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Navneet Kumar Sharma

*Department of Library and Information Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India., nk.sharma@bhu.ac.in*

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# Opinions of children regarding their needs and use for children library: user expectation survey in Varanasi

Navneet Kumar Sharma

Senior Research Fellow

Department of Library and Information Science  
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

Email- [nk.sharma@bhu.ac.in](mailto:nk.sharma@bhu.ac.in)

## Abstract

**Purpose-** The vital part of society that decides how the world will be after some years is 'child'. Child care and nurturing become the focus point for any society. Due to lack of money, they are deprived of good education and other basic facilities of life. In India, rural community faces more problems in delivering proper education and basic facilities to the children than urban one. If we can make good changes in a child's life, then eventually it will help in shaping a better world in future. Libraries can help in shaping a better future for a child. Children libraries not only support the basic education but also extracurricular activities for the overall development of the child. In the light of changing information and communication technology, children libraries should also need to change their policies and strategies. This paper aims at bringing the expectations from children about children libraries in terms of infrastructure, library hours, information source, events etc.

**Methodology-** To get the expectation of children, a survey is done with the help of questionnaire on 150 children in the vicinity of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Convenience sampling is done to get primary data. Percentage method is used for data representation and analysis.

**Research limitations-** This research is limited to the children residing in the vicinity of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. The data is collected from the children having less than 18 years of age.

**Practical Implications-** This survey will be helpful for revising the public library guidelines for children. It will promote to set a national platform for children libraries. This research will help in designing learning commons for the children. It will also help the library authorities in framing collection development policy for children libraries. Furthermore, it will help children librarian to acquire and disseminate information according to children's needs.

**Findings-** Children are in support for the technological advancement in the children library. They have diverse nature and needs to approach their information need. Further, the need of library learning commons is quite important in the present scenario of Varanasi children.

**Originality-** The paper is the first research of its kind in terms of its scope and coverage. It presents the original information about expectations of children about children library in Varanasi, India.

**Keywords-** Children library, Public Library, Indian Public Library Standards, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Child Expectations.

## **Introduction**

As per the definition given by UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of Child, a child is every human being below the age of eighteen. The future of any society or state rests on the shoulders of their children. They are the pillars on which the future world will rest upon. It is therefore essential to provide proper care and nourishment of a child physically, mentally and socially. This social well being of an individual largely depends on the kind of education he/she is getting during their adolescent phase. It is said that adolescent stage is a kind of pot making process, which after hardening cannot be molded again. The shape only changes during the pot making process. Similarly, adolescent phase sets the tone for the entire life of an individual. The very impression that an individual perceives in his/her childhood, that impression perceived so strongly and persistently in his/her mind that it has a deep impact on the mind of the individual. Education is the backbone for proper nourishing of the individual. It helps in overall development of the individual.

A library or an information center is always significant where the teaching and learning process is employed. Library facilitates the main purpose of the education. Due to advancement in information and communication technology, libraries are undergoing severe changes in terms of their information resources and services. Even the role of librarians is supposed to be in accordance with the changing environment. As far as children library is concerned, it is a section under public library especially for children below the age of 18. In words of Indian Public Library Standards that, "Every public library, without even a single exception, shall maintain a children's section for developing, creating talents, and mental development in children." So a children section within a public library is supposed to create and develop talents in children. It also supports mental development in children. Children should be encouraged to use the library from an early age, as this will make them more likely to remain users in future years.

## **What is a children library?**

Children are not a homogenous target group, they have very different skills, gifts, talents and needs (dependent on their age, cultural background etc) which must be considered in the space planning process and furnishing of the library. As target groups in the children's library cover a wide range of ages and abilities (from babies to adults) both the furniture and design space should suit their different needs.

## **Objective**

The purpose of this paper is to find the expectations for a children library from children of Varanasi near the vicinity of Banaras Hindu University. In addition to this, the paper aims to explain the need of learning commons for children.

## Methodology

### Data Collection

A survey method is used to fulfill the objectives of the study. Children below 18 year of age are respondents for this study. 150 children under 18 years of age are selected for the survey. Children belong to the classes 6 to 12. Closed ended questionnaire having 12 questions is distributed personally to all the students. Questions based on infrastructure, library hours, information sources and library events are asked from the respondents. 100 % response of questionnaire is achieved.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected through questionnaire method is analyzed by percentage method and the results are explained on the basis of data analysis.

Do you ever visit any children library?			
		Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Yes	18	9
2	No	132	91

Table-1

Most of the children (91%) in Varanasi did not visit any children library anywhere in their life. Less number of children (9%) visited children library in their life. It shows the lack of awareness about the children library among children in Varanasi. It also points the lack of interest in children towards visiting children library. The reason could be lack of any children library in Varanasi. It is expected that because of the use of internet and technology for fulfilling their information need, they are not going children libraries.

Do you want internet in your library?			
		Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Yes	18	9
2	No	132	91

Table-2

Most of the children (88%) in Varanasi do not want to use internet in the children library. They are in view to use internet at their home and to use books in the library. Less number of children (12%) showed interest to use internet in the children library. It shows that children are interested more in using library resources in the library than to use internet in the library.

What facilities you want most in you want in a children library?			
		Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Proper ventilation	13	9
2	Air conditioned	27	18
3	Adequate lighting	21	14
4	Computer lab	65	44
5	Canteen facilities	22	15

Table-3

Children have diverse expectation regarding kinds of facilities in the library. Nearly half (44%) of the surveyed children preferred computer lab to be installed in the library. They prefer air conditioned environment (18%) more than the canteen facilities (15%) and adequate lighting (14%) in the library. It means that technology and computers are attracting the children towards a library. They are least interested in other features such as air conditioned environments, canteen facilities and adequate lighting.

