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Students' perceptions of the Sub-Divisional Library, Kalimpong

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An intimacy with students' perceptions of the Sub-Divisional Library, Kalimpong

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to understand and evaluate the use of Sub-Divisional Library by the students of various Government, Government Sponsored and Private Schools of Kalimpong, West Bengal with respect to their demographical detail, purpose and frequency of using library, meeting required information by the libraries, difficulty in getting information, library collections and staffs, and their overall satisfaction to the services provided by the library. Hence a survey of 81 students of various schools across the tiny hilly station Kalimpong was conducted through structured questionnaire and out of which 73 questionnaires were duly obtained with a response rate of 90.12%. The results call for building functional and sound sub-divisional library to attract more students for its optimal utility and in meeting the information needs of students which ultimately augment the image of public librarianship in the expanse. The findings are valuable insights for anyone seeking to know more about the library usage and perceptions of school students towards the public library services.

Keywords: Public library, System and services, Kalimpong, Sub-divisional library, School students, User of library, and Information needs.

1. Introduction

The public library plays an important role in all aspects of educational process. Public libraries, which are considered the Peoples' University does occupy a significant place in informal education in our country. The present day education systems have witnessed many changes. Education of the individual is essential for the development of his mind and capacity to make sound and nature judgments and thus they play the role of an enlightened, responsible and well informed citizen. Thought the importance of formal education, through schools, colleges and universities is of prime importance in this regard, the significance of "informal education" or "self-education can't be ruled out, because the process of education does not and with ones formal education only, rather real education starts at the point where formal education ends. One study that provides evidence of the importance of the public library to learning is reported in Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling (Heyns 1978). Though, not a study

of public libraries, her investigation of the factors that influence learning of sixth and seventh graders when schools are closed found that, "The single summer activity that is most strongly and consistently related to summer learning is reading. Whether reading is measured by the number of books read, by the time spent reading, or by the regularity of library usage, it increases the vocabulary test scores of children". Her conclusion that "at least one institution, the public library, directly influences children's reading" was the basis for her recommendation that "educational policies that increase access to books (perhaps through increased library services) stand to have an important impact on achievement, particularly for less advantaged children". (Fitzgibbons, 2000).

The process of self-education is life-long which requires no classroom attendance and have the individuals to read whatever they like and at a time and place convenient to them. A public library undoubtedly is the most suitable place or institution for this purpose wherever it operates. Public libraries are now to be considered as an important learning resource centre, existing to support the teaching and learning process to a great extent.

2. Kalimpong at a glance

There are two spurs of the Himalayas in Darjeeling hill, West Bengal, one in the west running from north to south. On this spur the beautiful hill resort, "the queen of hill stations" called Darjeeling is situated. The other spur is in the east across the Teesta river. On the lower spur is Kalimpong, a small but attractive hill station. The word Kalimpong in Tibetan means "the stockade of Kings Ministers" form the two Tibetan words "Kalon" meaning Kings Ministers and "Pong" meaning stockade. Some scholars translate "Pong" as Assembly, in which case Kalimpong would mean "The Assembly of Kings Ministers". It is also called "Kalibong" or the black spur by the hill people. "Kalibong" in local dialects stands for "Kaulim" a fibrous plant which grows in abundance in this region. The meaning that has found the most favour, however, is the Lepcha meaning of the name – "ridge where we play". It is said that Lepcha tribesman used to organize field sports while not engaged in agricultural pursuits – hence the name. Situated at a height of 1,182 metres / 3,456 ft. and between the latitudes $26^0 51'$ & $27^0 12'$N and longitudes $88^0 28'$ & $88^0 53'$E Kalimpong was first known as the Dalingkot sub-division of Western Duars District and in 1866 it was transferred to Darjeeling District. The area of the sub-division is 1056.5 sq. km and is bounded in the north by Sikkim and in the east by Bhutan. Kalimpong is an area of mixed inhabitants consisting mainly of Nepalese, Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans, Marwaris, Beharis and Bengalis. Nepali is the "lingua franca" of these hill people. Most of the Nepalese follow Hindu religion the rest are Buddhists, Christians and Muslims. (O'Malley, 1907)

Kalimpong has a very mild and temperate climate. During the summers the maximum temperature is about 27^{0}C and the minimum about 17^{0}C while in the winters the maximum temperature is around 17^{0}C and the minimum about 6^{0}C. The average rainfall is about 220 cm. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people in the sub-division. There are a few tea estates, and most of these are situated in the foothills about the Duars. In the town areas the people are engaged in business or are engaged in government services. (Dozey, 1981).

