

Books shelved

The Nehru Centre Library is the new place to be for all book lovers, says **Huzan Tata**.



STASHIA D SOUZA

Book a seat Nehru Centre Library offers a huge reading space for bookworms

Ronald Dahl's most popular character, a bibliophile Matilda Wormwood had only one place of solace away from the crazy world around – her local library. There's good news for all the "real-life Matildas" in town. Relunched in November, the Nehru Centre Library is the perfect hidey-hole for all students, researchers and avid readers.

The library houses over 30,000 books and occupies a sprawling 10,000 sq ft area. Large glass windows let in natural light, making the room a perfect place to while away the hours leafing through rare tomes. In its earlier humbler avatar, the library was housed in a tiny room below Nehru Planetarium. Relocating the library to the Discovery of India building next door, now ensures a prominent space for it within the Nehru Centre. "The idea is to give the people of Mumbai, an excellent reading space where they can just sit and browse [through books], surf the net, [and] refer to the catalogue," said Arati Desai, librarian and

documentation officer.

Unlike a lot of other libraries, this one doesn't require any form-filling or identification checks. You simply enter, sign the register, search for a book, and sit to read. There's no membership required, and no fees to be paid.

The library is a hybrid space, with both books and technology available at the same location. Internet enabled computers and audio-visual stations are at hand here, and college geeks rejoice – laptops are allowed but sadly there's no free Wi-Fi. Amidst this sunshine-y development for book lovers, the only bummer is that this is purely a reference library. That is, you can read and research but no borrowing of any of its massive catalogue of books is allowed.

Several of the books at the NC Library are not searchable on Google or available on Amazon. There's an online catalogue,

easily accessible on the Internet, that lists all its titles, including magazines and journals. From fiction and non-fiction books as old as the *Baburnama* to copies of the *National Geographic* magazine from January 1946 onwards, the library has a vast collection. A 5,000 keyword thesaurus has

also been compiled, to make it easier to search through the database. All you have to do is look up your desired titles and give the list to a staff member. Proceed to find a quiet spot by those large windows and your books will be delivered in a bit.

On the cards are plenty of activities like book readings and discussions, to help

bring in the crowds. Also being planned are workshops for the technologically challenged and senior citizens, to familiarise them with using the online catalogue. Surely Dahl and Matilda would approve of this one.

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Nehru Centre Library, First Floor, Discovery of India Building, Annie Besant Road, Worli (2498-3921). Visit www.facebook.com/NehruCentreLibrary, www.nehrucentre.org/library.html. Log on to nehrucen-koha.informindia.co.in to access the catalogue. Mon-Fri & first and third Sat 10am-6pm; second and fourth Sat 10am-2pm.

Library round-up

JN Petit Library

It is part of a heritage structure that houses over 1,50,000 various titles. The books are stocked on the first floor of a Gothic building, and the second floor has a large reading room. The annual fee is just ₹2,000, and allows you to borrow three books and two magazines for a fortnight. Forging out ₹10,000 can make you a lifetime member. Located in a school district of sorts, it's fitting that there are plenty of children's books available.

Near Khadi Bhandar, DN Road, Fort (2204-8463). Mon-Sat 10am-4.30pm.

American Library

Open to everyone but only members can borrow books and periodicals, this library has over 11,000 books, magazines and DVDs relating to American culture. There are books available in Gujarati, Hindi and Marathi as well. A kid's corner and a DVD viewing station are also a part of the library. Becoming a member is easy – anyone above 16 years of age has to show a valid photo ID and pay ₹400 a year. Members can borrow four books and two magazines for three weeks at a time.

Visit mumbai.usconsulate.gov/theamericanlibrary.html. Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm.

Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya Library

Entering Mani Bhavan, Mahatma Gandhi's former city home will make you feel a part of history. The library on the ground floor of this heritage site has around 40,000 books relating to Gandhian thought. Just like the museum it resides in, the library and reading room are free and open to all. The only drawback – this is a reference library.

Visit www.gandhi-manibhavan.org. Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm.