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Public libraries in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), India: an explorative study

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the current status of public libraries of Varanasi. A structured questionnaire was designed and personally distributed to 100 respondents over a period of seven months for the study. Responses present a dismal outlook of the libraries. Financial deficit and lack of computers, infrastructure and staff have stagnated the development of these libraries. These libraries continue to stand the same way as they stood 60 years before.

Keywords: Public libraries, Varanasi, Public library services. Collections

Introduction

Public libraries strive to be one of the most popular cultural institution and a few civic or communal spaces that can be used gratuitously by the people for education and enjoyment. The rationalism underlying the institution of public library is to pave the way for greater accessibility to information for every section of people living in a community regardless of their age, gender, education and socio-economic milieu. The innate rationalism of the public libraries services can be apprehended at its best against the backdrop of the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) which states: "The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision— making and cultural development of the individual and social groups". It concedes that public libraries are the quintessence of their communities, which provides free, easy accessible spaces, resources and services for everyone. Being a basic component of a nation`s knowledge tank, public libraries accommodates scholarly works and information in different formats and languages.

According to (Mantel, 2011; Prentice, 2011) public libraries in general are the crucial resources during the difficult economic times for job seeking and training, but are also one of the first public resources to face the budget cuts. Moreover, public libraries have a positive impact on children`s performance in school and on the neighbourhood as a place of stability

and safety (Diamond, 2010). These are no longer a collection of information resources and services but are public places of importance that contribute to the social capital of their communities (Hillenbrand, 2005; Johnson, 2010). However, (Rasmussen and Jochumsen, 2003) feel that this success of public libraries is not the same so that they can sit back and relax. They further argue that the foundation of public libraries is surrounded with deep-rooted uncertainty where one moment the book is declared dead, the next alive and kicking and while some argue that the library should dissolve its physical presence into cyberspace, others suggest that the library should strengthen its role as a physical space in the local community.

Nevertheless, public libraries have been often regarded as a mainstay to the frontiers of the available knowledge domain made available to common people deprived of access to tools, resources, media and the enabling infrastructure in an era of digitalization. In the recent years research work on public libraries has lost its importance among the savants and it has become a neglected area. Given the serviceableness of the public libraries to communities and the real risk of public library cessation there is a need to evaluate their status on a timely manner. This study is based against this background that examines the status of public libraries in Varanasi in order to bring the current picture of a city that is considered treasure of traditional knowledge.

Varanasi: an enlightened city and a place of spiritual luminance

Varanasi, a city as old as time, is one of the most ancient cities of learning. This was a place where hundreds of enlightened beings lived at a time. In every street, you had an enlightened being to meet. A city that has seen the world turn, tides change and generations of humans born and die. Varanasi or Kashi, which has been standing the tests of time for over 5,000 years is said to be one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. In Mark Twain's words, "Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together." What draws millions of pilgrims from all over the world to the city of Varanasi is the fact that it is one of the holiest of the seven sacred cities in Hinduism. Called the spiritual capital of India, this magnificent city of learning radiates endless energy. Despite being witness to ancient civilizations come and go over centuries, Varanasi is still alive, unabashedly colourful, vibrant, and wonderfully rich in history and legends. Varanasi was the original hub of art, culture, spirituality and music. Many prominent Indian saints, philosophers, poets, writers, and musicians live or have lived in Varanasi. Several major figures of the Bhakti movement were born in Varanasi, including Kabir and Ravidas. Many religious texts and theosophical treatises have been written here. It is also the seat of one of India's biggest universities, the Banaras Hindu University.

Literature review

Singh (1991) evaluated the current status of public libraries in Bihar. The study discussed in detail the position of public libraries in different levels of State, divisional, district, sub-divisional, block, and village. Furthermore, the study briefed about the activities of library associations in Bihar, training in librarianship, the library services, and the administrative structure of the libraries. This analytical report states that the reason for poor performance in this sector seems to be the low literacy rate and economic stagnancy. Sahib Singh Verma (2002), conducted a survey to figure out the existing conditions of public libraries in Delhi,

Haryana, and Rajasthan and further examined the effect of the library legislation in the development of public libraries and the role of public libraries in literacy movement.

