

REALITY VERSUS EXPECTATIONS: A SURVEY ON THE WORKING LIBRARIAN'S EXPERIENCES IN SIKKIM

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Abstract *The advancement of Information & Communication Technology has brought radical changes not only on the library and information services but also on the roles and expectations of the librarians and information professionals. This study highlights the survey of working librarians' experiences who take part in the five days orientation programs organized by the Department of Cultural Affairs & Heritage, Government of Sikkim on 2nd Feb – 6th Feb 2013 at Gangtok. A well structured questionnaire was used for collecting opinions of the librarians about their sex, age, qualification, performance and functioning of authorities, library services and facilities, training programs etc. Out of 37 participants, only 33 questionnaires were collected from the respondents and selected for analysis of data. The present study also presents the suggestions provided by the respondents to harness the development of library services in the state.*

Keyword: *Library System & Services, Sikkim, Librarians' Opinions, Library Profession*

INTRODUCTION

Library is considered as an intellectual centre of the society containing records not only the intellectual but also of cultural, economic and social inclination. The central mission of a library is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to knowledge and information. The public library is to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the need of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions. UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994 describes a public library as: "A living force for education, culture and information and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women. It is a local centre for information making all kinds of information readily available to its users. The services are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of the age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language, or social status." Similarly the Academic and Special library have their respective objectives and mission to cater teaching, learning, and research related information needs of their users.

SIKKIM AT A GLANCE

Sikkim is one of the most beautiful and strategically important states of the Indian Union. It is a small mountainous State in the Eastern Himalayan region extending approximately

114 km from North to South and 64 km. from East to West, having a total geographical area 7096 sq. km. Bounded by foreign nations on three sides, it shares its boundary with the state of West Bengal. The State is situated between 88° 00' 58" and 88° 55' 25" East longitudes and 27° 00' 46" and 28° 07' 48" North latitudes. The State receives an annual Rainfall of 2000mm to 4000mm. Tista & Rangit, are the two major rivers of the State. The altitudes vary from 300 meters to 8500 meters above mean sea level. The entire state is a young mountain system with highly folded and faulted rock strata at many places. It encompasses the lesser Himalayas, Central Himalayas and the Tethys Himalayas. Great Mountain ranging from 3000 meters to 8500 meters in height separates the state from surroundings. The state receives an average annual rainfall of 500 cm. The State is bestowed with abundant natural resources. Covering just 0.2% of the geographical area of the country, it has tremendous biodiversity and has been identified as one of the Hot Spot for biodiversity.

Sikkim is a multi-ethnic state. Broadly, the population can be divided into Tribal and Non- Tribal groups. The people from the plain mostly involved in Trade and services represent a marginal group. As per the 2011 census (provisional) of India, the total population of the state is 6,07,688, whereas in 2001 it was 5,40,493, and in 1991 it was 4,06,457 only. The overall density of population in the state is 86 per sq. km. East district is the most populated. The State (at National Level) has the literacy rate 82.20%. There are 166 Panchayats and 453 Revenue Blocks, which comprise of 32 Assembly Constituencies.

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LIBRARY SYSTEM IN SIKKIM

The library system and services in the state has its own scenario. The state in fact experienced the importance of library services since late sixties. It has in its library system- public library, academic library and special library. There is a very systematic pattern of libraries among the academic institutions. Most of the schools have the library with a librarian enjoying the scale and status at par with the teachers. Universities and Colleges have their own libraries with ample resources. There are special libraries attached with various research institutes and government departments with adequate facilities.

Talking about Public libraries, Sikkim has a network of public library system comprising of a State Central Library, 3 District Libraries, 5 Sub-divisional Libraries, and 105 Rural Libraries. The present State Central Library (SCL) at capital city Gangtok was established in 1964 as Community Center Library and it was also functioned as District Library during 1982-2000. The State Central Library (SCL), District Libraries and Sub-divisional Libraries are under the Department of Cultural Affairs & Heritage of the State. The Rural libraries attached with Gram Panchayats are under the Department of Rural Development, Government of Sikkim. The three district libraries are West Sikkim District Library, Gyanshing established in 1970, South Sikkim District Library, Namchi established in 1990, and North Sikkim District Library, mangan established in 1990.

The State Central Library (SCL) at Gangtok acts as the resource center for all the other public libraries in the state. Till now the state does not have a Library Legislation. Despite this the State Government has given much attention to the development of public libraries across the state. Recently planning to automate the library system is in progress. RRRLF, Kolkata have also extended its assistance towards the development of public libraries in the state. However, infrastructural facilities like building, location, space, qualified and trained manpower are some of the bottlenecks in the development of public library services in Sikkim.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study is to assess the opinion and experience of working librarians who take part in the five days Orientation Programs in terms of their age, sex, organizational attachment, educational qualification, library facilities and services, training programs for professional development etc.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is mainly restricted to the librarians of various types of libraries of only the East District of the State, who

participated in the Five days Orientation Programs w.e.f. 19th to 23rd February, 2013, organized by the Department of Cultural Affairs & Heritage, Government of Sikkim in collaboration with Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Survey method of research has been adopted especially structured questionnaire and interview schedules to examine the attitude and experience of working librarians. A total of 39 structured questionnaires were distributed to librarians participated in the training program. And out of which 33 questionnaires were duly obtained with a response rate of 84.61%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the findings of the study are discussed below;

Table 1. Sexwise Distribution of Respondents

Items	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondent
Male	7	21.21%
Female	26	78.79%

The table 1 indicates that majority of participant librarians are female member 26 (78.79%) followed by 7 (21.21%) male librarians.

