

Accessibility of Indigenous knowledge in the college libraries of Assam: an analytical study

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- **Introduction:**

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- Indigenous knowledge, encompassing the cultural practices and way of life of indigenous communities worldwide, serves as a vital reflection of their history and identity. Transmitted orally across generations, it focuses on practical aspects of daily livelihoods rather than abstract concepts.
 - Through mediums like tales, songs, dances, manuscripts, and artworks, indigenous communities perpetuate their knowledge.
 - Libraries and archives, traditionally guardians of cultural heritage, have a responsibility to collect, preserve, and disseminate this knowledge.
 - Historically, these repositories mainly contained depictions of indigenous peoples by non-indigenous observers. Given its significance, indigenous knowledge should be a central focus of library collections, ensuring its preservation and accessibility for development endeavours.

Indigenous Knowledge

- Indigenous knowledge refers to the cumulative body of knowledge, practices and beliefs developed by indigenous people over generations through direct interaction with environment and cultural traditions.
- According to Marie Battiste (2005) Indigenous knowledge embodies a web of relationships within a specific ecological context; contains linguistic categories, rules, and relationships unique to each knowledge system; has localized content and meaning; has established customs with respect to acquiring and sharing of knowledge and implies responsibilities for possessing various kinds of knowledge.
- IK comprises of many parts ranging from culture, religion, mythologies, economy, governance, medicine, and agriculture to taboos, poetry, art and crafts and many more. It is often related to oral history, oral archives and oral tradition

Objectives of the study

- To find out the awareness & preservation of IK among the college libraries of Assam
- To know the types of IK that procured by the college libraries.
- To find out the initiatives taken by the college libraries to collect the IK.
- To assess the Authority's participation to preserve the IK.
- To know how the IK make accessible to the users.
- To examine the policies adopted by libraries to collect IK.
- To investigate the challenges in preservation of and accessibility to IK.
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Methodology

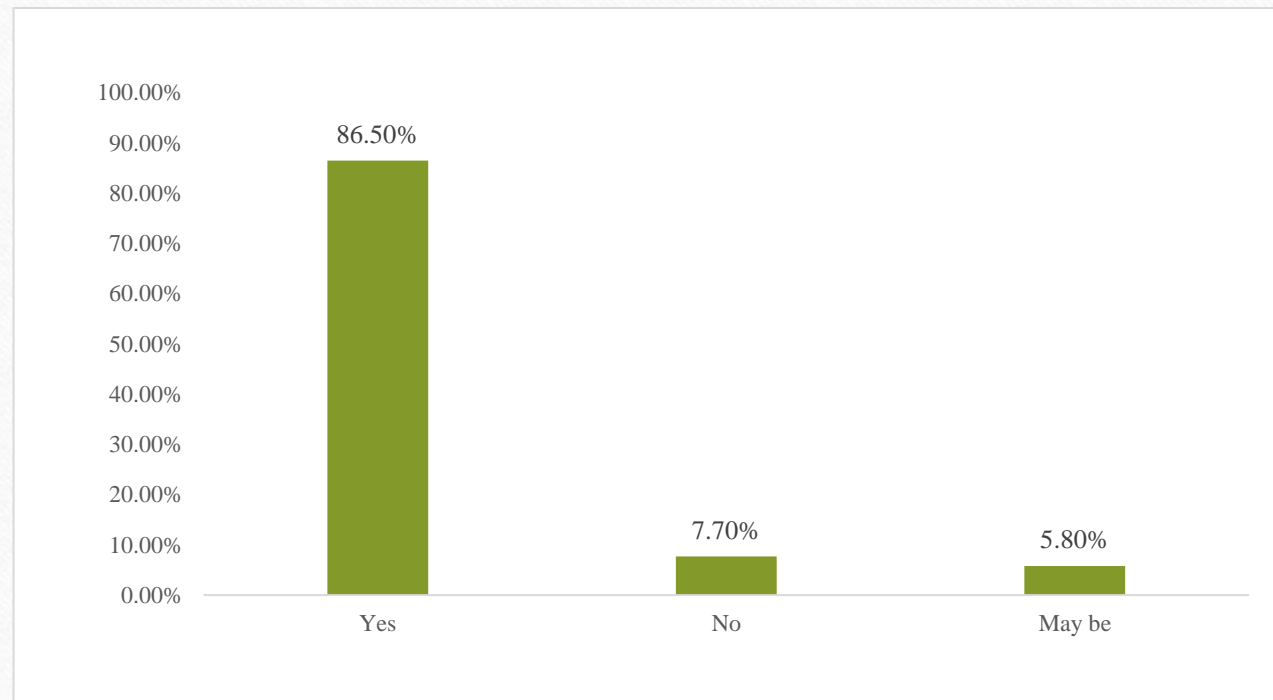
- Data is collected via the questionnaire technique. The college libraries of Assam were surveyed using a structured questionnaire to collect data regarding the use of library resources for indigenous knowledge and the provision of access to IK by patrons of college libraries. Email and WhatsApp were used to distribute the questionnaire. The distributed questionnaire yielded a total of 52 responses, which were analyzed using MS-Excel.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