Hennen's (2005) survey report on American public libraries has indicated that 1) in the State Plains there were 1655 public libraries, the highest in U.S. and in Far West there were only 476 public libraries, the lowest in the country; and totally there were 9211 public libraries in U.S. 2) an average of 1.2 square footage per capita buildings was constructed in U.S. for public libraries; 3) 95% of the libraries spent less than \$ 10.52 per item circulated; 4) on an average, libraries spent per capita of \$0.66 on electronic materials, while the spending per print item use averaged per capita of \$0.81; and 5) an average of six computer terminals for every 10,000 residents was provided. Khatra (1992) conducted a survey to study the district libraries of Ferozepur and Jalandhar who highlighted that shortage of skilled staff, less funds and poor infrastructure were affecting the library services. Similar study was carried out by Kathuria (1992) to study the user behaviour of Ropar and Hoshiyarpur.

Following the similar trend Sewa Singh undertook a study in 1996 to bring out the problems to the development of district libraries of Punjab. The study was supplemented by the study of Kaur in 2008. Vijaykumar & Kumar (2001) have made quantitative study on the different aspects of rural libraries. Rajnith (2004) has conducted a study on the rural libraries in Kerala.

Objectives of the study

The core purpose of the study is to unearth the status of public libraries in Varanasi, a district of Uttar Pradesh.

Other objectives are:

- To find out the current collection strengths, collection development policies of the public libraries in Varanasi.
- To find out the members strength of the public libraries in Varanasi
- To find out the ICT facilities in public libraries in Varanasi.
- To find out the problems that hinder the gradual development of public libraries in Varanasi
- To offer some suggestions to improve the current status of public libraries in Varanasi.

Methodology

The survey method was employed for the study. It was considered most appropriate as the study was targeted towards a large population that is spread across Varanasi district. Justification to the selected methodology is further emphasized in the works of Bailey (1978); Leedy (1980). The target population for the study constituted all the public libraries making up the selected region represented in table 3. However, since 3 libraries are no longer functional now henceforth, only 12 libraries were considered for the study. For data collection two instrument: questionnaire and interview were used. Keeping in view, the defined objectives, structured questionnaire was prepared to collect data from the users and 100 valid responses were considered from the study. All the instruments were administered and collected on the spot personally by the researchers in all the Libraries. Table 1 defines the key elements associated with the study population.

Definition	Description
Element	Public libraries of Varanasi
Sampling Unit	Library users of public libraries located in Varanasi
Extent	N/A
Time	Between 1 June 2014 to 31 October 2014

In order to rank the overall perceptions of respondents a scoring system designed by Sarrafzadeh et al. (2008) was used with some modifications as represented in table 2.

Mean Range	Rating Scale			
Mean 1 to 1.44	Strongly Disagree	Not Used	Not Important	Not Implemented
Mean 1.45 to 2.44	Disagree	Partially Used	Minor Important	Little Important
Mean 2.45 to 3.44	Don't know	Moderately Used	Moderately Important	Moderately Implemented
Mean 3.45 to 4.44	Agree	Used	Important	Implemented
Mean 4.45 to 5	Strongly Agree	Extensively Used	Very Important	Extensively Important

S.No	Name of Public library	Founded by	Year of establishment	Status
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	District Administration	1960	Operational
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	C.P. Karmaicel	1872	Operational
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvrganj	Shiv Kumar Singh, Ram Narayan Mishra and Shyam Sunder Das	1893	Operational
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	Seth Gaurishankar Goyanka	1926	Operational
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	Khedan Lal	1945	Operational
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	Hakim Abdul Ali	1945	Operational
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	Bang Samaj	1866	Operational
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	Pandit Banarasi lal Pandey	1932	Operational
9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	Mahavir Prasad and Govind Prasad Kapoor	1922	Operational
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	Vraj Vallabh Diwedi	2006	Operational
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	Anagric Dhampal	1903	Operational
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	Literacy of kanada (NGO)	2003	Operational
13.	Tulsi pustakalaya , Bhadaini Assi	---	1928	Closed
14.	Saidiya library , Madanpura	---	n.d	Closed
15.	Majdoor Library	---	n.d	Closed

Data analysis & interpretation

The responses received from the users are illustrated in the form of tables & figures, and the implications of the findings are discussed below. The data has been presented in two sections.

