E-resources Consortia: An Urgent Need for College Libraries in Cachar District: A Case Study

Jayanti Chakravorty

Abstract

College education in India, as of now, is facing pressures of increased enrollment, changing educational policies and the challenging task of imparting higher education to a vast human resource potential in the age group of 14 to 24, enabling them to participate in 21st Century global knowledge race. Simultaneous to this situation, unprecedented change in information scenario, current trends in electronic publishing, advanced technologies facilitating faster information access, concept of globalization of knowledge have altogether made the information environment more complex.

Higher education aims to achieve a comprehensive and well-rounded development in the life of the students. This is not possible through formal, limited-time class lectures alone; exposure to a vast collection of books and educational resources is needed for that. So, a well-equipped library is an essential component of the higher education structure. To what extent our college libraries are prepared to cope up with the changed information environment or remaining relevant towards augmenting higher educational process is an issue of serious thought.

This paper presents a survey report on the college libraries of Cachar District in Assam. The study shows that most of the libraries, under survey, suffer from inadequacy of library holdings, budgetary crunch, non availability of ICT Tools and poor infrastructure. To overcome this situation and to make the library services relevant to the institutional goals, it is necessary that the college libraries become well-equipped and more responsive to users' need, and in doing so, formation of E-Resource Consortia is probably the most viable solution.

Keywords: College Libraries, E-Resources, Library Consortia

1. Introduction

Higher Education Academic Libraries are now increasingly called upon for their contribution to institutional mission and goals. With changing economic and political scenario, quality of higher education becomes the focus of national importance the world over. In India, Higher education is considered a vital national resource and for the last couple of decades, it has assumed a pro-active role in response to nation's expectations, because the contribution of knowledge workers towards economic growth and international competitiveness is becoming more and more vivid.

In India, Universities are normally vested with the responsibility of Post-graduate teaching, affiliating Undergraduate Colleges, holdings examinations and awarding Degrees. Undergraduate teaching is mainly done by colleges and these colleges play the piv-

otal role in Indian higher education system. As of ow, the college education in India is facing pressures of increased enrollment, changing educational policies and the challenging task of imparting higher ducation to its vast human resource potential in the age group of 14 to 24, enabling them to participate in the 21st century global knowledge race. Simultaneous to this situation, unprecedented change in information scenario, current trends in electronic publishing, advanced technologies facilitating faster information access, concept of globalization of knowledge have altogether made the information environment more complex, as it had never been.

Higher education aims to achieve a comprehensive development in the life of the students. This is not possible through formal, limited-time class lectures alone; exposure to a vast collection of books and educational resources is needed for that and the institutional library alone can serve such purpose. Moreover, a library can introduce the students to the cultural, historical and intellectual heritage of the country. Formal education can, therefore, be conducted effectively and efficiently only with well-equipped libraries. Quality education is impossible without quality library collection.

India being still in developing phase, majority of the Indian students comes from poor and mediocre families. They may find it difficult to prepare their lessons at home. For such students, library is a much required boon. They can study at the library and take home the books. Borrowing books is not only convenient but also helps students save expenses on costly books. Most of the courses have project works included in the course curriculum. Here the library could be of immense help for the students. They can get the references or literature needed in

the library itself. The library staff can help them complete their projects.

Some of the undergraduate Degree Colleges in India possess adequate facilities along with a good library system; but majority of the colleges suffer from inadequacy of funds, non-availability of proper infrastructure, absence of a good library system and non-availability of ICT tools. So, to what extent our college libraries are prepared to cope up with the changed socio-economic-educational scenario and information environment is an issue of serious thought.

A Case Study was conducted to evaluate the prevailing Library System in the undergraduate degree colleges, affiliated to Assam University and situated in the District of Cachar. India is a vast country with a mighty population. Socio-economic and academic growth has not been uniform throughout the country. The disparity in growth and advancement is more vivid in the country's north-eastern region, due to its remote location, inaccessible hilly terrains and geographical isolation. The target area of the Case Study is situated in this region. Out of 18 colleges under study, 11 colleges have come up only in the last couple of decades and these are mostly located in rural areas. So, there are considerable disparity in the outlay, infrastructure, student enrollment and academic performance of the colleges and services offered by their libraries.