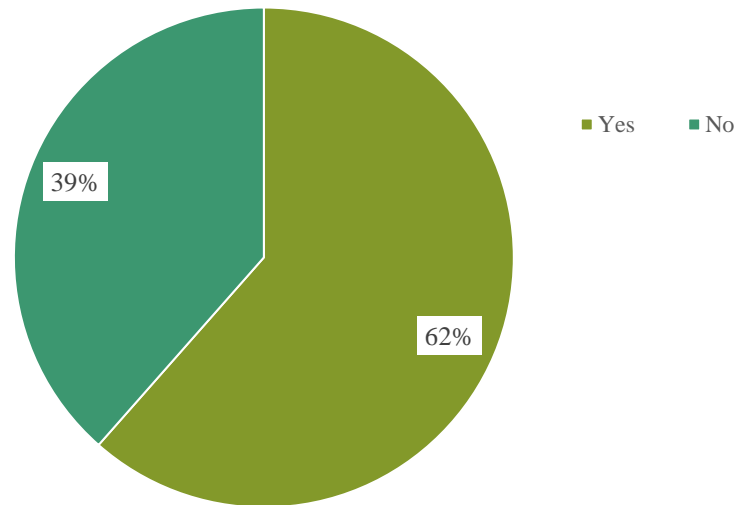
Sl. No.	Name of the College	Name of the Library	Year of establishment
1	PDUAM, Amjonga Goalpara Assam	Central Library, PDUAM, Amjonga	2018
2	Kamala Bezbaruah Memorial College of Teacher Education Jorhat	College Library	1990
3	Panigaon OPD College Lakhimpur	Panigaon OPD College Central Library	1984
4	Rampur Anchalik College	Rampur Anchalik College Library	1996
5	Jhanji Hemnath Sarma College, Sivasagar	Lalit Chandra Rajkhowa Memorial Library	1964
6	Dhemaji college, Dhemaji	B. C. Pegu library	1966
7	Sapatgram College	Central Library, Sapatgram College	1972
8	CKB Commerce College, Jorhat	Central Library	1965
9	Patidarrang College	Patidarrang College library	1989
10	Goalpara College	Goalpara College Library	1955
11	Raha College	Rasaraj Lakshminath Bezbaruah Central Library	1964
12	Dimoria College	Central Library, Dimoria College, Khetri	1979
13	Dharmasala College	Dharmasala College Library	1993
14	Nanda Nath Saikia College Titabar	Chakreswar Saikia Central Library	1962
15	Kakoli Goswami	Bongaigaon College-Central Library	1964
16	Vidya Bharati College	VBC, library	1990
17	K.C. Das Commerce College	K.C. Das Commerce College Library	1983
18	Cachar College Silchar	Central Library	1960
19	Joya Gogoi College Khumtai	Capt Jintu Gogoi, Vir Chakra library	1992
20	Pub Kamrup College	Pub Kamrup College Library	1972
21	R.S.Girls College	College Library	1962
22	Bahona College	Bahona College Library	1966
23	Gargaon College	Gargaon College Central Library	1959
24	Kakojan College	Central Library	1967
25	Bapujee College, Sarukhetri	Bapujee College Library	1970