First part deals with an overview of libraries while the second one provides users opinion on the libraries.

I. Overview of libraries

Overview of library working

Table 4 presents an overview about the working duration of the public libraries. It also presents the gate statistics and average per day use of the public libraries. Since, public libraries are open source for all the individuals living in an area therefore the working hours play a major role in the use of services and resources offered by these libraries. The results show that working hour of the library is directly proportional to the per day visits. Due to less working hours of Bang Sahitya Samaj and Abhimanyu Pustakalaya there is low gate statistics while it is maximum for Karmaicel Library that works 8 hour a day.

S.No	Name of Public library	Working hours	Per day visits
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	8 A.M.- 10 A.M. & 2 P.M.- 6 P.M. (Summer); 9 A.M.- 11A.M. & 1 P.M.- 5 P.M. (Winter)	50-60
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	10 A.M.- 6 P.M.	150-180
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvrganj	11 A.M.- 5 P.M.	60-70
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	10.30 A.M.- 5 P.M.	25-30
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	10.00 A.M.- 2 P.M.	10-15
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	5 P.M.-8.30 P.M. (Summer) 4 P.M.-7.30 P.M. (Winter)	15-20
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	6 P.M.-8 P.M. (Summer) 5.30 P.M.-7.30 P.M. (Winter)	5-8
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	8 A.M. to 11 A.M.	5-8
9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	8 A.M.- 11 A.M. & 6 P.M. to 9 P.M.	25-30
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	10 A.M. - 6 P.M.	12-15
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	10 A.M. - 5 P.M.	15-20
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	9.30 A.M.- 5.30 P.M.	70-80

Overview of library works

Table 5 presents a snapshot of the current status of the libraries. It can be seen that most of the libraries are running short of library staff. Moreover, standard classification schemes and cataloguing codes are not being used. Most striking is the fact that no any government agency or the apex body for public libraries i.e. RRRLF is providing financial support to these libraries. Lack of financial support is a driving factor that has affected the quality of the library services. If the situation continues to be the same, this treasure house of knowledge will face extinction in the coming future.

Table 5: Overview of library works

S.No	Name of Public library	Library staff	Classification scheme	Cataloguing code	Issue/ Return rules	Funding source
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	4	DDC	AACR2	2 books for 15 days	Govt.
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	6	By Accession	No scheme	2 books for 15 days	Karmaicel library Association Trust
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvarganj	3	DDC & CC	CCC	---	Nagri pracharini Sabha
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	3	By Accession	No scheme	2 books for 15 days	Gaurishankar Goyanka Endowment Trust
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	1	By Accession	No scheme	---	Sharswati sadan bachnalaya pustakalaya Trust
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	3	By Accession	No scheme	---	Public Islamia library Trust
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	1	By Accession	No scheme	---	Bang shahitya samaj Trust
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	1	By Accession	No scheme	---	No source
9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	1	By Accession	No scheme	---	No source
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	2	By Accession	No scheme	---	RRRLF
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	3	By Accession	No scheme	---	Mahabodhi society
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	3	By Accession	No scheme	---	Literacy of kanada NGO

Overview of library computerisation

In the recent years technology has become imperative for the libraries. Table 6 shows that leaving Government district library all the libraries does not have computer facility. Although, new concepts such as digital library, electronic library, web 2.0, library networking and automation has been much talked about in the 21st century which is advanced applications of computers in libraries. But, there is huge misbalance when the case of public libraries is considered. Even still today public libraries remain neglected. These libraries lack even in installation of computer terminal that questions their sustenance in the techno-driven paperless society.

