Public Libraries in Srinagar and Budgam Districts of Jammu &Kashmir: An Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Public libraries play a very important role in creating knowledge based societies. Importance of public libraries has been realized at national and international levels. Present paper highlights the concept of public libraries in the contemporary societies. This study focuses public libraries in terms of infrastructure, collection development, collection organization, human resources and services. Scope of the study is limited to the two districts of Jammu and Kashmir state (India) viz., Srinagar and Budgam. Questionnaire and personal interview methods were adopted for collecting the data. Results of the study indicate that public libraries under the scope of present study are ailing on different fronts like physical infrastructure, collection development, services and human resources. Majority of public libraries in both districts are housed in rented buildings and are facing space problems. Collection available in libraries varies. Traditional services like lending of documents, reprographic services are being provided by the libraries and services based on ICT like internet based services are provided by a small number of libraries. Dewey decimal classification is used by majority of libraries for organising their collection. While staff working in public libraries of District Srinagar is mostly professionals but those working in public libraries of district Budgam are mostly non-professionals. It is suggested that appropriate measures taken by the governments in consultation with the experts in the field of library and information science can be the panacea for all the problems faced by these libraries. It is appropriate to integrate ICT facet into the functioning of public libraries for facing the challenges in a knowledge based society.

Keywords: *Public libraries; Library Human Resources; Collection Development; Library Services; Knowledge society, Srinagar, Budgam, Jammu & Kashmir*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of libraries, the public library assumes a special significance. Among the different types of libraries, public libraries are unique in their objectives, clientele served, governance, collection development and scope of services. It has the mandate to meet the needs of its users for education, information, leisure and personal development. For centuries, libraries were considered to be among most valuable information organizations in society. Their goal was and still is to help people exploit and use information to solve problems, gain new insights and acquire new skills and knowledge (Choy, 2007). Public libraries are distinct from research libraries, academic libraries and other special libraries in that their mandate is to serve the general public's information needs (rather than the needs of a particular school, institution, or research population). Public libraries typically allow users to take books and other materials off the premises temporarily; they also have non-circulating reference collections and provide computer and Internet access to patrons. In addition to access, many public libraries offer training and support to computer users. Most public libraries today are supported by tax monies from local and state governments, and some have foundations to support them with additional capital. Libraries lend books and materials freely, but charge fines if materials are returned late or damaged. Libraries often keep many historical documents relevant to their particular town. And as such these public libraries serve as gateways to local knowledge. In the twenty-first century, the role of librarians will be facilitating access to information resources rather than acting as custodians of human knowledge. This change is a result of the pressure of digital technologies on libraries which are forced to re-write their strategies in order to stay visible in the increasingly digital society. Younger generations of library users are particularly susceptible to digital technology and their demand for digital information has increased since most of the new material is born digital and is readily accessible on the internet. The internet has taken over the role of the main information provider among young generations, changing their perspective and attitude towards libraries greatly because of the inclination of users towards search engines instead of library resources (Radovan, 2010). The world over, information and communications technologies (ICTs) are transforming the way people communicate, learn, do business and interact with their governments (Tshepo, Tiroyamodimo, Sebusang, Resego,2011). In digital world, libraries are becoming more deeply engaged in the creation and dissemination of knowledge and are becoming essential collaborators with the other stakeholders in these activities (Lougee, 2002). Thus

public libraries if developed on professional lines can play a very important role in converting the dream of information society into reality.

2. PROBLEM

Public libraries can act as catalysts for bringing change in the societies. This change will be in terms of progress and prosperity. But for bringing this change, public libraries must be well developed in terms of infrastructure, collection, human resources, ICT etc. Under which circumstances public libraries are operating is the problem studied in this study.

3. OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the study are enumerated as under:

    a) To introspect the physical facilities available in the public libraries.

    b) To know about the nature of collection possessed by these libraries.

    c) To study the staff of public libraries in order to know the professional manpower.

    d) To know about the services provided by the public libraries.

4. SCOPE

Public Libraries are existing in all the districts of Jammu & Kashmir. However in order to make the study a comprehensive one, problem will be devoted to only two districts viz., district Srinagar and Budgam.

5. METHODOLOGY

Multi-pronged research methodology is being applied for collecting the data required for the present study. It consists of:

    a. Questionnaire

    b. Interview &

    c. Personal Observation

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected from the public libraries under the scope of the present study is analysed and interpreted under following headings:

6.1 Status of Libraries

Data when analysed reveals that public libraries in district Srinagar and Budgam are operating at different levels. Public Libraries of Srinagar are enumerated in Table 1 along with their status.