The early education that prevailed in the native societies of the hill region of Kalimpong was very simple in nature and practical in character. The principal means of education for all the hill people was incidental and non-formal. Religious institutions have also played their roles as the agencies of education in the life of the native hill people. The indigenous institutions would be the only centres of learning for the native tribes after the advent of modern education to be brought by the Christian Missionaries and other Europeans. (Dewan, 1991). The real educational works were taken up in this region only during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, which could be possible only through the agency of government department and the Christian Missionaries of Swiss and Scottish Church. Successive government in West Bengal also took various developmental steps to improve the educational status of both the urban and rural people by establishing many schools at different places in the area. For a long time Kalimpong has had a very good reputation for being an excellent educational centre. Dr. Grahams' Home, St. Augustine's School, St. Convent School, SUMI, Kumudini Homes are some schools which are internationally acclaimed. One recent development that the Kalimpong subdivision of the Darjeeling hills has became the 21st district of West Bengal on 14th February 2017.

3. Sub-Divisional Library, Kalimpong

The development of libraries in Kalimpong sub-division can be traced only after independence with the establishment of some Area libraries and some Feeder libraries during the period 1953-1960 by Education Department of Government of West Bengal. Those Area libraries are still running in some areas but some Feeder libraries does not existed now and some become rural library later. After the establishment of Government Central Library, Kalimpong in 1961 these Area libraries and Feeder libraries were benefited by the mobile section of this library. Most of the other rural libraries were established mainly during the period of 1971-80 and recognized as Government Sponsored Library. Now there are total 24 Rural libraries, 4 Area libraries, 1 Town library, 1 Sub-divisional library and 1 Govt. Central library in the Kalimpong sub-division of Darjeeling district.

In the year 1975, during the month of April the enthusiastic people of Kalimpong Town-Hall Committee donated the land measuring 0.15 acres for constructing Sub-Divisional Library.

Consequently the foundation stone was laid on 6/12/1975 by Mr. D K Guha, the then Education Commissioner, Government of West Bengal. Eventually the construction started and finally completed with the assistance of Education Department and the Hill Affairs Department, Govt. of West Bengal. The library was inaugurated on 28/10/1976 by Sri Siddartha Shankar Roy, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal. The Library started functioning as full fledged one from March 1977. Since then and now over the span of 40 years, the Library is serving the people of Kalimpong and its adjoining areas. The contribution of local people especially that of Sri K S Subba, the then Principal, People's Janta College, Kalimpong to establish the library is remarkable. During the year of political uprising in the hill areas especially after 1986 some Public Libraries in the region were turned into ashes. It was a very sad period in the history of Public Library in the region. However some of the libraries were revived later with the efforts of people and respective Government Authorities. (Karkee, 2014).

Sub-Divisional Library, Kalimpong (Source: Author)

4. Literature Review

Woolard (1980) pointed out a difference that is often noted: the public library is primarily concerned with providing the needs of the student as an individual and as a member of the community, and gives the student experience in using a facility that will be a lifelong resource. Dwyer (1987) emphasized that it is the function of the public library to: serve the community as a general centre of reliable information; to provide encouragement and opportunity for children, young people, men, and women to educate themselves continuously; and to promote, through guidance and stimulation, an enlightened citizenship and enriched personal lives. (Fitzgibbons, 2000). Clabo (2002) in her dissertation title "A Study of the Library Use Practices of High School Students in Three East Tennessee Counties' under the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, East Tennessee State University examine how and why high school students use the library and its resources. The participants under survey were 350 students of 11th-grade attending public high schools in 3 east Tennessee counties and only 130 responded with 37% response rate. The study found most students visited the library at an early

age, although not on a regular basis. They were more likely to visit the school library than the public library; the primary reason being to locate information to complete school assignments. Salma and Yelwa (2004) have investigated the students' attitudes towards public library services and resources of the central library in Borno State of Nigeria and has provided the following information: 1) A majority of the students (64%) who patronise the library have not registered with the library; 2) 36% of the students visit the library for examination purposes, 20% visit the library to study using library books, 20% came to the library to borrow and return books and 12% used the library to read newspaper and magazines; 3) 40% of the students describe the resources and services as inadequate for their needs, 28% said they were adequate for their needs, while 12% gave a rating of highly inadequate; 4) 64% of the students responded "very good" on the conduciveness of the environment, 28% said it is "excellent", and equal responses of 4% each for "good" and "fairly good" were also registered. Brown (2004) has studied the reference service for children in public libraries in Australia. The study revealed that 1) the reference needs of children are primarily the requirement of information to enable them to complete a given school assignment; 2) for the successful reference transaction, the librarian needs to be conscious of children's wants and needs; 3) it is important to create an environment in which children and their questions are taken seriously; 4) to facilitate the delivery of quality reference and information services to children, it is important to have accepted guidelines or standards; and 5) the need for specific evaluation methods for children's reference services will increase the quality of the reference service.