S.No	Name of Public library	Installation of computers	Services offered	Library automation
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	Yes	Internet	No
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	No	No service	No
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvarganj	No	No service	No
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	No	No service	No
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	No	No service	No
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	No	No service	No
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	No	No service	No
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	No	No service	No
9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	No	No service	No
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	No	No service	No
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	No	No service	No
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	No	No service	No

Collection of libraries

Library collections are the soul of libraries which is considered as the mainstay of all library services. The total collections of the libraries under study have been presented in detail in the table 7. As can be observed from the table, amidst the public libraries under study, Arya Bhasa library has a colossal collection of 80000 books and 3000 manuscripts followed by Karmaicel library with 40000. Government district library ranks third with a collection of 38000. While, Sharaswati Sadan Pustakalaya, SAAR Pustakalaya and Literacy of Kannada have the least collections of 5000 each.

S.No	Name of Public library	Total collection		Language of collection
		Books	Journals, Manuscripts	
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	38000	---	Hindi, English, Urdu & Sanskrit
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	40000	---	Hindi, English, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvarganj	80000	3000	Hindi & Sanskrit
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	10000	---	Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Urdu, German, French, Nepali, Pali, Tamil & Telgu
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	5000	---	Sanskrit, Hindi, English & Urdu
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	12000	---	Urdu, Sanskrit, & Hindi
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	20000	---	Bengali, English, Sanskrit, & Hindi
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	25000	---	Bengali, English, Sanskrit, & Hindi
9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	24000	---	Hindi, English, Sanskrit, & Urdu
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	5000	---	Hindi, English, Sanskrit, & Urdu
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	10000	---	Hindi, English, Japanese, Thai, Tamil, Bengali, Gujarati,

				Marathi, Tibati, Nepali
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	5000	---	Hindi, English, Sanskrit

Newspapers and preservation policy

Newspapers form a chief component of the information resources of a library. Most of the library users visit the libraries for reading them. Table 8 below presents the findings of the study. Almost all the libraries are subscribing Hindi newspapers. However, the duration of the preservation of the newspapers is the least. It needs to be given due concern and the preservation policy for the newspapers have to be given a second thought. Most of the users require back date newspaper also.

S.No	Name of Public library	Newspaper subscribed languages	Preservation policy of newspapers
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	Hindi & English	preserve last three year
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	Hindi, English, Bengali, Urdu	preserve last 6 month
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvrganj	Hindi	preserved Aaj newspaper from 1920, Danik jagran from 1990 Hindustan from 2005
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	Hindi	preserve last 6 month
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	Hindi	preserve last 2 month
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	Hindi, Urdu	preserve last 2 month
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari		
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	Hindi	
9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	Hindi	preserve last 2 month
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	Hindi , English	preserve last one year
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	Hindi	preserve last 6 month
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	Hindi , English	preserve last 6 month

II. Users opinion about the public libraries

Background information of respondents

Age-wise distribution of respondents

It may be observed from the Table 9 that majority of the public library users are less than or equal to 21 years representing 45% of the total users. The second highest majority of the public library users are in 21-30 years age group scoring 24%, 31-40 years age group of users make 16%, 41-50 years age group users make 8% and above 60 years age group from the least in number representing 2%.

S.No	Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than or equal to 21 years	45	45
2.	Between 21 – 30 years	24	24
3.	Between 31 – 40 years	16	16
4.	Between 41 – 50 years	8	8
5.	Between 51 – 60 years	5	5
6.	More than 60 years	2	2

Gender-wise distribution of respondents

The data regarding the gender wise break up of public library users has been represented in Table 10. It may be seen from the table that most of the user are male users representing 62% and only 38% are female users.

S.No	Gender	Number of users	Percentage
1.	Male	62	62
2.	Female	38	38
Total		100	100

Educational qualification of respondents

Table 11 presents the qualification wise break up of users. It was striking to note that about 40% of the respondents preferred not to answer about their qualification. Further, it can be interpreted from the table that the maximum users in this category are mainly class ten pass outs 19%, intermediate degree holders scoring 18% from the next highest group followed by those who have graduation and post-graduation degree scoring 5% and 7% respectively.

S.No	Qualification	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	School going	6	6
2.	SSC	19	19
3.	Intermediate	18	18
4.	Diploma	3	3
5.	Degree	5	5
6.	Master's degree	7	7
7.	Professional degree	2	2
8.	Unanswered	40	40

Nature of respondents

Table 12 gives an overview of the nature of respondents who participated in the study. Again, majority of respondents 24% did not give an idea about their status. About 18% of the respondents were unemployed youth followed by 16% of professional degree and 14% Master's degree holders.