26	Sibsagar College, Jyotsnera (Autonomous)	HDM LIBRARY	1958
27	BHB College, Sarupeta	Central Library BHB College	1971
28	Progati College, Agomani	H.N.P.M Library	1991
29	Pramathesh Barua College, Gauripur	Alokesh Chandra Barua Central Library	1964
30	Dibru College	Dibru College Central Library	1963
31	Sipajhar College	Central Library	1971
32	Government Model College Deithor	Bonglong Terang Library and Information Centre	2021
33	S.B.Deorah College	S.B. Deorah college library	1984
34	Dhakuakhana College	Central Library, Dhakuakhana College	1966
35	B.P.Chaliha college, Nagarbera	Central Library	1972
36	DKD College, Dergaon	N S LIBRARY	1962
37	Bikali College	Central Library Bikali College	1982
38	B.H. College	B.H. College Library	1966
39	B.N. College, Dhubri	SNT Library	1946
40	sarupathar college	Sarupathar College Library	1970
41	birjhora mahavidyalaya, bongaigaon	Central library, Birjhora Mahavidyalaya	1987
42	Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Adarsha Mahavidyalaya, Tulungia	Central Library, PDUAM Tulungia	2017
43	Duliajan College	Duliajan College Library	1969
44	North Gauhati College	North Gauhati College Library	1962
45	CKB College, Teok	Siba Ram Borah Library	1959
46	Halakura College	Halakura College Library	1991
47	Madhab Choudhury College, Barpeta	Kameswar Das Library	1939
48	Chilarai College, Golaganj	Bhuban Chandra Prodhani Central Library	1973
49	Sonari College	Sonari College Library	1970
50	M.N.C. Balika Mahavidyalaya, Nalbari	Munindra Narayan Choudhury Central Library Pandit Tirthanath Sarma Library	1979 1954
51	Pragiyotish College	P.B.Anchalik Mahavidyalaya Central Library	1984
52	Paschim Barigog Anchalik Mahavidyalaya		

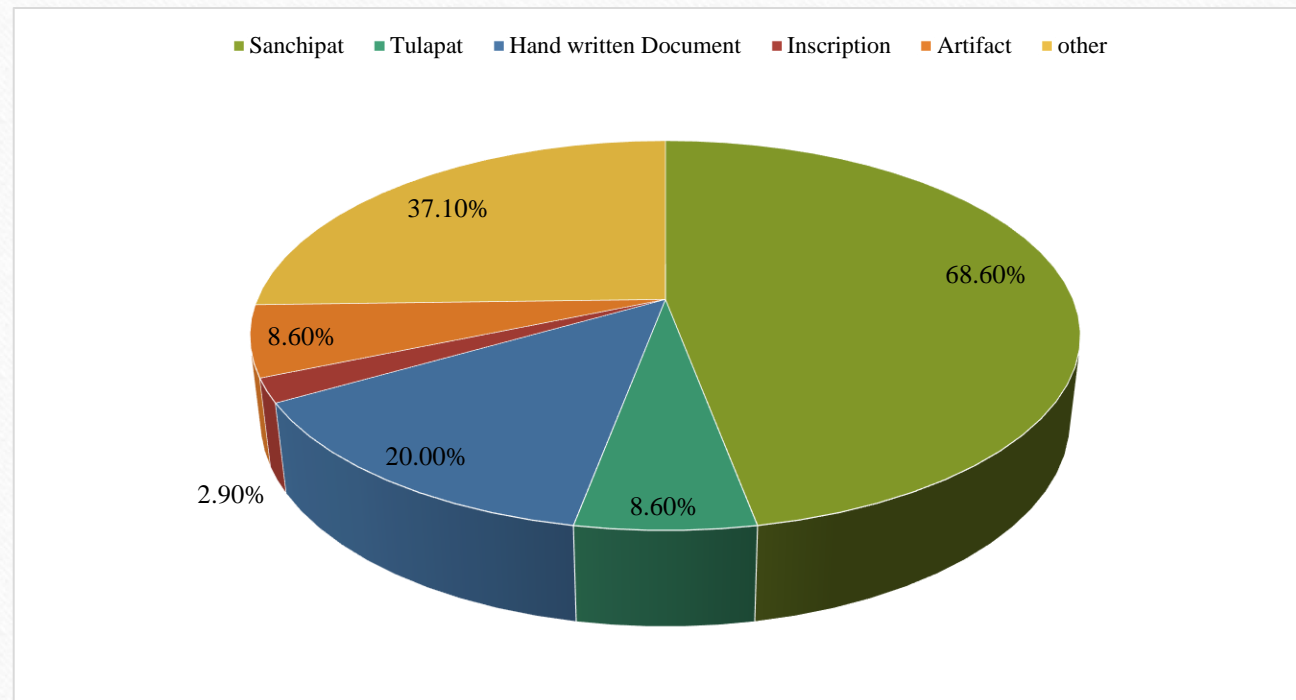
Do you have any knowledge of IK?