Table 1

District Srinagar: Status of Public Libraries

S.No	Name of Library	Status of Library
1.	SPS Central Public Library	Central Library
2.	Oriental Research Library	Research Library
3.	City Central Library	Central Library
4.	District Library Srinagar	District Library
5.	Block Library Khanyar	Block Library
6.	G. M. Library & Reading Center	Reading Center
7.	Block Library, Soura	Block Library
8.	Tehsil Library Zadibal	Tehsil Library
9.	M.M Library Fatehkadal	Shrine Library
10.	Gunj Baksh Library	Block Library
11.	Ziyarat Naqashband Sahib Library, Srinagar	Shrine Library
12.	Sultan-ul-Aarifeen Library	Shrine Library

Table 1 depicts that in district Srinagar there are a number of public libraries at tehsil level, block level, some shrine libraries and a few city central libraries.

Public Libraries of district Budgam are enumerated in Table 2 along with their status.

Table 2

Public Libraries in District Budgam

S.No	Name of Library	Status of Library
1.	Tehsil Library Char-i-Shrief	Tehsil Library
2.	District Library Budgam	District Library
3.	Tehsil Library Khan Sahib	Tehsil Library
4.	Tehsil Library Chadoora	Tehsil Library

5.	Tehsil Library Khanda	Tehsil Library
6.	Block Library Khag	Block Library
7.	Block Library Arizal	Block Library
8.	Block Library Bemina	Block Library
9.	Block Library Magam	Block Library
10.	Tehsil Library Beeru	Tehsil Library

Table 2 reveals that in district Budgam there are five tehsil libraries, one district library and four block libraries.

6.3 Library Buildings

Public Libraries need a sufficient space to serve the needs of diverse user groups. While planning to construct a library building proper library building standards need to be strictly followed. Public libraries under the scope of present study are either housed in their own buildings or are working in rented buildings. Table 3 gives insight about the buildings of public libraries in district Srinagar.

Table 3

Library Buildings (Srinagar)

S.No	Name of Library	Nature of Building	Space sufficiency	
			Yes	No
1.	SPS Central Public Library	Own		√
2.	Oriental Research Library	Rented		√
3.	City Central Library	Rented		√
4.	District Library Srinagar	Rented		√
5.	Block Library Khanyar	Rented		√
6.	G. M Library & Reading Center	Own	√	
7.	Block Library, Soura	Rented		√
8.	Tehsil Library Zadibal	Rented	√	

9.	M.M Library Fatehkadal	Own	√	
10.	Gunj Baksh Library	Own		√
11.	Ziyarat Naqashband Sahib Library, Srinagar	Rented		√
12.	Sultan-ul-Aarifeen Library	Own	√	

It is evident from table 3 that in district Srinagar out of twelve libraries seven public libraries (58.33%) are having library buildings on rent basis and five libraries (41.66%) are having their own building. When asked about whether the space available is sufficient, authorities of eight public libraries (66.66%) were of the opinion that their present space is not sufficient while as four libraries (33.33%) are of the view that their space is quite sufficient.

Public libraries in district Budgam are also having either their own buildings or are operating in rented buildings as is shown in table 4.

Table 4

Library Buildings (Budgam)

S.No	Name of Library	Nature of Building	Space Sufficiency	
			Yes	No
1.	Tehsil Library Char-i-Shrief	Own	√	
2.	District Library Budgam	Own	√	
3.	Tehsil Library Khan Sahib	Rented	√	
4.	Tehsil Library Chadoora	Rented	√	
5.	Tehsil Library Khanda	Rented	√	
6.	Border Block Library Khag	Rented	√	
7.	Block Library Arizal	Rented	√	
8.	Block Library Bemina	Rented	√	
9.	Block Library Magam	Rented	√	
10.	Tehsil Library Beeru	Rented	√	

Table 4 reveals that in district Budgam eight public libraries (80%) are housed in rented buildings and two libraries (20%) are having their own building. Library authorities when asked on whether library space is sufficient, responses collected reveal that all public libraries in district Budgam has space sufficient.

6.2 Collection

Collection development is considered as one of the primary tasks for any library. It is a dynamic and continuous activity. In order to develop a balanced, user-oriented and active collection, a well-planned system has to be evolved by the library authorities in close association with the representatives of various user constituencies. Such a system will not only help develop need based collection but also save money, time and space that would, otherwise, be wasted on developing irrelevant, outdated, and passive collections. A well-planned collection development program is thus essential to satisfy not only the current needs but the near future needs of their users as well (Walia and Momeni, 2011). Collection strength of libraries under the scope of present study is presented in table 5.

Table 5

Collection Range in the Public Libraries

Collection Range	No. of Libraries in Srinagar	No. of Libraries in Budgam
1000-4000	4	1
4001-7000	2	2
7001-10000	2	1
10001-13000	-	-
13001-16000	-	-
16001-19000	1	-
19001-22000		1
More than 22000	3	-

From table 5 , it is evident that in district Srinagar, majority of public libraries (33.33%) possess collection in the range of 1000-4000, followed by three libraries (25%) possessing collection in the range of 19000- 22000. In district Budgam, one Library is having documents in Collection range of 1000-4000, two in 4001-7000 range, one in 7001-10000 and one in 19001-22000 range of documents available in the library. In district Bandipora, two Libraries possess collection in the range of 1000-4000; one library has collection in the range of 4001-7000 range and one in 10001-13000 range.