Table 2. Agewise Distribution of Respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondent
18 – 25 yrs	4	12.12%
26 – 35 yrs	13	39.40%
36 – 45 yrs	10	30.30%
46 and above	6	18.18%

The above table 2 reveals that 4 (12.12%) librarians are age between 18-25 yrs, 13 (39.40%) are age between 26-35 yrs, 10 (30.30%) are age between 36-45 yrs and only 6 (18.18%) respondents are above 46 yrs of age.

Table 3. Organizational Attachment of Respondents

Organizations	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondent
Public Library	8	24.24%
School Library	16	48.49%
College Library	1	3.03%
Govt. Departmental Library	6	18.18%
Special Library	2	6.06%

Table 3 shows that 8 (24.24%) respondents are coming from Public Libraries, 16 (48.49%) are attached with School Libraries, only 1 (3.03%) is serving the College Library, 6 (18.18%) are employed of various Govt Departmental Libraries and 2 (6.06%) are attached with Special libraries in the East district of the Sikkim.

Table 4. Educational & Professional Qualification of Respondents

Qualifications		No. of respondents	% of respondent
Academic Qualification	Class X Passed	6	18.18%
	Class XII Passed	8	24.24%
	Graduate	14	42.42%
	Post Graduate	5	15.16%
Professional Qualification	C. Lib Sc	-	-
	D. Lib Sc	7	21.21%
	BLISc	13	39.40%
	MLISc	6	18.18%
No Response	-	7	21.21%

Asking about the academic qualification the table 4 reveals that 6 (18.18%) respondents are having Class X passed, 8 (24.24%) are XII passed, 14 (42.42%) are graduate and 5 (15.16%) are having post graduate degree. Similarly regarding professional qualification of candidates 7 (21.21%) have Diploma in Library Science, 13 (39.40%) have Bachelor degree in Library & Information Science and 6 (18.18%) have Master degree in Library & Information Science.

The respondents were requested to indicate their views regarding the performance and functioning of respective authorities. They were given four indicators such as very satisfactory, satisfactory, poor and very poor. Some have not responded the column. The table 5 elucidates that the performance of Department of Cultural Affairs &

Heritage (DCA&H), 17 (51.51%) candidates finds it very satisfactory, 14 (42.42%) finds it satisfactory. Performance of Department of Rural Development (DRD), 11 (33.33%) respondents says it is satisfactory, 14 (42.42%) claimed it is poor and 4 (12.12%) finds it is very poor. Performance of State Library Council (SLC), 5 (15.15%) candidates says it is very satisfactory, 20 (60.60%) finds it is satisfactory, and 4 (12.12%) claimed it is poor. About style & functioning of State Central Library (SCL), 9 (27.27%) respondent says it is very satisfactory, 19 (57.57%) says it is satisfactory, and 3 (9.09%) finds it is poor. Asking about style & functioning of Gram Panchayat Offices, 12 (36.36%) responded it is satisfactory, 8 (24.24%) says it is poor, and 4 (12.12%) finds it is very poor. 4 (12.12%) respondents say that the working of Library Committee is very satisfactory, 8 (24.24%) finds it is satisfactory, 16 (48.48%) says it is poor and another 4 (12.12%) claimed it is very poor. Regarding amount of Govt. grant received 2 (6.06%) respondents reveals it is very satisfactory, 8 (24.24%) says it is satisfactory, 10 (30.30%) finds it is poor and 9 (27.27%) indicates it is very poor. About membership subscription 13 (39.39%) candidates reveals it is satisfactory, 8 (24.24%) says it is poor and 6 (18.18%) finds it is very poor.

In table 6 librarians were asked to response their observations about library resources and facilities. They were given four indicators such as very satisfactory, satisfactory, poor and very poor. Some got hesitation to respond the column. Considering library building 4 (12.12%) participants says that their library building is very satisfactory, 6 (18.18%) claimed it is satisfactory, 9 (27.27%) finds it is poor and another 13 (39.39%) finds it is very poor. About furniture 4 (12.12%) respondents reveals it is very satisfactory, 8 (24.24%) finds it is satisfactory, 14 (42.42%) says it is poor while 6 (18.18%) finds it is very poor. Regarding number of library users 20 (60.60%) responded it is satisfactory, 7 (21.21%) says it is poor and 4 (12.12%) finds it is very poor. 16 (48.48%) of the total respondents observe that the reading habit of