S.No	Status	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	Unemployed youth	18	18
2.	Students	12	12
3.	Intermediate	6	6
4.	Diploma	3	3
5.	Degree	7	7
6.	Master's degree	14	14
7.	Professional degree	16	16
8.	Unanswered	24	24

Mother tongue of library users

The data regarding the mother tongue of the public library users is presented in Table 13. Majority of the respondents are belonging to Hindi (29%) and Bhojpuri (27%) language.

S.No	Language	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	English	3	3
2.	Hindi	29	29
3.	Urdu	17	17
4.	Nepali	2	2
5.	Tamil	7	7
6.	Gujarati	5	5
7.	Marathi	3	3
8.	Bhojpuri	27	27
9.	Bengali	6	6
10.	Telgu	1	1

Usage of Public libraries

Library Membership

Table 14 gives the detail of library membership. It shows that in total there are about 1305 registered members (887 male and 418 female) of all the public libraries in Varanasi. Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya has the highest number of registered members (380) followed by Karmaicel library (300).

S.No	Public library	Registered members	Membership fee	Male	Female
1.	Government district Library, Ardali bazaar.	165	300	102	63
2.	Karmaicel Library, Bansfatak	300	250	190	110
3.	Arya Bhasa Library, Vishsvrganj	---	---	---	---
4.	Shree Vishvnath Pustakalaya, Lalita ghat	380	600	240	140
5.	Sharswati sadan pustakalaya, Chetgang	---	---	---	---
6.	Public Islamia Library, Madanpura	90	50	65	25
7.	Bang Sahitya Samaj, Jangambari	115	225	90	25
8.	Abhimnyu Pustakalaya, Gurubagh	---	---	---	---

9.	Khojwa Adrash Pustakalaya, Khojwa	145	150 (annual), 1500 (life time)	115	30
10.	SAAR Pustakalaya, Pahariya	110	50	85	25
11.	Mulgandh Kuti Bihar, Sarnath	---	---	---	---
12.	Literacy of Kanada, Assi	---	---	---	---
Total		1305		887	418

Reasons for non-membership of library

It is surprising to note that with such a huge population of Varanasi, only 1305 people have registered themselves for the library services. Table 15 shows the reasons non-membership of libraries. Free admission and the lack of necessary books of studies are the prime reasons that act as a barrier for library membership.

S.No	Reasons	Mean	Proportional mean	Test value	p-value	Rank
1.	Distance of libraries	3.52	73.72	7.31	0.000*	5
2.	Lack of interest	3.22	72.91	7.04	0.000*	6
3.	Free admission	4.93	88.96	9.68	0.000*	1
4.	Lack of awareness	3.86	79.52	9.27	0.000*	3
5.	Lack of necessary books of studies	4.37	86.67	9.41	0.000*	2
6.	Unsuitable working hours	3.74	75.21	8.53	0.000*	4
7.	Inadequate reading facility	3.18	71.82	7.01	0.000*	8
8.	Non availability of latest collection	3.21	72.17	7.03	0.000*	7

Frequency of library visits

The breakup of frequency of library users by the public library users is as shown in Table 16. Majority of the respondents (35%) respondents visits the library almost weekly followed by once in a week.

S.No	Frequency	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1.	Almost weekly	18	17	35	35
2.	Once in a week	16	9	25	25
3.	Fortnightly	11	1	12	12
4.	Rarely	14	8	22	22
5.	Daily	3	3	6	6
Total		62	38		

Time spent in libraries

The responses of the time spent by the users in the libraries are shown in Table 17. The results that about 33% of users spend about one hour in the libraries followed by 25% users who spend two to four hours.

S.No	Frequency	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1.	Upto 30 min.	11	9	20	20
2.	One hour	25	8	33	33
3.	One to Two hour	9	1	10	10
4.	Two to Four hour	8	17	25	25
5.	Four to Six hour	3	3	6	6
6.	More than Six hour	2	-	2	2
Total		62	38		

Purpose of visit to public library

The data regarding the purpose of visits to the public library is shown in Table 18. Majority of users visit the library for reading (29%) followed by preparing for competitive examinations (20%).