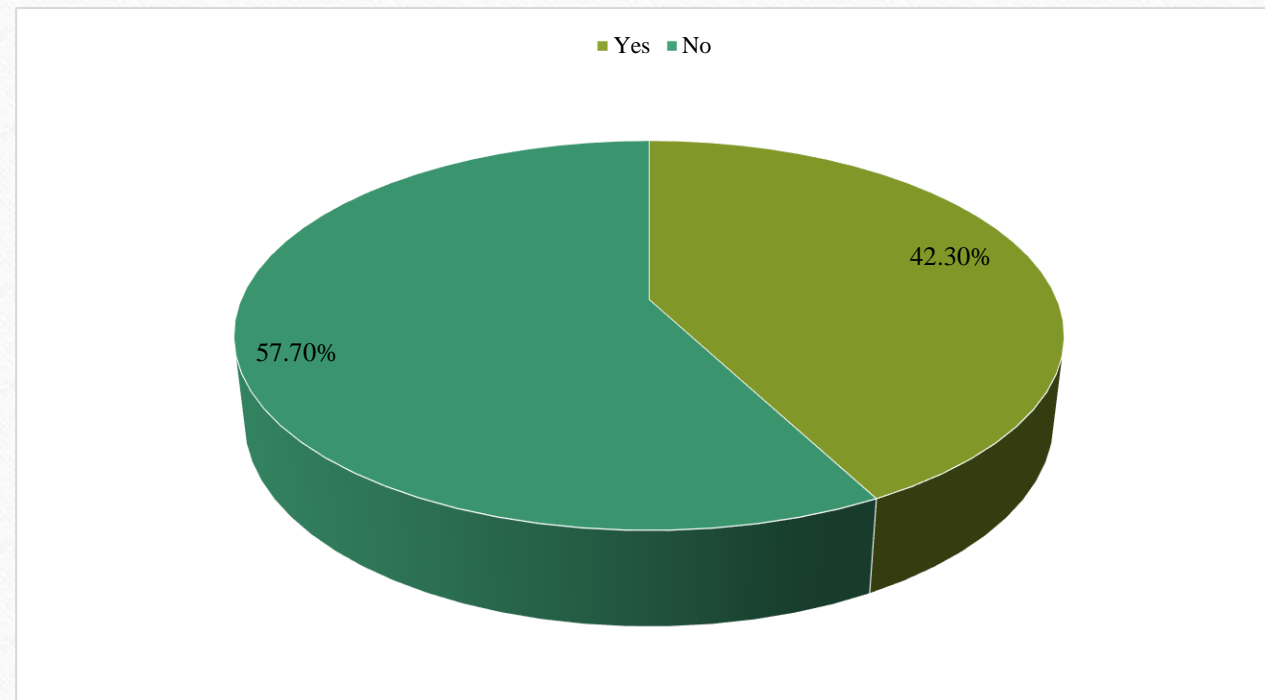
Do you possess any resources on IK within your library?