The Study shows that, most of the college libraries have inadequate holdings and majority of them suffer from budgetary crunch. A few of the colleges are getting grants from UGC under various plans and are registered with N-List programmed of INFLIBNET. 'To overcome the limitations of physical ownership, libraries may supplement their col-

lections through Inter-Library Loan and Document Supply Services'.[1] But the libraries under study seem to show any interest in DDS and ILL. As mentioned earlier, a qualitative shift has been occurring in academic libraries as an outcome of the electronic revolution. Resultantly, there is a rapid change in collection development and management of libraries compared to a decade back. College libraries are therefore, required to redesign their collection development and management policies on priority basis. In India, 'libraries are moving slowly from print to electronic media. Libraries faced with declining budgets and high cost of journals are not able to purchase all publications and materials that their users generally expect to have. The escalating price of the rapidly growing numbers of electronic journals and databases has forced the librarians to think alternative option to subscribe e-resources.'[2]

Most of the college libraries in the study area are still functioning in the traditional style and many of them have no Computer installation or Internet connectivity. So to upgrade their library service, to remain relevant with the changing higher academic scenario and to effectively help the undergraduate students, the college libraries in Cachar District are supposed to urgently redesign their library service, acquire ICT Tools and devices, form an E-Resource Consortia, introduce Union Catalogue and implement Open Access System in their respective libraries.

2. E-Resources

2.1. Definition

'Electronic Resources refer to that material that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, mainframe or handheld mobile device. They may either be accessed remotely via the Internet or locally'.[3] An electronic resource can also

be defined as 'any electronic product that delivers a collection of data, be it text referring to full text bases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time based, as a commodity available title that has been published'.[4]

2.2. Types of E-Resources

Some of the commonly used types of e-resources are:

- ❖ E-journals
- ❖ E-books
- ❖ Full-text databases
- ❖ Indexing and abstracting databases
- ❖ Reference databases
- ❖ (Seminar papers, dictionaries, manuals, directories, guidebooks, encyclopedia etc.)
- ❖ Statistical, numerical and graphical databases
- ❖ E-photographs and E-images
- ❖ E-audio-video

The resources may be available in the form of online resource or may be available in the form of CD ROM, Diskettes and other portable devices.

2.3. Advantages of E-Resources

E-Resources are becoming an increasingly important component of the collection building activities of libraries. Recent developments in the field of information communication technology have brought in a number of new techniques and other related standards for document creation and delivery mechanism. To cope up with the rapid generation of information and knowledge, academic libraries are gradually shifting towards e- resources for their collection development. 'Electronic resources are generally accepted because of the ease of usability, readability, affordability and accessibility.'[5] The advantages of e-resources are:

❖ Abundance: E-resources provide access to thousands of magazines and newspapers, much more than any library could possibly subscribe to in printed format. Some e-resources include periodical publications dating back to last several years.

❖ Multi-accessibility: E-resources are distributed worldwide over Internet and can be accessed from multiple points simultaneously at any point of time suitable to the user.

❖ Speed: An e-resource is quicker to search. One can search for the e-resources to find articles on a particular subject from many different publications simultaneously without having to search each publication separately. It is also possible to integrate the required information into other material and to cross search between various sources.

❖ Functionality: E-resources are particularly useful for findings information not yet available in books. E-resources also allow the user to approach the contents from multiple angles of a subject. E-Resources provide us with current and objective reference material.

❖ Content: In addition to the text, the e-resources consist of mixed media: images, video, audio, animation and so on.

❖ Convenient and cost-effective: E-resources offer convenience in storage, transportation and international reach. They are cheaper in comparison to printed resources.