S.No	Language	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	Reading	29	29
2.	General Knowledge	18	18
3.	Preparing for competitive examinations	20	20
4.	Entertainment	17	17
5.	Others	16	16

Use of information resources in libraries

Table 19 summarizes the findings of the use of information resources. It shows that out of all the available resources books are heavily used followed by Magazines. Users also came to libraries for seeking oral information.

S.No	Information resources	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Occasionally	Mean	Proportional Mean	Test Value	P-value	Rank
1.	Reports	6	3	1	-	-	3.28	63.72	3.11	0.000*	6
2.	Oral information	9	5	-	10	2	5.22	82.91	7.04	0.000*	3
3.	Manuscripts	7	6	-	15	1	4.93	78.96	6.88	0.000*	4
4.	Newspapers	3	5	-	-	9	4.86	77.52	6.67	0.000*	5
5.	Books	5	6	3	-	-	6.37	88.67	7.91	0.000*	1
6.	Magazines	4	7	2	-	3	6.24	87.21	7.53	0.000*	2
Total=		34	32	6	25	15					

Use of information services in libraries

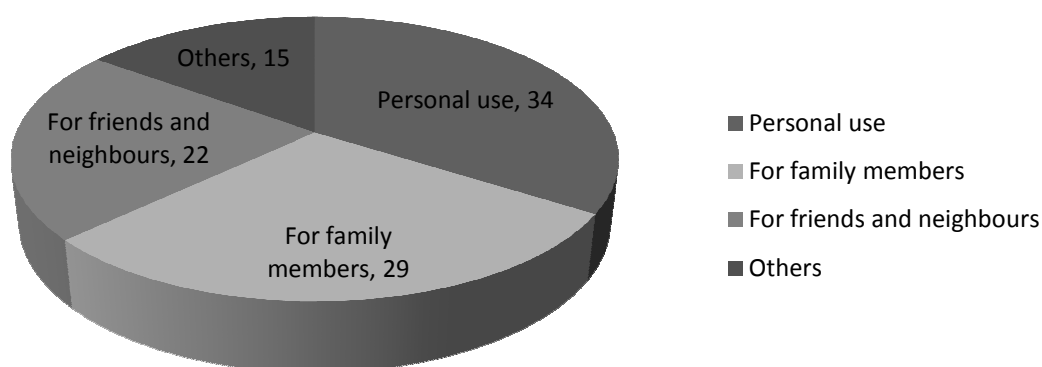
Table 20 summarizes the findings of the use of information services. It shows that out of all the offered services, circulation services are heavily used followed by reading. Users also came to libraries for seeking reference services.

S.No	Information resources	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Occasionally	Mean	Proportional Mean	Test Value	P-value	Rank
1.	Reading	8	6	5	23	19	4.38	87.72	15.31	0.000*	2
2.	Others	1	5	-	-	-	3.76	75.91	6.47	0.000*	6
3.	Reprographic	7	6	-	-	-	3.93	78.96	6.88	0.000*	4
4.	Computer	1	5	-	3	9	3.86	77.52	6.67	0.000*	5
5.	Circulation	9	6	6	12	7	4.92	88.67	17.91	0.000*	1
6.	Reference	4	7	2	-	3	4.74	84.21	7.53	0.000*	3
Total=		30	35	13	38	38					

Borrowing of books

Fig 1 shows the behaviour of borrowing of books by the user. About 34% of users borrow books for their personal use followed by 29% of user who borrow books for their family members and 22% of users who borrow for their friends and neighbours.