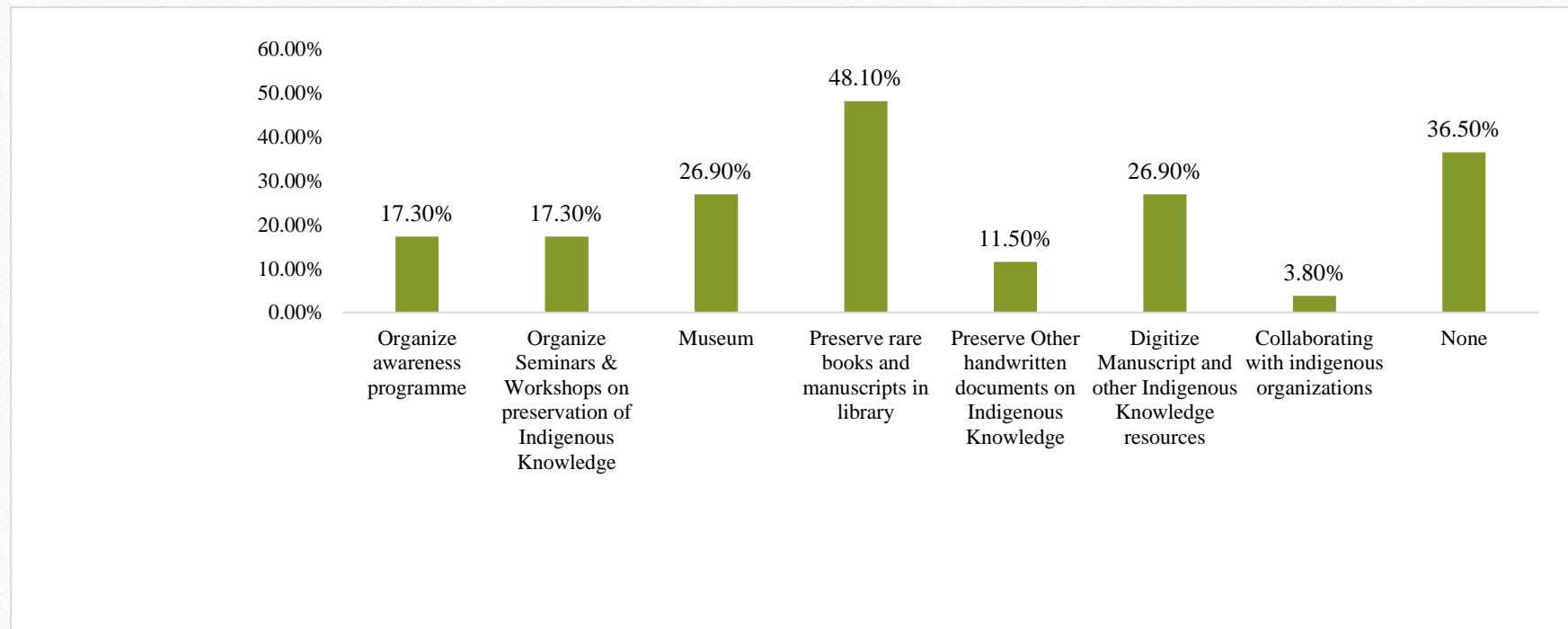
What type of Indigenous resources has your library procured?



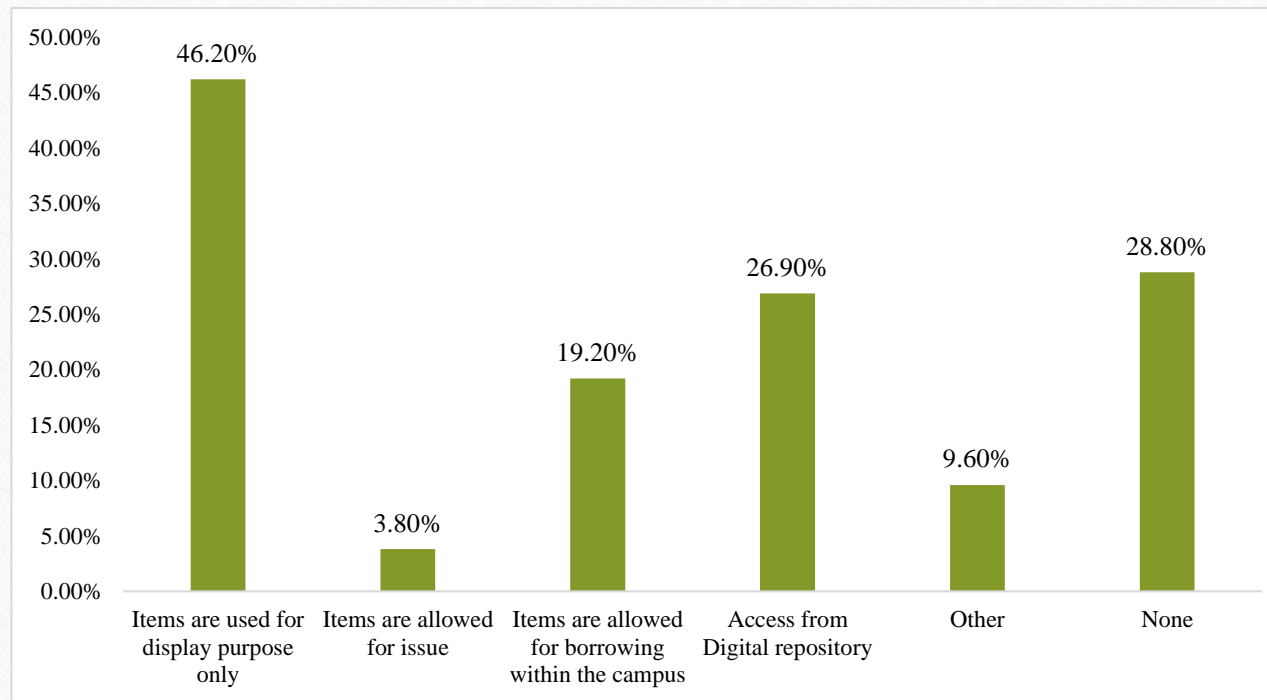
Does your library take any initiatives to acquire indigenous resources specific to your locality?



