

# Exploring the Role of District Libraries in Supporting Resources, Services and Government Information

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## Abstract

Public libraries as a social organization make available an assortment of information as social, cultural, political, and economic. As a community information centre, it provides printed as well as other forms of information to all peoples of the society without discrimination of caste, creed, sex, religion, and age. The study examines the functions of district libraries to encourage people toward public libraries in West Bengal, India. The main purpose of the study is to determine the current scenario of West Bengal district libraries based on their resources, services, and publications. The present study formed on the strength of some objectives as to explore the collections, facilities, and publications of district libraries, to recognize the types of government information provided by the district libraries, and to discover the systems of six district libraries in West Bengal. The findings of the study showed that the maximum number of libraries has a great collection of library resources and they provide a variety of services to attract people towards public libraries and they try their best to fulfil the desire of users. Although the study revealed that three libraries acquire maximum scores based on their collections, services, and publications.

**Keywords:** District library; Library resources; Library services; Public Library; Public Library user; West Bengal.

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## 1. Introduction

The library is the fourth pillar of education. Different types of libraries (public, academic and special) play a pivotal role to make a knowledgeable society. The public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the public community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of public organization. They provide equal access to all types of community members and stretch their coordination through every part of society. This study highlights West Bengal district libraries to explore their resources,

services, various sections, publications and govt. information. District library as the repository of knowledge plays a major role to make educated and responsible citizens. It is open to all community members without distinguishing cast, creed and sex. In Cesena, Italy, the first community-run public library, the Malatestiana Library, was established in 1447, spread both secular and religious texts in Latin, Greek and Hebrew and was fully open to all members of the public. The Maharaja of Tanjuar started the famous Saraswati Mahal Library in the 17th century A.D. The credit had been gone into the bagged of Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad for

introducing the first public library to open to all public and inaugurated elementary education in 1883 in India(Sathikumar, 1993). At present 30 state central libraries, 40 regional and divisional libraries, 364 district libraries, 4658 city/town libraries as well as 49,758 village libraries out of a total of 54851 public libraries in India(Ramaiah & Reddy, 2010). “The public library, the gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision- making and cultural development of the individual and social group (IFLA, 1994).

Public libraries have an outstanding opportunity to set up a connection to the public citizen with global emergence through the application of information technology (Saur, 2001). Information and Communication Technology is a way that can transfer data, information and knowledge. District libraries have gradually been implementing ICTs for spreading better services in society. Many public libraries have tried to the harmonious way in the electronic revolution era and taken the opportunity to one step toward ahead their services in new and exhibiting ways.

The first library training program was conducted by Borden at Baroda in 1911. He played an effective role in the establishment, management, and organization of public libraries in India. In 1951 Delhi public library was set up by the Government of India with the cooperation of UNESCO to serve as a model public library for Asia (Roy, 2021). The first public library act was enacted in Madras in 1948. Madras public library act contains a library cess (10%) on land, property, and building taxes. In 1979 West Bengal public library act was enacted. It decided library cess will not collect and free library services will be provided to the citizens. In India, most of the states are offering free library services irrespective of public library legislation.

District libraries try their best to access and introduce new materials for the public interest. They help citizens with necessary information.

Young citizen comes to the library to access their personal interest viz. career guidance, preparation for competitive exams and government information.

## **2. Review of related literature**

Abumandour (2021) investigated the role of Bibliotheca Alexandrina public libraries to support e-learning and disseminate lifelong education concepts in the community. In this study author compared traditional education to e-learning education along with their pros and cons. Author connected e-learning with STEM disciplines and public libraries through this study. Khanchandani (2021) explored the functions of public libraries in the development of digital Bharat towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. The study focused on knowing how public libraries help to achieve the goals of digital Bharat and to know the user’s daily information needs regarding e-government initiatives in India and the key challenges faces by libraries in providing these services. The author suggested that government should make a suitable plan and policy to provide e-government services among citizens through public libraries. Further, Roy (2021) discussed the history of public libraries in India as well as West Bengal. The main focus of the study was on the Malda District library in West Bengal. Author explained the various five-year plans (1951-2002) and government initiatives for libraries in India. Biswas & Mahato (2020) find out the role of West Bengal public libraries for local economic development. The authors selected five public libraries of West Bengal for circulating a questionnaire along with an interview method to collect data. The findings of the study showed that these public libraries were trying to satisfy the information requirements of citizens through their various information services. Karim & Islam(2020) described a review-based study that revealed some selected published research work on public libraries’ role to provide community information services in numerous developed and