2.4. E-journals

As on date, e-journals have become the largest and fastest growing areas of digital collection for most of the academic libraries. "E-journals are often referred to interchangeably as 'electronic publishing', 'electronic serials', 'online journals', and 'electronic periodicals'."[6] Over the years, there has been phenomenal increase in production and distribution of e-journals. 'According to statistics, out of over 1,50,000 serials published the world over, more than 70,000 cover scholarly communications, and among these more than 20,000 titles are electronic journals and are accessible in the Internet. More than 2500 among these scholarly journals are free for all, which comprise a vast treasure of scholarly content from among the world.'[7]

2.5. Policy & Process for selection and management of e-resources

E-resources may be purchased or acquired through licensing agreement. Some are also available free on the web. E-resources may be born digital or multiple format materials, e.g., CD-ROM. E-resources present a number of challenges not generally encountered with the selection and acquisition of traditional analog materials. As such, the library authority should develop clear policies for selection, acquisition and management of e-resources keeping in view the various factors like cost, technical feasibility, licensing, access and preservation requirements. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has come up with a Guide entitled "Key Issues for e-Resource Collection Development: A Guide for Libraries", issued by its Collection and Development Section in January, 2012. This Guide would help a library in developing its e-portfolio and formulating its Collection Policy with due consideration of the following aspects.

❖ Technical feasibility

(a) Availability, e.g., remote access, stand-alone access

(b) Authentication, e.g., Internet Protocol, filtering or login password

(c) Hardware and Software compatibility and capability

(d) Storage and maintenance, e.g., remote hosting v. local hosting

(e) Platforms which facilitates access to e-resources

❖ Functionality and reliability

(a) Search and retrieval functionality, e.g., truncation, browsing

(b) Exporting and downloading, e.g., printing, e-mail, downloading

(c) Sorting and ranking abilities for database results, e.g., author, title, date etc.

(d) Interface, e.g., system intuitiveness, navigation, help, tutorials

(e) Integration

(f) Reliability and availability, e.g., response times, 24/7 access

❖ Vendor Support

(a) User training and support

(b) Trials and product demonstrations

(c) Technical support and system notification process

(d) Statistical reporting

(e) Customization, e.g., branding

(f) Provision of bibliographic data, e.g., MARC records

(g) Data security and archiving policies

❖ Supply

(a) Purchase model, e.g., purchase, subscribe, pay per view, rental

(b) Pricing models, e.g., selective v. big deal

(c) Access options, i.e., single user, multiple users

(d) Archiving and post termination rights

(e) Maintenance fees

(f) Cancellation rights

❖ Licensing

(a) Model/Standard license

(b) Governing laws

(c) Liability for unauthorized use, Definition of authorized users and authorized sites

(d) Fair use provision

(e) Termination, Refunds and Period of agreement

(f) Compliance with the governing laws of the library's or consortium's legal jurisdiction (province, state, country)" [8]

3. Consortia

The word Consortium has been derived from Latin in the sense of partnership.[9] A Consortium could be described as a group of organizations who come together to fulfill a combined objective that usefully

requires co-operation and the sharing of re-sources.[10] A Library Consortium is a collective ac-tivity of a group of libraries. With the availability of the state-of-the-art information technology solu-tions and the web revolution, libraries are now bet-ter off in terms of easy access to more information through meaningful co-operation among them-selves.[11]

3.1. Need

A Consortium is needed for:

(a) Addition and widening up of subject areas of study

(b) Proliferation of information and knowledge in various branches of study

(c) Multiplication of users' needs

(d) Resolving budgetary crunch

(e) Impossibility in attaining self-sufficiency

3.2.   Major Activities

Major activities of an Academic Library Consortium are:

❖ Arrange subscription of e-resources identi-fied and negotiated by the members

❖ Identify new resources relevant to the stu-dents' and teachers' need

❖ Interaction with member libraries to ensure optimum utilization of resources and creating awareness about access to e-resources

❖ Ensure access to subscribed e-resources to member libraries

❖ Initiate additional activities complementary to the primary activities

❖ Any other activities warranted by the local circumstances

3.3. Advantages

'The Consortium approach is a win-win situation for all its stakeholders – users, publishers and the libraries – all alike. Users are the ultimate end-ben-eficiaries of such initiatives. Consortia offer several benefits including:

❖ Access to otherwise un-subscribed materials

❖ Scope for electronic archives

❖ Availability and monitoring of usage statis-tics

❖ Getting deep discounts through joint pricing negotiations

❖ Reduced storage costs

❖ Developing common resources databases

❖ Effective document delivery systems

❖ Single interface and access point

❖ Enhanced search facilities

❖ Better scope for developing a union cata-logue'[12]

3.4 . Consortium Initiatives of UGC

Launched in December, 2003, UGC-INFONET Digi-tal Library Consortium is a major initiative taken by the UGC. The Consortium provides access to schol-arly electronic resources in all subject disciplines to academic and research community so as to bring qualitative change in teaching, learning and research in Indian higher education. The Information and Li-brary Network (INFLIBNET), an autonomous Inter University Centre of UGC, is the executing and moni-toring body for this initiative.