6.3 Library Services

Service form an important part of libraries. Services determine the satisfaction level of the library users. Services provided by the public libraries under the scope of the present study are highlighted as under.

a) **Public Library Services in Srinagar**

Data collected from the public libraries of district Srinagar regarding services is presented in table 6

Table 6

Library Services (Srinagar)

Name of Library	Services				
	Lending	Reference	OPAC	Reprographic	Internet
SPS Central Public Library	Y *	Y	N	Y	Y
Oriental Research Library	N**	Y	Y	Y	N
City Central Library	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
District Library Srinagar	Y	Y	N	N	N
Block Library Khanyar	Y	N	N	N	N
Gani Memorial Library	Y	Y	N	N	N
Block Library, Soura	Y	N	N	N	N
Tehsil Library Zadibal	Y	N	N	N	N

M.M Library Fatehkadal	Y	N	N	N	N
Gunj Baksh Library	Y	Y	N	N	N
Ziyarat Naqashband Sahib Library, Srinagar	Y	N	N	N	N
Sultan-ul-Aarifeen Library	Y	Y	N	N	N

Y* = Yes;   N** = No

Table 6 reveals that in district Srinagar all the twelve Libraries (100%) are providing lending services, seven libraries (58.33%) are providing reference services, two libraries (16.66%) are providing OPAC services, three libraries (25%) are providing reprographic services and two libraries (16.66%) are providing internet based services.

b) Public Library Services in Budgam

Services provided by public libraries in district Budgam are shown in table 7.

Table 7

Library Services (Budgam)

Name of Library	Services				
	Lending	Reference	OPAC	Reprographic	Internet
Tehsil Library Char-i-Shrief	Y *	Y	N**	N	N
District Library Budgam	Y	N	N	N	N
Tehsil Library Khan Sahib	Y	N	N	N	N
Tehsil Library Chadoora	Y	N	N	N	N
Tehsil Library Khanda	Y	N	N	N	N
Border Block Library Khag	Y	N	N	N	N
Block Library Arizal	Y	N	N	N	N
Block Library Bemina	Y	N	N	N	N
Block Library Magam	Y	N	N	N	N
Tehsil Library Beeru	Y	Y	N	N	N

Y* = Yes;   N ** = No

It is evident from table 7 that in district Budgam all the ten public libraries (100%) are providing lending services and two libraries (20%) are providing reference services. None of the library in district Budgam provides any other service like reprographic services, internet based services etc.

6.4 Organisation of Collection

Organisation of documents in libraries means to classify and catalogue the collection on professional lines in order to facilitate the easy retrieval of documents. Proper organisation of documents can increase the level of utilization of library holdings. Besides it will save the time of both staff as well as of the users of libraries. Data collected from the libraries under the scope of the present study reveal that there is variation in the methods adopted by these libraries for organising the collection. Libraries in district Srinagar are applying different methods for organisation of documents. In district Srinagar out of twelve public libraries only nine libraries (75%) are classifying documents using Dewy Decimal Classification (DDC) and rest of them are not classifying their documents. Six libraries (50%) are cataloguing their documents, out of which four are using AACR-I & two are using AACR-II cataloguing codes. In district Budgam out of ten public libraries only six libraries (60%) are classifying documents using DDC rest of them are not classifying their documents. Six libraries (60%) are cataloguing their documents, out of which three libraries (30%) are using AACR-I and three libraries (30%) are using AACR-II cataloguing codes.

6.5 Human Resources in Libraries

Human resources form an essential component of libraries and information centres. It is human resources that can either make or mar any library organisation. Recruiting professional librarians can increase the credibility of public Libraries. Data collected from the libraries under the scope of the present study indicate that there are about 84 staff members working in the public libraries of district Srinagar. While as 40 staff members are professionals (47.61%) and 44 staff members are non-professionals (52.38%). In district Budgam there are 28 staff members working in public libraries and only 7 staff members (25%) are professionals and 21 staff members (75%) are non-professionals.

Conclusion

Public libraries in districts of Srinagar and Budgam are operating at different levels like district, tehsil, block etc levels. Majority of libraries are operating in rented buildings. Collection in these

libraries varies. Libraries apply Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme for classifying documents while as AACR is applied for cataloguing of documents. Services provided by these libraries consist of circulation, reference services etc. Human resources available in public libraries under the scope of present study are composed of professionals and non professionals. It is suggested that in the present information and communication technology era, libraries must be equipped with electronic gadgets for providing internet access facility to the members of the society who are visiting the libraries for availing services. Staff working in these libraries may be given the chance and opportunity to refresh their skills and knowledge in order to become relevant in the present times. Government is having the main responsibility to provide sound financial support for strengthening the overall resources of public libraries. Policies and strategies for enacting library legislation are to be framed by the government for ensuring smooth functioning of public library in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

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