# Social Responsibility of Academic Library: A Study on Role of College Libraries in Assam

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**Abstract**

*Academic libraries are rich in terms of resources and infrastructure in comparison to the public libraries in Assam. The resources and infrastructure of the college libraries in Assam can effectively use in providing community service in the locality. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in its assessment guidelines clearly mentioned about the social institutional responsibility of the colleges. The college libraries as a part of its social responsibility should engage in activities such as extension of reading facilities to the general public and allowing them to use existing physical infrastructure, Internet facility, e-resources access facility of the college library. Extension of these facilities of the college libraries will definitely benefit the needy peoples of the society.*

*The paper intends to identify the availability of resources and other infrastructural facilities in some randomly selected college libraries in Assam and observes how these large quantities of resources be effectively make open to the other needy people living in the society.*

**Keywords:** College Libraries, Social Responsibility, Community Service

## 1. Introduction

Colleges form the integral part of higher education and libraries in colleges are the primary source of learning. The college library is a connecting link between teaching and learning as well as a place which supplement its resources what the class room has failed to supply. College library is a depository of books as well as an active workshop instrumental in the production of original thinking**.** It extends opportunities for self education to the deserving and enthusiastic students without any distinction. It also stimulates the students to obtain, evaluate and recognized knowledge and to familiarize himself/herself with the trends of knowledge for further education and learning new disciplines. The primary purpose of the college library is not only to provide books, journals and other instructional materials in support of the academic programme of the college, but also to encourage the formation of a life-long habit of reading.

College libraries are helping the youths to develop skills of learning, building up moral character, self confidence, and in culcation of values. The youth can devote most of their time in acquiring the facts, truth, and knowledge in the college libraries, which will ultimately help them to develop the understanding and power of right decision making.

The collection of physical resources such as books, magazines, journals as well as e-resources and infrastructure have been substantially improving in the college libraries in Assam. A substantial amount of fund received from Rashtriya Uchattar Siksha

Abhijan (RUSA) and Govt. of Assam are being utilized for procurement of physical resources and infrastructure development in the college libraries of Assam. The support provided by the INFLIBNET Centre in terms of modernization of the college libraries is also playing a very important role in transforming the college libraries in to a centre of learning.

The paper intends to identify the availability of resources and other infrastructural facilities in some randomly selected college libraries in Assam and observes how these large quantities of resources be effectively make open to the other needy people living in the society as a part of social responsibility of the college.

## 2. Aim of the paper

❖ To assess the availability of various resources and infrastructure in the college libraries;

❖ To observe the possibility of linking the existing physical environment and resources of the college libraries for greater use by the public; and

❖ To suggest the measures to be taken by the college libraries to extend the services to the people as a part of its social responsibility.

## 3. Methodology & Scope of the paper

A structured questionnaire has been designed for the college librarians in Google forms, which was used as a tool of survey. The opinions of the surveyed college librarians on various issues of extension of college library facility for the society; library infrastructure and manpower have been collected through interview over telephone and also paying personal visit to some of the colleges for making observation in these libraries. Users' survey has been excluded from the purview of the study.

## 4. Survey of the College Libraries

A survey has been carried out with an intention to assess the resources, ICT infrastructure in thirty randomly selected provincialized college libraries of Assam with an aim to assess the possibility of extending services to the society utilising the existing resources and infrastructure of the library.

## 4.1 Basic Information about the Colleges under Study

The data in supplementary material shows the basic information of thirty provincialized colleges and one pure govt. college, Cotton College which is now a state university, the oldest college of the state established in the year 1901. This college was re-accredited by NAAC for the second time with 'A' Grade. Out of the thirty provincialized colleges 14 are situated in urban places, 05 are in semi-urban places; and 11 colleges are in rural areas in different districts of Assam. Thirteen colleges have both Arts & Science streams; six colleges have Arts, Science & Commerce streams; three colleges have Commerce; BBA and MBA streams; two colleges have Arts & Commerce streams while six colleges have single stream only Arts stream.

All provincialized colleges have institutional website and most of the colleges have received RUSA grants for infrastructure development of the college as well as for the college library.

## 4.2. Resources of the College Libraries under Study

The data reveals the existence of large amount of physical resources in the form of books in the college

libraries under study. These colleges also have online e-resources access facility of N-LIST consortium.

### 4.3. Infrastructure

### 4.3.1 Basic Hardware Infrastructure

ICT infrastructure is usually comprises of computer hardware, software and telecommunication. The infrastructure remains the main bottleneck to the development of ICT in libraries. Sufficient infrastructure is very much essential for the successful application of ICT in the libraries. Data available as supplementary material shows the availability of basic hardware infrastructure of provincialized college libraries of Assam selected for this study.

The data reveals that almost all the colleges possess server machine, desktop, CCTV, printers, photocopiers while 87% colleges have scanner, bar code scanner, barcode printers and 53% colleges have scanners of good quality digitization purposes.

### 4.3.2 Network Facility

Networking of computers available in the library in order to establish connection between them is necessary to share information with the users of the library. Automation services of the library is provided over the networked computers where the server hosts the master database of the library and other computers (clients) are connected to the server in order to provide services to the users.