The Consortium provides current as well as archival access to more than 7500+ core and peer-reviewed journals and 10 bibliographic databases from 26 publishers and aggregators. In the first phase that began in 2004, access to e-resources was provided to 50 universities, who had Internet connectivity under the UGC-Infonet Connectivity Programme. In the second phase 50 more universities were added in the year 2005. 93 universities were granted membership in the third phase. Currently, the Consortium has 417 members:

Universities covered	193
National Law Schools/ Universities	14
IUCs and Other Institutions	6
Associate Members	204

While the expenditure on subscription to e-resources for universities covered under 12B of the UGC Act is being made available by UGC, other universities may join the Consortium on their own for sharing benefits. The benefit of subscription to e-resources would also be extended to the Colleges, to begin with the College for Potential with Excellence (CPE) and autonomous colleges. The Consortium offers 'Associate Membership Programme' wherein private universities, research organizations and colleges can join the Consortium. The members have to sign an agreement with the Consortium as well as with the publishers of e-resources that they wish to subscribe. The Consortium charges an annual membership fee of Rs.5,000.00.[13]

National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content, N-LIST is an initiative of HRD Ministry under the NME-ICT now funded by UGC, as college component under UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium. As on July, 2014, 2489 12B/2F colleges and 1000 non-aided colleges have registered themselves and are getting access to 6000+ e-journals and 97000+ e-books.[14]

4. Findings of the Case Study

The Cachar District of Assam covers an area of 3786 Sq.kms. with a population of 17,36,319 and Literacy Rate of 80.36% as per 2011 Census (2001 - 14,44,921, 67.82%). The District has 2 Sub-divisions, Silchar and Lakhipur, 9 Police Stations, 15 Development Blocks, 5 Revenue Circles, 163 Gaon Panchayats and 1830 villages.[15] Population, literacy rate and number of educational institutions in the District are as follows.[16]

Population 2001 *	Population 2011 *	Literacy % 2001 *	Literacy % 2011 *	Secondary & HS Schools❖	Degree Colleges■	Professional Colleges■
14,44,921	17,36,319	67.82	80.36	155	18	5

Ref : * Census Report

❖ Statistical Handbook, Assam

■ Assam University Records

The literacy rate has substantially grown in the District during the period from 2001 to 2011. A Secondary or a Higher Secondary School in the District covers approximately a population of 11,202, while an Undergraduate College covers a population of 96,462 on an average.

The District comes under the academic jurisdiction of Assam University, a Central University established in 1994, by an act of the Parliament (Act XIII,1989). The main campus is situated at Dargakona, about 20 kms. from Silchar, the Headquarter town of Cachar. Drawing its 300+ faculty

from many disciplines, from all over the country, the university sustains a multidisciplinary approach to higher education. The University has 16 Schools of Study and 35 Departments under these Schools. The geographical jurisdiction of Assam University comprises of the Districts of Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong in Assam. Prior to the establishment of Assam University, the District of Cachar was under the academic jurisdiction of Calcutta University until establishment of Gauhati University in 1949.

In Assam, there are three types of colleges: Government College, Provincialised College and Non-provincialised College. In Government Colleges, all expenditures, including staff salary, development and maintenance are borne in by the Government. In Provincialised Colleges, the Staff Salary is only borne in by the Government. Development and maintenance of infrastructure are done by the College Governing Body at local level. In Non-provincialised Colleges, all expenditure, including Staff Salary, Infrastructural development and maintenance are arranged by the Governing Body. Permission for opening up a College is granted by the Assam Higher Secondary Council for Classes XI-XII (Junior College) and for Undergraduate Degree Course, by the University. Examinations in the Higher Secondary level is conducted by the Assam Higher Education Council, while at the Undergraduate Degree level by the respective Universities under whose jurisdiction a particular college falls. Government Colleges and Provincialised Colleges are under direct control of the Directorate of Higher Education of the State. Non-provincialised colleges are more or less autonomous in their functioning.

