange records. A number of standard formats schemes have been created. These include USMARC, CANMARC, UKMARC, MARC21, CCF, and UNIMARC. (Saur 1994, Simmons and Hopkinson (Eds). 1998, MARC 21 Manual http://www.loc.gov/marc/) Such standard record formats comprise prescribed bibliographic data elements as well as prescribed codes to identify data elements. The importance of standard record format lies in the fact that libraries can exchange such records without any loss of data and thus libraries can benefit by sharing their cataloguing or bibliographic resources.

You will find a detailed description about these standards in Unit 9 on Standards.

5.5.2 Record Structure

The term record structure often implies record format. However, record format is generally the broader term and often refers to a combination of record structure, content designation, and content of the record. The record structure specifies the structure of bibliographic/ cataloguing record. It consists of

❖ A record label consisting of 24 characters,

❖ A directory consisting of a 3-digit tag of each data field, along with its length and its starting character position relative to the first data field, and

❖ Data fields of variable length, each separated by a field separator.

❖ ISO 2709 further specifies that the data in fields may optionally be preceded by indicators and subdivided into subfields.

5.5.3 Software for Creating Database

The libraries need to acquire software for creating records in machine-readable format. This could be either an integrated library management software or single module software exclusively for database creation only. The software acquired and used by the library for record creation must support the standards for bibliographic exchange format, and standard record format.

5.6 Conclusion

After completing this Unit, the learner would come to understand the importance of information dissemination and the role that such a proactive service

can play in addressing the social, economic and educational issues and problems of interest to adult community. They would also come to

learn of issues and problems confronting adult community and how could they use information dissemination services for raising awareness about opportunities in the marketplace for improving their socio-economic status. The learners would also come to learn what type of information is useful in planning communication to the adult community for addressing their day-to-day problems, improving their employment potential, or developing their innate potential. The learners would also learn about different models available for planning and organizing information dissemination services. To make impact, they would have place greater emphasis on offering proactive information services, and opening avenues for interactive sessions with the target community, such as E-Chouplas and Choupal Sagars and deploying all such innovative means that interest and benefit the target adult community.

5.7 Apply What You Have Learnt

If you have completed all the activities, given in the various sections of Unit 5, you would have learnt to apply the information provided. Further to this input, you may write a short account of how you plan to augment your efforts to disseminate information received at your end among those connected with your adult learning set-up.