Fig 1: Borrowing of books

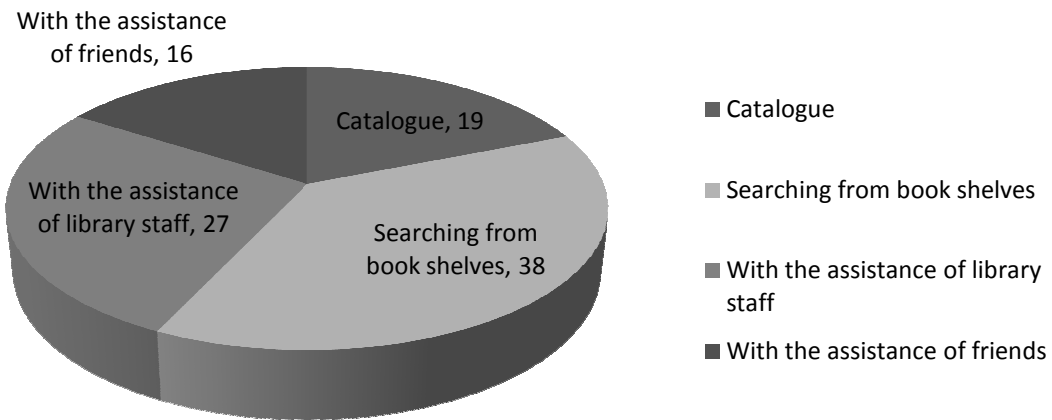


Means for selecting books

Figure 2 shows the responses of users regarding the means adopted by the users for selecting and searching books. The analysis shows that 38% of users searched for books of their

requirement directly book shelves followed by 27% of users who took the help of assistance of library staff for selecting and searching books.

Fig 2: Means for selecting books



Arrangement of books

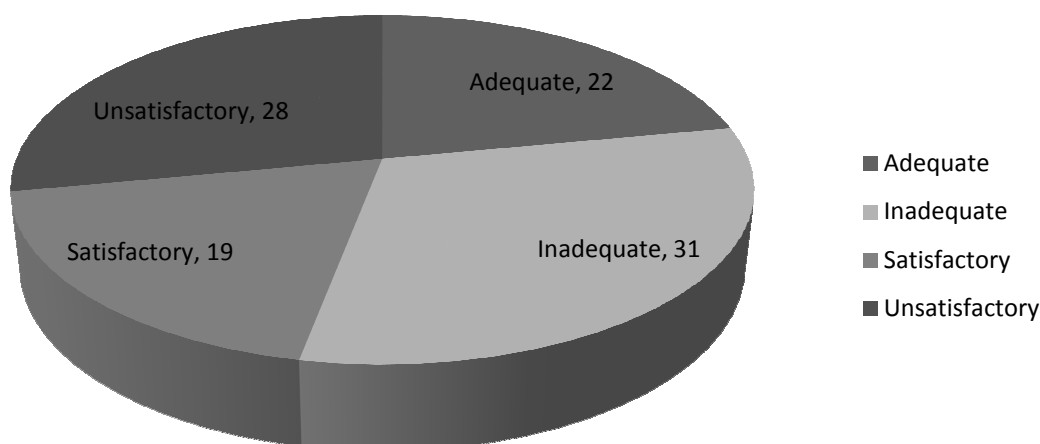
Table 21 shows the user perception about the arrangement of books in libraries. Majority of users agree to the fact the books are poorly arranged which is unsatisfactory for them. It can be related to the fact that most of the libraries lack standardized tools such as classification schemes and cataloguing codes affecting the overall service quality.

Table 21: Arrangement of books						
S.No	Description	Mean	Proportional Mean	Test Value	P-value	Rank
1.	Unsatisfactory	4.38	87.72	15.31	0.000*	2
2.	Good	3.76	75.91	6.47	0.000*	5
3.	Satisfactory	3.93	78.96	6.88	0.000*	3
4.	Very good	3.86	77.52	6.67	0.000*	4
5.	Poor	4.92	88.67	17.91	0.000*	1

Adequacy of documents in interest area

Fig 3 shows the results of the level of adequacy of documents of interest in the libraries. About 31 % of users feel that the documents were inadequate and 28% were unsatisfied with the library collection.

Fig 3: Adequacy of documents in libraries



Attitude towards computerization of libraries

Table 22 shows the results of the attitude of users towards the computerization of libraries. On the basis of study it can be concluded that users rank use of IT enhances the knowledge and expertise as the top most drivers for computerization of libraries followed by use of IT will modernize the traditional library services that stands second most.