The sample population for the Case Study includes all the 18 affiliated undergraduate Degree Colleges [17] in Cachar District. Questionnaires were served on all the Colleges. 17 out of 18 colleges returned the filled up Questionnaires. M.K.Dey College, Amraghat did not respond.

4.1. Finding 1

Out of the 17 colleges under study, 5 colleges were established in between 1935 to 1970, 3 colleges in between 1971 to 1990 and 9 colleges in between 1991 to 2009. There are 4 colleges in the urban area, which were established in 1935, 1960, 1963 and 1971. The remaining 13 colleges are in rural areas. 8 colleges are affiliated to UGC. Colleges with their locations, year of establishment and UGC affiliations are as follows:

Table 1: Colleges in Cachar District

No.	Name of the College	Estd. at	Area	Est. in	UGC Affiliation
1	Gurucharan College	Silchar	Urban	1935	2(f) and 12(B)
2	Cachar College	Silchar	Urban	1960	-do-
3	Women's College	Silchar	Urban	1963	-do-
4	Janata College	Kabuganj	Rural	1964	-do-
5	Nehru College	Pailapool	Rural	1965	-do-
6	Radhamadhab College	Silchar	Urban	1971	-do-
7	MC Das College	Sonai	Rural	1972	-do-
8	West Silchar College	Barjatrapur	Rural	1985	2(f)
9	Sarada Charan Dey College	Kalinagar	Rural	1992	-
10	Satyaranjan College	Kalain	Rural	1992	-
11	Silchar College	Singari	Rural	1994	-
12	SM Dev College	Lakhipur	Rural	1995	-
13	Lalit Jain Commerce College	Silchar	Rural	1996	-
14	Jagannath Singh College	Udharbond	Rural	1998	-
15	Katigorah Anchalik Degree College	Katigorah	Rural	1998	-
16	NC Paul College	Chenkuri	Rural	2009	-
17	Barkhola College	Barkhola	Rural	2009	-
18	MK Dey College ?	Amraghat	Rural	-	-

4.2. Finding 2

Gurucharan College and Cachar College hold reasonable number of Library Books, around 35,000 and 23,000 respectively. Women's College, Janata College, Nehru College and Radhamadhab College possess a holding of 10,000 to 15,000 books. (The figures for Nehru College and Radhamadhab College were assessed during our library visit). M.C.Das College has a holding of around 9,000. The remaining 10 colleges hold only 2,000 or lesser number of books, as is evident from the following table:

Table 2: Library Holdings (Number of Books)

College	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Gurucharan College	33,796	34,327	34,770
Cachar College	21,842	22,632	23,102
Women's College	12,076	13,802	15,212
Janata College	10,323	11,395	12461
Nehru College	855*	727*	470*
Radhamadhab College	•	•	•
MC Das College	6,013	6,915	8,553
West Silchar College	1,500	2,000	2,200
Saradacharan Dey College	1,540	1,810	2,135
Satyaranjan College	2,001	2,100	3,941
Silchar College	1,837	1,975	2,187
SM Dev College	885	1,060	1,240
Lalit Jain Commerce College	510	610	751
Jagannath Singh College	1,974	2,094	2,194
Katigorah Degree College	400	440	490
NC Paul College	•	•	100
Barkhola College	•	200	250

* Added during that year, not the total number of books

• Figures not available

4.3. Finding 3

It would be evident from the following table that, only 7 colleges subscribe reasonable number of Printed Periodicals.