5. Objective of the study

The major objectives of the study were;-
• To investigate access and use of sub-divisional library information resources by the students upto higher secondary level
• To determine the level of satisfaction of students towards library information resources
• To find out challenges facing students in the use of sub-divisional library and how to address such challenges

6. Methodology

Survey method of research has been adopted. The structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed among the students upto higher secondary level. Efforts were also made to physically visit the library to collect the required information by arranging interview schedules with the students present in the library. A total of 81 structured questionnaires were distributed among the students across the hilly town and out of which 73 questionnaires were duly obtained with a response rate of 90.12%.

7. Results and Discussion

Some of the findings of the study are discussed below;

Table-1   Background of the respondents

SI no.	Demographic information		Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Gender	Male	46	63.01%
2		Female	27	36.99%
1		Under 8 years	13	17.81%
2	Age groups	8-12 years	37	50.68%
3		12-20 years	23	31.51%
1		Upto Class V	19	26.03%
2	Education	Class VI – Class X	34	46.58%
3		Class XI – Class XII	20	27.39%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents used for this study. It reveals that 63.01% respondents are male followed by slight lower percentage 36.99% of female members. It also indicates that 50.68%, a large proportion of the respondents fell into the age bracket of 8-12 years. Next to that is 12-20 years, with 31.51%, and under 8 years with 17.81%. In respect of level of education table shows that 26.03% respondents are studying under Class V, 46.58% are studying between Class VI – Class X and 27.39% students are attending classes of XI and XII level. Kalimpong hill has experienced well developed education system since long time and has been a destination of many young pupils to study here.

Table-2   Who encouraged you to use the library?

SI no.	Items	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Nobody	6	8.22%
2	Friends/Elders	22	30.14%
3	Teachers	13	17.81%
4	Principal	7	9.59%
5	Librarians	10	13.69%
6	Parents	15	20.55%

Table 2: shows where from students get recommendation on the use of the library. Only 8.22% students reported that nobody encouraged them to use the library. Others were encouraged by friends/elders 30.14%, teachers 17.81%, librarians 13.69%, and school

principals 9.596%, parents 20.55%. This signifies that organizing a series of lecture under user instruction or user education or library orientation program is required in public senior secondary schools. Also, students need to be counselled more to use the library by teachers, librarians, school principal, and parents.

Table-3   Frequency of using the library

SI no.	Frequency	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Daily	7	9.59%
2	Once in a week	21	28.77%
3	Once in two week	33	45.21%
4	Once in a while	12	16.43%

The students were asked to tell about the frequency of using the sub-divisional library. The above table 3 shows that the majority of students 45.21% use the facility once in two weeks, 28.77% use the library once in a week, 16.43% use the library once in a while and only 9.59% use the library daily. From the findings it is clear that a greater majority of respondents use the library once in two weeks. This means that more efforts need to be made to improve the rate and frequency of library use by the students.

Table-4   Duration of visiting the library

SI no.	Time Duration	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Less than 30 minute	18	24.66%
2	30 mt – 1 hr	23	31.52%
3	1 hr – 1.30 hr	20	27.39%
4	1.30 hr – 2 hr	12	16.43%

Respondent were asked to indicate how long they are staying in the library. The response revealed that majority of users 31.52% remain in the library between 30 minutes to 1 hour, 24.66% remain less than 30 minutes in the library, and 27.39% remain between 1 hr to 1.30 hr while 16.43% responded that they stay in the library between 1.30 hr to 2 hr duration. This implies that more improvement is needed for space arrangement and sitting facilities in the library.

Table-5   Purpose of using the library

Sl no.	Purposes	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	To borrow books	11	15.06%
2	To read Newspaper / Magazines	5	6.85%
3	To use dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and other reference materials etc.	6	8.22%
4	To do assignments and homework	41	56.17%
5	To read books on competitive exams	5	6.85%
6	Leisure reading	5	6.85%

It is observed from the above table 5, the main purposes of using the library by the respondents are to do school assignments and homework 56.17%. This is followed by the purpose to read newspapers and magazines 6.85%, to use dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and other reference tools 8.22%, to borrow books 15.06%, and leisure readings 6.85%. This indicates that the majority of students make use of library purposefully for doing their assignments and homework. Therefore, library authority should strengthen the existing stock with different information resources related to school curriculum that can meet students' information needs which ultimately help the students to raise their school performance.

Table-6   Preferred time of using the library

Sl no.	Time	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	10.00 am – 4.00 pm	4	5.48%
2	10.30 am – 4.30 pm	30	41.09%
3	11.00 am – 5.00 pm	24	32.88%
4	11.30 am – 5.30 pm	15	20.55%

Respondents were asked to point out their preference time of using the library. The above table 6 shows that majority of respondents 41.09% says that they prefer the working hour of the library between 10.30 am to 4.30 pm., 32.88% says their preferred time between 11 am to 5.00 pm, 20.55% says their preferred time between 11.30 am to 5.30 pm while 5.48% respondents like the working time of the library between 10 am to 4 pm. This implies that majority of students want to visit the library after the school is over and on holidays.