developing countries. Nengomasha & Shuumbili (2020) explored the field connected with the information accession by the citizens through the help of community libraries (65 in number) in Namibia. The result framed that public library provide various kinds of information services and mostly provide employment and tax-related information. Jacob & Olajide (2018) revealed that public libraries of South West Nigeria market their various information products and services to pay the attention of the general people. Mishra & Ngurtinkhuma (2017) discussed the role of public libraries to reduce the digital and technological gap for effective e-governance. They also discussed some issues and challenges of public libraries to achieve the goal. The result of the study showed that due to deficiency of technological equipment and insufficient digital knowledge-based human resources, the digital divide is constant in general people. Snead (2014) discussed some issues and challenges which effects on to meet the government information needs of public library users. The study explored how library evaluation can improve library systems and develop library-provided government information facilities. He discovered how library and information study helps to prepare the public librarians to meet the challenges of changing environment of government information. The study also revealed that public libraries are approaching to provide effective and efficient e-government services to patrons with the help of the internet.

### 3. Objectives

- i. To discover the collections, services and publications of West Bengal District libraries.
- ii. To identify the types of government information provided by the district libraries.

- iii. To explore the systems of the district libraries of West Bengal.

### 4. Methodology

The present study covered six district libraries these are Bankura District Library (BDL), Burdwan Udaychand District Library (BUDL), Howrah District Library (HDL), Jaykrishna Library Uttarpara (JLU), Kolkata Metropolitan Library (KML) and Ramkrishna Mission Boys' Home District Library (RMBHDL) in West Bengal. Data were collected through a survey with the help of interviews along with schedule methods. Open-ended and close-ended both types of questions were set up for data collection. The purposive sample was used in this research for selecting the sample unit from the study area to fulfil the objectives. Data were collected from six district libraries with the help of respected librarians or library professionals. Descriptive statistical and checklist method was used for the analysis of collected data and make findings. Researchers calculated the Mean value for considering the better library services. A formula of simple Arithmetic Mean has been used to calculate the Mean value, that is-

$$\bar{X} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n x_n$$

Where  $\bar{X}$ = Mean,  $n$ = Number of items in the sample,  $X_n$ = Sum of all Values.

### 5. Importance of the study

Based on the above objectives, the present study tries to demonstrate the services, collection, and publications of district libraries. The findings of the study may help to implement a better plan and policy for district libraries and reduce the barriers to providing free library services according to the information needs of users. And this study might be providing an effective role for further related research.

## 6. Data Analysis and Findings

Different Sections	BDL	BUDL	HDL	JLU	KML	RMBHDL
Acquisition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Technical	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Circulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Periodical	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reference	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stack area	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Binding	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
Electronic data	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Audio-visual	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Digital library	×	×	×	×	×	×
Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	08	10	07	10	10	08

**Table 1** Different sections maintained by the District Libraries

Table 1 showed that Burdwan Udaychand District Library, Jaykrishna Library and Kolkata Metropolitan Library maintained ten sections. Two libraries i.e. Bankura District library and

Ramkrishna Mission Boys' Home District library have eight sections and Howrah District Library maintained seven sections. Out of these six libraries, no one library provides a digital library section to their users.

<b>Information Resources</b>	<b>BDL</b>	<b>BUDL</b>	<b>HDL</b>	<b>JLU</b>	<b>KML</b>	<b>RMBHDL</b>
<b>Books</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Theses/ Dissertation</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Journal</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Magazine</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Newspaper</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Maps/atlas</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Reference resources</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Conference proceeding/ Committee reports</b>	×	×	×	✓	✓	×
<b>Government reposts/Gazetteer</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Manuscripts</b>	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
<b>CD/DVDs</b>	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓
<b>e-books</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>e-journals</b>	×	×	×	×	✓	✓
<b>Letters</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Patent</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Standards</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Total</b>	07	08	08	10	09	09

Table 2 Distribution of various collections available in the district libraries

Table 2 showed the collections of the libraries. Jaykrishna Library of Uttarpara has the highest types of collections. Kolkata Metropolitan and Ramkrishna Mission Boys' Home District library

had 9 types of collections. 8 types of collections are available in Burdwan Udaychand and Howrah district libraries. And the rest of Bankura District Library has 7 types of library materials.