Table 3: Library Holdings (Periodicals)

College	Subject Periodicals	Comm. Journals	House Journals	Total Number of Periodicals	Newspaper
Gurucharan College	16	4	10	30	8
Cachar College	6	4	9	19	8
Women's College	13	-	-	13	4
Janata College	7	12	-	19	2
Nehru College	15	2	3	20	4
Radhamadhab College	8	10	-	18	6
MC Das College	8	3	3	14	4
West Silchar College	-	1	-	1	3
Saradacharan Dey College	-	-	-	-	2
Satyaranjan College	4	-	-	4	2
Silchar College	-	-	-	-	2
SM Dev College	-	-	1	1	2
Lalit Jain Commerce College	2	-	-	2	1
Jagannath Singh College	-	-	-	-	2
Katigorah Degree College	-	-	-	-	1
NC Paul College	1	2	-	3	2
Barkhola College	2	-	-	2	2

4.4. Finding 4

Gurucharan College Library has a reasonable budget of Rs.16 Lacks. Allocation for 6 colleges, namely, Cachar College, Women's College, Janata College, Nehru College and Radhamadhab College (figure assumed) and M.C.Das College is in the vicinity of Rs.1 to 2 Lacks. Budget allocation of the remaining 10 colleges is extremely low.

Table 4: Library Budget (in Rupees)

College	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Gurucharan College	13,00,000	14,00,000	16,00,000
Cachar College	5,00,000	2,01,375	2,53,190
Women's College	1,20,000	1,22,000	1,25,000
Janata College	1,30,000*	1,30,000*	1,30,000*
Nehru College	1,57,187	2,51,084	46,422
Radhamadhab College	●	●	●
MC Das College	80,000	1,10,000	1,50,000
West Silchar College	10,000	15,000	15,000
Saradacharan Dey College	50,000	53,000	55,000
Satyaranjan College	2,000	4,000	4,000
Silchar College	20,000	20,000	25,000
SM Dev College	32,000	40,000	48,000
Lalit Jain Commerce College	10,000	50,000	65,000
Jagannath Singh College	82,000	86,000	76,000
Katigorah Degree College	3,000	4,000	5,000
NC Paul College	●	●	30,000
Barkhola College	●	4,000	8,000

* UGC XIth Plan Budget 2007-11: 6.50,000/-   ● Figures not available

4.5.   Finding 5

The following table would show the availability of electronic facilities in the college libraries. Only 1 college library has Micro-filming facility, 6 libraries have Reprographic facilities and 3 libraries have audio-visual facilities. 13 Colleges have Desktop Computer installation, in 7 colleges the Computer is earmarked for the library, in the remaining 6 colleges, Computer is installed in the College office. 9 College Libraries have Internet connectivity and 7 of them access e-journals.

Table 5: Availability of Electronic Facilities

College	Micro-filming Facility	Repro-graphic facility	Other Audio-visual facility	Computer Installation	Internet Connec-tivity	Access of e-journals
Gurucharan College	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cachar College	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Women's College	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Janata College	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nehru College	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Radhamadhab College	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
MC Das College	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
West Silchar College	No	No	No	No	No	No
Saradacharan Dey College	No	No	No	Yes *	No	No
Satyaranjan College	No	No	No	Yes *	No	No
Silchar College	No	No	No	Yes *	No	No
SM Dev College	No	No	No	No	No	No
Lalit Jain Commerce College	No	No	No	Yes *	Yes	No
Jagannath Singh College	No	No	No	Yes *	Yes	No
Katigorah Degree College	No	No	No	No	No	No
NC Paul College	No	No	No	Yes *	Yes	Yes
Barkhola College	No	No	No	No	No	No

* Computer installed in College Office

4.6.   Finding 6

Books issued by the College Libraries and number of readers using Reading Room facility is depicted in the table below:

Table 6: Books issued and Number of readers

College	Books issued 2008-09	Books issued 2009-10	Books issued 2010-11	Library Readers 2008-09	Library Readers 2009-10	Library Readers 2010-11
Gurucharan College	45,970	46,158	44,816	7,556	7,680	7,231
Cachar College	8,100	9,450	12,150	921	874	933
Women's College	2,201	2,356	3,059	.	.	.
Janata College	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nehru College	425	375	460	6,100	6,214	6,200
Radhamadhab College	900 approx.	900 approx.	900 approx.	.	.	.
MC Das College	776	803	1,025	380	415	625
West Silchar College	●	●	●	.	.	.
Saradacharan Dey College	510	780	930	1,180	1,245	1,630
Satyaranjan College	2,000	2,015	2,000	50	40	60
Silchar College	40	47	53	32	41	37
SM Dev College	375	405	507	172	205	227
Lalit Jain Commerce College	60	200	300	491	585	600
Jagannath Singh College	763	898	1,065	1,412	1,650	1,824
Katigorah Degree College	45	25	40	19	25	31
NC Paul College	.	.	.	.	.	40
Barkhola College	.	120	200	.	40	60

● Books are not issued to students
· Data not available

4.7. Finding 7

5 out of 8 UGC-aided colleges, Gurucharan College, Cachar College, Women's College, Janata College and Radhamadhab College are registered with N-list Programme. Only 1 non-aided college namely, Satyaranjan College is registered; thus making the total registration to 6.