Table 5. Opinion about Performance and Functioning of Respective Authorities

Items	Very. Satisfactory		Satisfactory		Poor		V. Poor		No Response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Performance of DCA&H	17	51.51%	14	42.42%	-	-	-	-	2	6.07%
Performance of DRD	-	-	11	33.33%	14	42.42%	4	12.12%	4	12.13%
Performance of SLC	5	15.15%	20	60.60%	4	12.12%	-	-	4	12.13%
Style & Functioning of SCL	9	27.27%	19	57.57%	3	9.09%	-	-	2	6.07%
Style & Functioning of GP Office	-	-	12	36.36%	8	24.24%	4	12.12%	9	27.28%
Working of Lib. Committee	4	12.12%	8	24.24%	16	48.48%	4	12.12%	1	3.04%
Amt. of Govt. grant received	2	6.06%	8	24.24%	10	30.30%	9	27.27%	4	12.13%
Subscription from members	-	-	13	39.39%	8	24.24%	6	18.18%	6	18.19%

Table 6. Opinion about Library Facilities and Resources

Items	Very. Satisfactory		Satisfactory		Poor		V. Poor		No Response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Library Building	4	12.12%	6	18.18%	9	27.27%	13	39.39%	1	3.04%
Furniture	4	12.12%	8	24.24%	14	42.42%	6	18.18%	1	3.04%
No. of Lib. Users	-	-	20	60.60%	7	21.21%	4	12.12%	2	6.07%
User's reading habits	-	-	16	48.48%	9	27.27%	6	18.18%	2	6.07%
Library collections	3	9.09%	11	33.33%	14	42.42%	5	15.16%	-	-
Staff strength	-	-	17	51.51%	10	30.30%	4	12.12%	2	6.07%
Working condition	2	6.06%	18	54.54%	9	27.27%	3	9.09%	1	3.04%
Govt. rules	3	9.09%	17	51.51%	9	27.27%	-	-	4	12.13%
Lib Automation	-	-	1	3.03%	10	30.30%	15	45.45%	7	21.22%

users is satisfactory, 9 (27.27%) finds it is poor while only 6 (18.18%) says it is very poor. Talking about library collection only 3 (9.09%) responded that their collection is very satisfactory, 11 (33.33%) reports that their collection is satisfactory, 14 (42.42%) says it is poor and 5 (15.15%) reveals that their library collection is very poor. 17(51.51%) respondents claimed that their staff position is satisfactory while 10 (30.30%) says it is poor and 4 (12.12%) reports that their staff strength in the library is very poor. Asking about working condition 2 (6.06%) respondents finds it is very satisfactory, 18 (54.54%) reports it is satisfactory, 9 (27.27%) says it is poor and 3 (9.09%) finds it is very poor. 3 (9.09%) respondents claimed that they are very satisfied with existing government rules, 17 (51.51%) said that it is satisfied while 9 (27.27%) responded that it is poor and need modifications. Regarding library automation majority of respondents 15 (45.45%) finds it very poor, 10 (30.30%) indicates it poor while only 1 (3.03%) candidates says it is satisfactory.

Table 7. Deputation to any Workshop/Training/ Refreshers Course

Items	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondent
Yes	25	75.75%
No	8	24.25%

Asking about whether the librarians are deputed to any type of workshop, refresher training for their professional development the above table 7 shows that majority of respondents 25 (75.75%) says that they have attended such type of training program while only 8 (24.24%) candidates reports no.

Table 8. Helpfulness of Such Training Programs

Items	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondent
Yes	23	69.69%
No	10	30.31%

The respondents were requested to indicate their views regarding the helpfulness of training courses in above table 8, 23 (69.69%) participants says that it is helpful for their professional life while 10 (30.30%) finds that the training program is not helpful to them.

SUGGESTION FROM LIBRARIANS

The respondents were requested to suggest some major measures to accelerate the development of library system and services in the state. These are as follows;

- Library authorities at all level should give more attention to initiate a viable developmental plan for effective library services in the state.
- Library legislation should be enacted.
- Proper planning of library building and other physical facilities should be formulated.
- Appropriate collection development policy should be adopted.
- Staff strength should be immediately fulfilled.
- In-service training courses for the library staff should be regularly organized.
- Library cadre service should be encouraged.
- Library automation and networking should be initiated.
- Library Association should be constituted to provide common platform for the librarians.

CONCLUSION

The present study has elucidate the experience of working librarians coming from East district of Sikkim and take participated in the five days orientation program organized by the Department of Cultural Affairs & Heritage, Govt. of Sikkim at capital city Gangtok. What was learnt from analysing the findings of the study that all librarians believed that library irrespective of their types and size has an important role in the societal development of this tiny hilly state. Despite some discontents most librarians felt that library authorities at all level should come forward in promoting effective library services by providing adequate infrastructural and financial resources. All respondents agreed that there is an urgent need to change their attitude towards their job. They will need to recognized that their active services derived from their professional learning and experiences has an inevitable significance in providing effective and efficient library services to the people of the state which ultimately led to raise the image of this noble profession of librarianship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wish to thank Mrs. Nalini G. Pradhan, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department, Government of Sikkim, Mr. Phurden Lepcha, Curator of State Central Library, Gangtok, Sikkim and Mr. Amrit Subba, District Library Officer, Darjeeling for their valuable support.

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