

# 1.4 Academic Libraries and Technology in Developing Countries in the Twenty-First Century

R.N. Sharma

## Introduction

The present recession and economic crisis have made a deep impact on all countries of the world but the developing nations have suffered more than developed nations. The recovery is very slow and libraries have not been able to serve the needs of their users due to budget and staff cuts and even services have been cut in many academic libraries. They have been struggling as usual to improve their services, introduce technology, and catch up with libraries of developed nations. There are 150 developing countries in the world (“List of Developing Countries. As Declared by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs” 2009), and a majority of developing countries are located in Africa, Latin America, Asia. They are often nations that were colonized by another nation in the past. The populations of “[developing] countries are generally very poor but with high birth rates. In general they are not as industrialized or technologically advanced as the first world. The majority of the countries in the world fit this classification” (Chaliand 2005). A few countries including Brazil, China, and India have made some progress.

Libraries have been part of the academia since founding of the first university in the world known as Takshila University in Taxila, India in 700 BC (Sharma 2006). Academic libraries have played a very important part in supporting students and faculty in their curriculum and research needs and preparing the leaders of tomorrow. They have also been instrumental in storing and retrieving information for their scholars and other researchers all over the world from rich to poor nations.

Many changes have been introduced in academic libraries since 700 BC to meet the growing and changing needs of students and faculty including the methods of obtaining information from them. During ancient times, information was written and stored on clay tablets and handwritten materials. This method was changed to printed materials during medieval times. Then microforms, CD-ROMs, and online storage methods were introduced in the twentieth century including databases on the World Wide Web (Sharma 2006).

Introduction of technology is still very new to the profession of academic libraries and its users all over the world. With the introduction of punch card