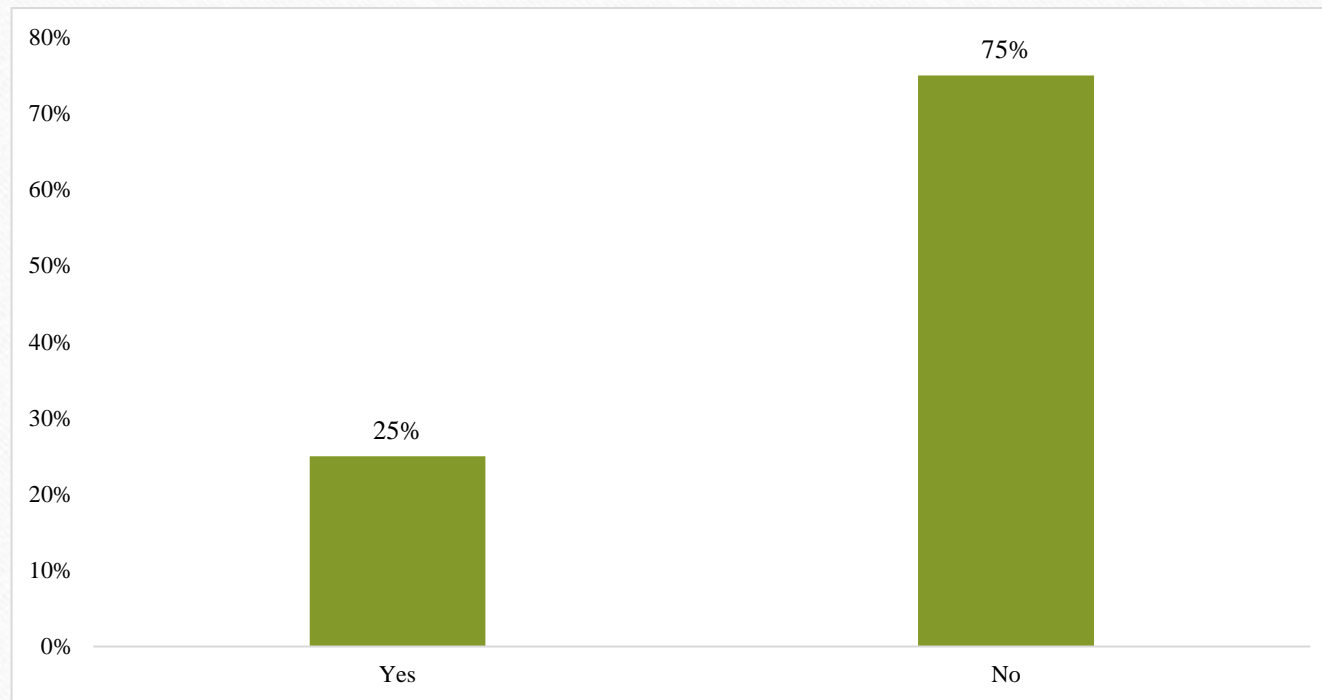
How does library /authority go about gathering and safeguarding IK?