Table-7   Meeting required information by the library

SI no.	Meeting information	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Very Often	17	23.29%
2	Often	44	60.28%
3	Once a while	12	16.43%
4	Never	-	

The study also sought to establish whether students always find their required information from the library. This would provide an indication of the level of satisfaction among students. In table 7 majorities of respondents 60.28% indicated that they are often getting their required information from the library, while 23.29% reveal that they get their required information very often from the library and 16.43% respondents get their required information once in a while from the libraries.

Table-8   Opinion about library collection

SI no.	Library Collection	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Poor	31	42.47%
2	Adequate	25	34.25%
3	Good	14	19.18%
4	Very Good	3	4.10%

Respondent were asked whether they are satisfied with the collection of the library. Their responses revealed in table 8 that majority 42.47% claims poor resulting that the library falls short to create interest among its tender members. 34.25% respondents says that the collection is adequate, 19.18% claimed that it is good and only 4.10% responded that the library collection is very good. This indicates that available information resources in the library do not satisfy student academic needs. This is probably because of poor accessibility of those resources, unavailability, relevancy, and lack of current reading materials. Therefore, there is a need to improve the sub-divisional library by provision of quality and quantity materials in order to meet information need of students.

Table-9   Overall services of the library

Sl no.	Library services	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Very Satisfactory	6	8.22%
2	Satisfactory	44	60.28%
3	Not Satisfactory	16	21.91%
4	Inadequate	7	9.59%

As it is evident in the table 9 above, the findings of this study revealed that the students are found satisfied with the services of the library. The sub-divisional library with its all capabilities strives to cater the needs of its young users. Majority of the respondents 60.28% say they are satisfied with the various services provided by the library while 8.22% responded very satisfactory. This is followed by 21.91% responded that the services provided by the library are not at the level of satisfaction and 9.59% respondents say that it is inadequate. Hence it can be said that the sub-divisional library is providing more or less satisfied services to the young potential users in the region.

Table-10   Challenges facing by students in using the library

Sl no.	Challenges	Number of Respondents(N=73)	%
1	Lack of current reading materials related to curriculum	47	64.38%
2	Lack of informational professional librarians to teach students on how to use library	46	63.01%
3	Lack of co-operation by library staff	15	20.55%
4	Lack of sitting facilities	20	27.39%
5	Lack of computer and internet facilities	68	93.15%
6	Lack of library orientation	67	91.78%
7	Restricted reading hours	18	24.65%

(Multiple choice question)

The students were asked what constraints they face in using the library and to choose their answers from the checklist. As it evident in the table 10 above 64.38% mentioned the lack of current reading materials related to curriculum as a major constraint, 63.01% said lack of

informational professional/librarians to teach students on how to use the library and its resources, 20.55% indicate lack of co-operation by library staff, 27.39% said lack of sitting facilities, majority of respondents 93.15% said lack of computer and internet facilities, similarly 91.78% said lack of library orientation and only 24.65% said restricted library reading hours. This indicates that the there is a need to improve the sub-divisional library by provision of quality and quantity reading materials related to school curriculum and introduction of computer and internet facilities to provide modern library services to the students.

8. Conclusion

In general, the public library has been viewed as serving the informational, cultural, educational, and recreational needs of the entire community. The overall picture emerged from the study reveals that the Sub-divisional library has an important place in providing informal education across the small hilly town Kalimpong. The students across the region are found more or less satisfied with the services provided by the library. However, the result has shown that the sub-divisional library is still beset with a myriad of problems, the prominent among which are lack of funds, space, adequate information resources and professional staff. It can be concluded that, if sub-divisional library is given due recognition by way of providing ample collections of especially school syllabus related books, adequate provision of sitting facilities, more funds, qualified and professionally trained staff for effective running of the library which ultimately will help the library to produce a more educated citizen as these young people are potential users in later period. This also implies that organizing a series of lecture under user instruction or user education or library orientation program is required in sub-divisional library as well as in schools also. This paper also calls for the commencement of co-operation and assistance among the schools and sub-divisional library to enhance and create good library atmosphere to motivate the interest of the young minds to avail the full benefit of the library for over all development of the immature people and the society at large. Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2012) had stated that satisfaction is a function of three main sources; quality of the information resources, the Information system and the services that make the information product available. There is no doubt that well stocked public library manned by adequate qualified librarians and offering variety of modern library services would contribute a lot not only towards raising the standard of education in the society but, also harvesting the habit of self-directed independent learning which is forerunner to life-long education.

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