4.8. Finding 8

(a) Only 6 college libraries, Gurucharan College, Cachar College, Women's College, Janata College, Radhamadhab College and M.C.Das College have Open Access facility.

(b) 10 college libraries follow cataloguing scheme. Gurucharan College, Cachar College, Women's College, Janata College, Nehru College, Radhamadhab College and Silchar College follow AACR 2R. M.C.Das College, West Silchar College and Satyaranjan College follow Classified Cataloguing Code.

(c) No college library extends Document Delivery Service and none of them encourage Inter-Library Loans.

4.9. Summary

The study shows that, libraries of all the colleges established in the last three decades, precisely in between 1973 to 2014 suffer from inadequacy of library holdings, extreme budgetary crunch and non-availability of ICT tools. Count of such libraries is 10 out of 17, constituting 60% of college libraries in the District. It was noticed during our library visits that, these libraries have very poor infrastructure, many libraries do not have proper shelf arrangement or adequate Reading Room facility. Most of them suffer from inadequate staffing pattern and absence of trained personnel. Under such circumstances, how far these libraries could be of assistance in promoting higher education is a matter of serious concern.

Libraries of Gurucharan College, Cachar College, Women's College, Radhamadhab College, Janata College, Nehru College and M.C.Das College are moderately well-set. Gurucharan College Library is on the process of digitization. Others are supposed to embark on the process and encourage their users to extensively use ICT.

Only Gurucharan College and Cachar College libraries could issue a reasonable number of books to their users and Gurucharan College and Nehru College alone had good number of readers. This indicates that the undergraduate students in the District may not be probably aware of the utility of college libraries or might be that they were not introduced to the library on joining the college.

5. Conclusion

Even during today's technology-driven information paradigm, most of the college libraries in a remote corner of north-east India are functioning in a traditional style. Resultantly, majority of the undergraduate students here are little aware of the recent technological and educational developments carried out at the national and international level. Students are not properly introduced to the college library and consequently whatever little or more resources the libraries have, remains under-utilized. To remain relevant with the changing higher education scenario and to effectively help the students, the college libraries in Cachar District are supposed to urgently redesign their library service, acquire ICT Tools, introduce Open Access System, register themselves with the N-List programme, encourage the students

to use the libraries and acquaint them with modern ICT devises.

The 21ˢᵗ century is the century of information revolution. Information need of the society at every level is growing continuously as well as at tremendous speed. To justifiably answer to the social demands, the academic libraries have to be invariably the richest source of information and to be so, resource sharing amongst the libraries is the only viable means.

Realizing the potential of Web-technologies for effective use of resource sharing on the carrier-network of Internet, the College and Library authorities may initiate the effort of forming an E-Resource Consortia on Shared Budget Model. The common user interface provided by the Web browsers enables integration of shared resources to build a union catalogue. Integration of messaging and file-transfer protocols in the Web enables easy support for inter-library loan. Since Internet offers platform independent protocols and public domain tools, development of new applications and services and value addition to existing services becomes quite easy. Creating awareness about access to e-resources among participating members is also necessary for deriving the best possible benefit of the consortium. We hope the college authorities would seriously think over the issue and initiate certain positive steps. Initiation in this regards may also be taken by the State Higher Education Directorate or the College Development Council of Assam University. Unless certain positive steps are taken to upgrade the library system of the colleges in Cachar District of Assam, the academic scenario here would continue to remain beyond the mark and the higher education students of the District would be trailing behind in the national competitions.

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About Author

Mr. Jayanti Chakravorty
E-mail: jayantichakravorty@gmail.com