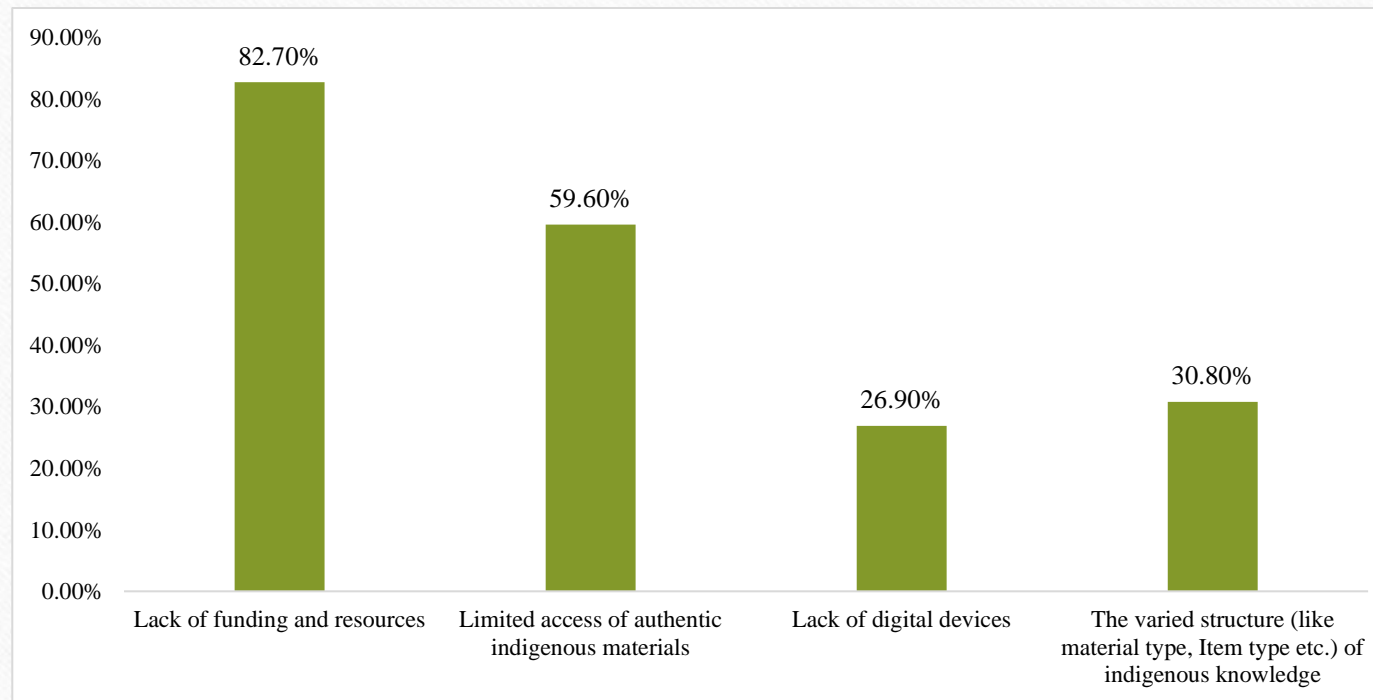
In what ways are resources made available for library users to access?



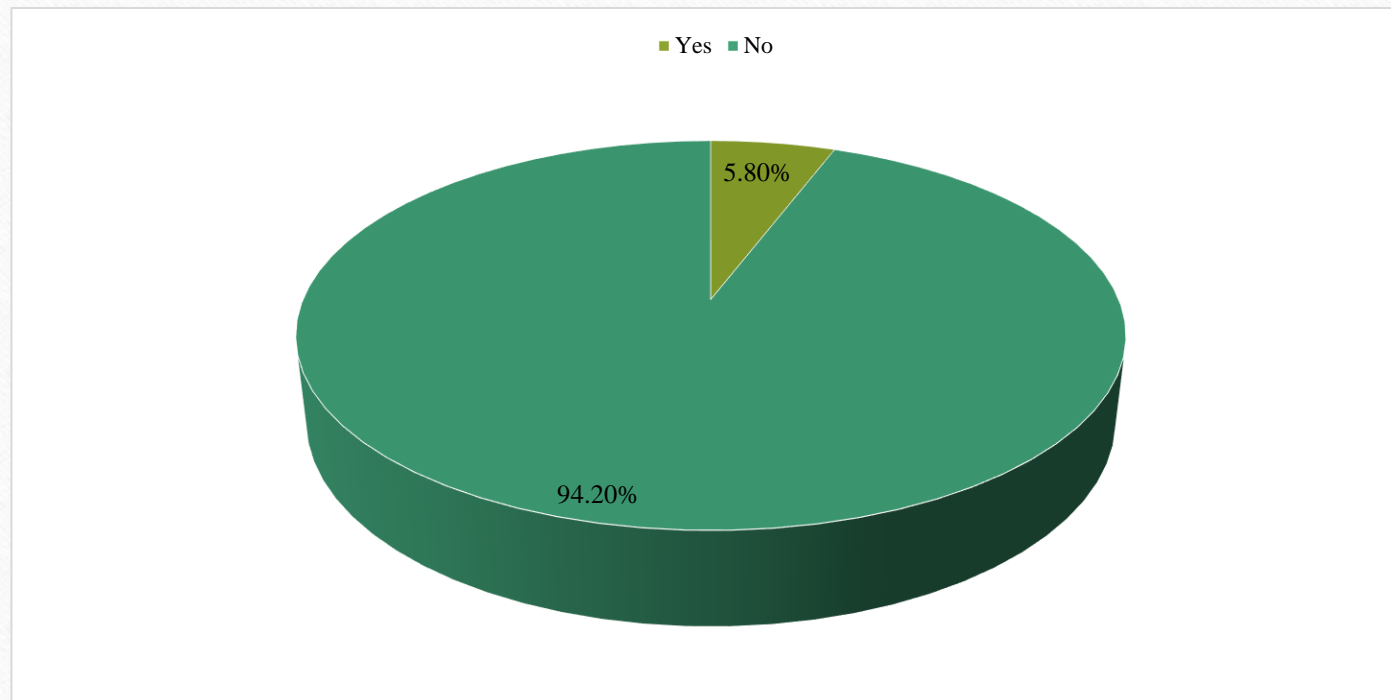
Does the library has any policy for collecting IK?