Among the surveyed libraries 26 (87%) colleges have LAN while 04 (13%) colleges have campus network while all the colleges have internet connection. The data reveals that 20 (67%) surveyed college libraries have DSL broadband connection of BSNL for Internet services with 556 kbps to 2mbps bandwidth while 04 (13%) libraries have leased line connection with 5 mbps or more bandwidth to provide seamless internet connectivity to the students.

### 4.4. Library Manpower

The data reveals that the college libraries are running with minimum staff. In majority of the colleges the librarian has to manage the library with two to three non-professional support staff.

### 5. Observations and Discussions

### 5.1. Open up the Physical Environment and Resources for the General Public

The college libraries possess a large amount of physical resources in the form of books. These books comprise of not only text books related to course curricula but also include reference books of various types viz. encyclopaedia, dictionaries, literature books such as novel, short story, essays, poetry books; competitive examination preparation books etc. as well as various popular magazines, newspapers of local, regional and national. Usually the rush hour in the college libraries is from 9.00 am to 3.00 p.m. while classes are held. After that the college libraries can allot a time slot for the general people of the neighbouring areas to utilize the existing physical environment and resources of the college library for their benefit. The colleges of the rural areas where the public library, community information centre facilities are not available for the general public, can play a great role by providing the reading facility to the village people.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in its assessment guidelines clearly mentioned about the social institutional responsibility of the colleges through engaging the

colleges in various extension activities for the well-being of the society. The college libraries as a part of its social responsibility should engage in activities such as extension of reading facilities to the general public and allowing them to use existing physical infrastructure, internet facility, e-resources access facility of the college library. Extension of these facilities of the college libraries will definitely benefit the needy peoples of the society.

It is to be noted that some college libraries of the rural areas of Assam have started providing the reading facility to the elderly people of the society. Nazira College library is an example which is providing reading facility to the elderly people. This college library is also extending book reading services to the prisoners living in jail. The example set by the Nazira College library will inspire many college libraries of the rural areas to initiate such types of activities in near future.

## 5.2.  Engagement in Information Literacy Programme

Public library is a place, which supports the literacy programme in the community. As the public library system and community information centre in the rural areas of Assam are not properly functioning due to lack of finance, staff and lack of Govt. policy, the college libraries can play a great role in developing a literacy programme in the community. Though universalization of primary education by the Govt. of India through programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP); National Literacy Mission and so on has improved the literacy rate among the growing population but in true sense a large number of populations do not know the effective use of information. The problems with the effective and efficient use, consumption and evaluation of information resources affected in taking right decisions by the people at large numbers. Information literacy programme can play a vital role in educating the people on how to search, access and retrieve information from various information resources distributed in various forms over the internet as well as on various physical resources. The college libraries existing resources and infrastructure can be used to educate the people of the rural areas through organising information literacy programme from time to time.

## 5.3.  Arrange Awareness Programme

The college libraries can also arrange awareness programmes on some issues which affect the society badly. For example, the number of cancers, especially among the rural people of Assam has been increasing day by day due lack of proper knowledge and information. The mouth, neck and oesophagus cancer in Assam has been growing day by day. Awareness programme on the various causes of such cancers would be greatly benefitted the people. The women living in the rural areas are not aware about the breast cancer symptom. Un-hygiene is one of the root causes of cervical cancer among the women, very few women know about this. So, awareness campaign on such topics will greatly benefit the women.

## 5.4.  Providing Space for Meeting, Cultural Events

The space of the college library can be made available for the general public for use in many purposes such as – spaces for meeting for small groups, collaborative workspaces, reading and study space, cultural events, book discussions etc.

## 6. Suggestions

❖ College libraries in Assam should engage in community services like public libraries by extending library facilities to the general public of the neighbouring areas.

❖ The assessment criteria of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) gives a good weightage on various extension activities conducted for the society by the college. As a part of it, the college libraries in association with Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) should organise book exhibition, book distribution among the disadvantageous group, literacy programme in the nearby locality, schools.

❖ The college libraries should allow the general public of the locality to use the space, resources and Internet after the normal class hours on some specified time and day.

❖ The college authority should frame certain rules to open the college library space for the general public of the locality.

❖ More library staff should be engaged to provide the extension services to the society.

❖ The Govt. should appoint required numbers of library staff for smooth functioning of the college library.

❖ Fund for development of college library infrastructure and resources should be provided by the Government at regular intervals.

## 7. Conclusion

The academic libraries should reclaim their roles as agents in community building by borrowing ideas from the public libraries. They should increase their roles in information literacy and transform themselves as an important learning place for the people living in the society. The college libraries in Assam, especially of the rural areas, can play vital role in community building. It is worthwhile to mention that some of the college libraries in Assam have already started extension services for the community as a part of their social responsibility following the NAAC guidelines. It is expected that in near future more college libraries will join hands and will engage themselves in promoting social service activities.

**Further Reading**

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**Note:**

Online version of this paper, associated data, files and other supplementary materials are available on Institutional Repository of INFLIBNET Centre. It can be accessed online by scanning QR Code or using following URI: http://ir.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/1944/2273