Table 22: Attitude towards computerization of libraries

S.No	Perception about IT	Mean	Proportional Mean	Test Value	P-value	Rank
1.	Use of IT will improve the efficiency of library services	3.17	73.72	6.81	0.000*	3
2.	Use of IT will improve the communication facilities in library.	3.22	74.91	7.02	0.000*	4
3.	Use of IT will modernize the traditional library services.	3.83	78.96	8.78	0.000*	2
4.	Use of IT will reduce the workload and improve the status of library staff	3.07	72.67	6.54	0.000*	5
5.	Use of IT enhances the knowledge and expertise.	4.13	82.67	11.07	0.000*	1

Expectations of users from public libraries

Table 23 shows the various expectations of the library users from the public libraries. Users rank awareness programmes to top priority followed by internet services that is inevitable for the 21st century. Moreover, science and technology along with arts exhibition has been given prime importance by the users in the study.

Table 23: Expectations of users from public libraries

S.No	Expectations	Mean	Proportional Mean	Test Value	P-value	Rank
1.	Adult education	2.28	59.72	-0.31	0.370	6
2.	Science and Technology exhibitions	4.82	77.91	7.04	0.000*	3
3.	Arts exhibitions	4.23	74.96	6.88	0.000*	4
4.	Television	4.06	72.52	6.67	0.000*	5
5.	News clipping	2.24	59.66	-0.29	0.368	7
6.	Internet	6.24	87.21	7.53	0.000*	2
7.	Awareness programmes	6.37	88.67	7.91	0.000*	1

Impediments of public library services

Table 24 presents the various impediments to the public library services. It can be drawn from the study that users rank financial deficit, lack of infrastructure and space to be the factors that are acting as barrier to the development of public library services. Most important is the fact that these libraries are standing the same as they stood 50 years ago. In order to enhance the library services financial support along with modernization of services has to be taken care of in order to prevent them from extinction.

Table 24: Impediments to public library services

S.No	Impediments	Mean	Proportional Mean	Test Value	P-value	Rank
1.	Financial deficit/lack of funds	4.93	88.96	9.68	0.000*	1
2.	Lack of proper administrative support	3.22	72.91	7.04	0.000*	6
3.	Lack of library automation that can meet the present techno savvy generation.	3.49	73.66	7.29	0.000*	7
4.	Lack of infrastructure	3.86	79.52	9.27	0.000*	3
5.	Crisis of space	4.37	86.67	9.41	0.000*	2
6.	Lack of technical staff	3.74	75.21	8.53	0.000*	4
7.	Lack of importance of library value	3.39	72.77	7.08	0.000*	8
8.	Lack of library networking	3.52	73.72	7.31	0.000*	5
9.	Lack of conducive environment to work.	3.26	72.06	7.01	0.000*	9

Findings of the study

- * The status of public libraries of Varanasi presents a dismal outlook.
- * Financial uncertainty has severely affected the libraries. No any government organization or body is providing financial support to the libraries.
- * ICT infrastructure is very poor in the public libraries of Varanasi.
- * The libraries are facing huge shortage of library staff.
- * Libraries do not use any standardized library classification or cataloguing codes.
- * Although, library legislation has been enacted in the state but there is no any improvement in the condition of libraries.
- * Library working hours is very less that has led to low gate counts.
- * New services such as internet and science and technology exhibitions should be introduced to maintain the interest of library users.

Conclusion

India has made substantial progress in the establishment of public libraries and strengthening its services. The emphasis of present government on libraries through various initiatives with the use of technology has further brightened its future. Public libraries since time immemorial have stood to be the open frontiers of knowledge. However, the present study shows that even today public libraries lag behind in providing their basic services. At a time when government is talking about National digital library project and spending a lot for the cause of libraries, the libraries under study lack basic amenities which are lying in a dilapidated state. The carelessness of the authorities has brought closure of 3 public libraries in the city out of 15. It is a high time when the government should give it a prime concern and ensure monetary support along with necessary infrastructure which may enable the libraries to provide their services in best possible manner.

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