Challenges encountered by the library staff to work on IK?



Is there any training provided by the college for library staff to maintain IK?



Finding and discussion

Objective-1: *To find out the awareness & preservation of IK among the college libraries of Assam*

The analysis shows that most of the college librarians are aware about indigenous knowledge. 45 librarians out of 52 are aware about IK which is a good sign. It will surely help to preserve IK system.

Objective-2 *To know the types of IK that procured by the college libraries.*

The college libraries in Assam have a range of indigenous resources including Sanchipat and Tulapat manuscripts, handwritten documents, inscriptions, and artifacts. 24 libraries have Sanchipat collections, 3 have Tulapat, 7 have handwritten documents, 1 has an inscription, and 3 have artifacts. Additionally, 13 libraries have other indigenous resources like handloom and traditional items from the local community, with manuscripts often obtained from Namghars and rural households

Contd.

Objective-3 *To find out the initiatives taken by the college libraries to collect the IK.*

42.30% of the population are actively involved in collecting indigenous knowledge (IK) resources within their communities. They organize awareness programs, seminars, and workshops on IK, inviting experts to decode ancient scripts of manuscripts, thus disseminating hidden knowledge. Additionally, 26.90% of colleges have digitized manuscripts, a significant step in preserving IK. Furthermore, two libraries have collaborated with indigenous organizations, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of preserving indigenous resources.

Objective-4 *To assess the Authority's participation to preserve the IK.*

Majority of the libraries don't have any separate policy for collection of IK resources. 33 libraries out of the total population responded that their authorities are taking initiatives towards gathering and safeguarding IK resources. They organize various awareness programme and seminars with the collaboration of their authorities. They mainly focused on preserving manuscripts and rare books.

Contd.

Objective-5 *To know how the IK make accessible to the users.*

In 24 libraries indigenous resources are kept for display purpose only. Only two libraries allowed the items for issue and 10 (19.60%) libraries allowed for borrowing within the campus. Libraries who have digitized their resources, they put it in the institutional repositories of their parent organization. 14 libraries (26.90%) have done the digitization initiatives. 28.80% libraries have not any steps for IK resources.

Objective-6 *To investigate the challenges in preservation of and accessibility to IK.*

Libraries are facing various problems while preserving IK resources. 42 (82.70%) libraries have lack of funding and resources. 59.6% have responded that there is a limited access of authentic indigenous materials. 14 libraries have lack of digital devices for digitize the IK resources. 30.80% libraries are facing difficulties due to varied structure of IK. Other than that 49 (94.20%) library staffs are not trained for properly to handle indigenous resources. Only three libraries the staff got training for this. Training is very much essential for the collection, preservation, and dissemination of information related to indigenous knowledge.

Recommendation

- **Community engagement**
- **Interest from the parent organization**
- **Interest of the government**
- **Collaboration with IK community**
- **Documentation**
- **Digitization of resources**
- **Staff Training**

Conclusion

- Preserving indigenous knowledge (IK) is crucial for maintaining social identity and understanding cultural heritage. IK exists in various forms like manuscripts, oral traditions, and ancient inscriptions, embodying a rich history. In today's digital age, there are both challenges and opportunities for preserving IK. While digital resources are increasingly popular, much of IK remains in printed or undocumented forms. Workshops and seminars led by experts play a key role in raising awareness and translating ancient texts for wider accessibility. Both library and information science (LIS) professionals and society at large have a responsibility to ensure the preservation and accessibility of IK in both print and digital formats. In future govt. can also make some policies so that indigenous resources can be collected easily for preservation purpose and digitization steps can be carried out in large scale

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Thank You