<b>Services/Facilities available in the District libraries</b>	<b>BDL</b>	<b>BUDL</b>	<b>HDL</b>	<b>JLU</b>	<b>KML</b>	<b>RMBHD L</b>
<b>Issue/Return system</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Reservation</b>	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓
<b>Reading Room Facility</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Read your own books</b>	×	×	×	×	✓	✓
<b>Proper arrangement of Library resources</b>	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
<b>User guidance/orientation</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Help for searching/locating the required information</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Facility for group discussion</b>	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓
<b>Reference service</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Referral service</b>	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
<b>Interlibrary loan</b>	×	×	×	✓	×	×
<b>Extension services</b>	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓
<b>Reprographic Services</b>	✓	×	×	✓	✓	✓
<b>Printings services</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Document delivery</b>	×	×	×	✓	×	×
<b>Translation Service</b>	×	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Storytelling</b>	×	×	×	✓	×	×
<b>CAS</b>	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓

<b>SDI</b>	x	x	x	✓	x	x
<b>Newspapers display</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Newspaper Clipping Service</b>	x	✓	x	✓	x	x
<b>Abstracting</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Indexing</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Quiz</b>	x	x	x	x	x	✓
<b>Debate</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Internet service (WIFI)</b>	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
<b>OPAC</b>	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓
<b>Computer Lab</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Social networking services</b>	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
<b>Alerts/ Notification to users</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Feedback through Mail/Telephone/WhatsApp</b>	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
<b>Online Counseling/ Online conferencing/Online services</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Annual program</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Public meeting</b>	x	x	x	✓	✓	x
<b>Staff training program</b>	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
<b>Guesthouse</b>	x	x	x	✓	x	x
<b>Total</b>	14	15	08	26	18	22

**Table 3** Distribution of services provided by the district libraries

Table 3 showed that different services available in the district libraries. Jaykrishna Public library Uttarpara has reached the apex position, and provided 26 library services, followed by

Ramkrishna Mission Boys' Home District library which provided 22 services. Kolkata Metropolitan Library provided 18 services. 15 services were provided by the Burdwan

Udaychand District library. Bankura District library provided 14, as well as 08 services were provided by the Howrah District library.

Table 4 shows that Howrah District Library has four publications and Jaykrishna Library has three publications. Other libraries don't have their publication.

Table 5 shows that all district libraries provided two types of government information to their

users at present i.e., COVID-19 related information as well as library membership rules and regulations provided by the West Bengal State government.

BDL	BUDL	HDL	JLU	KML	RMBHDL
No publication	No publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jela Parikrama</li> <li>• Rear books and manuscripts</li> <li>• Bengali Translation of Gazetteer</li> <li>• Gazetteer of Howrah and Kolkata</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uttar Swakshar Akti Aalok Prabaho</li> <li>• Biography of Jaykrishna</li> <li>• Biography of Basanta Kumar</li> </ul>	No	No
0	0	04	03	0	0

**Table 4** Distribution of publications of the different district libraries

BDL	BUDL	HDL	JLU	KML	RMBHDL
COVID-19 Related Government Circulation					
Library membership rules and regulations provided by the West Bengal State government					
02	02	02	02	02	02

**Table 5** Distribution of government information available in the district libraries

## 7. Findings

Based on the above tables, researchers calculated all the data for the findings of Mean value. At

first, it gathered all values in one table for calculating the sum.



	BDL	BUDL	HDL	JLU	KML	RMBHDL	Total
<b>Sections</b>	08	10	07	10	10	08	53
<b>Types of Collections</b>	07	08	08	10	09	09	51
<b>Services/ Facilities</b>	14	15	08	26	18	22	103
<b>Publication</b>	00	00	04	03	00	00	07
<b>Govt. Information</b>	02	02	02	02	02	02	12
<b>Total</b>	31	35	29	51	39	41	226

**Table 6** Distribution of summaries data taken from the above tables

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n x_n$$

Where  $\bar{x}$  = Mean,  $n$  = Number of items in the sample,  $X_n$  = Sum of all Values.

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{6} * 226 = 37.66$$

**Then Mean is 37.66**

Here 37.66 is the Mean or Average value of all six libraries. Only three libraries (Jaykrishna Library Uttarpara, Ramkrishna Mission Boys' Home District Library and Kolkata Metropolitan Library) have qualified above the mean in respect of library sections, services, collections, publications as well as government services. Those scores 51, 41, and 39 already crossed the Mean value of 37.66 and the rest of the other three libraries were also obtained good scores, but they are not qualified. Because they did not touch the Mean value as well as cross the value.

## 8. Conclusion

As public libraries are intimately connected with the people, they try to provide the best services from their end. This paper covered six district

libraries with their collection, services, sections, publications, and government information. The results reveal that all libraries have valuable collections and can promote good services. The above findings represented that, the three libraries successfully implemented their better quality of services based on their collections, and publications according to the mean value and others are not. Moreover, all libraries have working on their database. Six district libraries are installed and used library management software as Koha. They try their level best to change their present plan of work for the elevation of service and stride to the modern age from the traditional era for the fulfillment of human optimism in the digital world.

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