Which kind of look you are expecting for a children library?			
		Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Normal look	31	21
2	Good and well decorated look	34	23
3	Modern and sophisticated look	71	47
4	Look is not important	14	9

Table-4

When children were asked about the look of the library, they preferred modern and sophisticated look (47%) for a library. Few of the children are interested in good and well decorated look (23%), followed by normal look (21%) of library. Look of the library is not important to few children (9%). It means children

are more focused to the infrastructural look of the library. They are not only interested in information resources but also to the surrounding environment.

Which will be the best hours for children library to open?		
1	10 am- 5 pm	13 %
2	10 am- 8 pm	21 %
3	2 pm- 8 pm	37 %
4	Round the clock	29 %

Table-5

When children were asked about the best library hours, they (37%) preferred 2pm-8pm as most favourable time for library to open. Few students (29%) were in favour to open library round the clock. Few students (21%) were also in favour for 10 am-8pm as library hours. Very Few (13%) were in opinion for 10am-5pm as library hours. It means that children have diverse opinion regarding library hours. More than three-fourth surveyed children are interested to open library till 8pm. It means they prefer libraries over other activities of children in the evening such as sports, tuitions etc.

In which language you want books and audio-video materials in children library?		
1	Native language	15 %
2	English Language	58 %
3	Hindi Language	27 %

Table-6

When children were asked to give opinions about the language of information resources, they opined that more than half children will prefer those resources in English language. More than quarter of the children favoured Hindi language and few children are interested that resources must be present in their native languages. It means that children are allowing English language resources in the library. However, they also want resources to be in Hindi or native languages.

Which kind of resources do you like most for a children library?		
1	Comic books	25 %
2	Spiritual books	9 %
3	General knowledge books	38 %
4	Curriculum books	28 %

Table-7

With respect to the nature of information resources, children mostly preferred to read general knowledge books (38%) than curriculum books (28%), comic books (25%) and spiritual books (9%). It means children are interested in studying general knowledge book. They show less interest in reading curriculum books and comic books in the library. They show less inclination towards spiritual books at this age.

Which of the following kinds of information source you would choose for a children library?		
1	Photographs & paintings	17 %
2	Attractive toys & puppets	14 %
3	Audio-visual materials	43 %
4	Brain-in games material	26 %

Table-8

Nearly half of the surveyed children are interested in audio-visual materials (43%) to access information. Quarter of the children opined to use brain-in-games (26%) materials in the library. Few of the children are interested in photographs & paintings (17%) and attractive toys & puppets (14%) in their library. It means children are interested in sound and visual mode of learning than reading mode. They expect more fun in the library.

Which of the following events you would like to be organized in your children library?		
1	Storytelling & book reading	14 %
2	Book talks and competitions	28 %
3	Indoor games	31 %
4	Quiz	27 %

Table-9

When children were asked about the library events, there were mixed responses among them. Nearly equal number of children expressed their view in organizing indoor games (31%), book talks & competitions (28%) and quiz (27%) in the library. Few children were also interested in events like storytelling and book reading (14%) in the library. It means the children are showing diversity in terms of library events. They are not focused only towards academic events, but they are also interested co-curricular activities inside the library.

Would you like to develop your own home library?		
1	Yes	45 %
2	No	55 %

Table-10

When children are asked to develop their own library, more than half children (55%) did not show their interest in developing a home library. Less than half children are interested in developing a home library. It shows that children show a mixed response in having or developing a home library owned by them where majority is showing no interest in the same.

Which of the librarian you will love to have in children library?		
1	Male librarian	42 %
2	Female Librarian	58 %

Table-11

Children show inclination towards female librarian (58%) to be in their library. Less than half children opined for male librarian (42%) to be present in their library. It shows that children show more inclination towards female librarian. It may be due to the psychology factors of children.

What kind of library space you will like to have in children library?		
1	Colourful	40 %
2	Friendly	23 %
3	Peaceful	17 %

Table-12

Most of the children love colourful kind of space (40%) in their library. Few children appreciate peaceful space (37%) in their library, while rest of the children opined for friendly space in their library. It shows the mixed response of children towards the library space. Overall they are interested in colourful kind of space in their library.

### **Learning Commons – A Teaching Aid**

Basically, the concept of Learning Commons originated in education discipline. Librarians started using this concept for fulfilling the information needs of school going students. School library system is a good host for Learning Commons. We can use this concept to public library also. There is a section called



children section within a public library. It is said that every public library, without even a single exception, shall maintain a children's section for developing, creating talents, and mental development in children (Indian Public Library Standards, 2003). So, this concept of LCCs is well applicable to the public libraries. Not only children section, but also to all the sections of the society, this concept is appropriately applicable.

Library Learning Commons has some specific goals to serve users in a better way. Following are the areas where LLCs can work:-

- To create accessible spaces, hours, services, staffing, and technology.
- To plan for an environment that connects students, staff, and faculty in life- long learning.
- To provide hours, services, and staffing that meet community needs.
- To provide core academic support services that enable students to excel.
- To provide easy access to a variety of learning spaces and resources that encourages personal and professional success.
- To support the research process from search and discovery to synthesis and presentation.
- To provide individualized services for diverse learning styles.
- To promote and foster faculty participation and support.
- To assist students in becoming critical thinkers, self-directed learners, and citizens engaged in building a better community.
- To maintain effective administrative planning and operation, in accordance with established principles of the Learning Commons
- To support an environment of professional growth, respect, and collaboration among the community.

To establish an environment that welcomes new ideas to improve services and to maintain a positive, forward-thinking momentum.

## **Findings and Discussion**

There should be encouragement among the children right from their early age to use library and its resources because it will help them grow properly in the academic environment and most likely to remain genuine library users throughout their life. The concept of LCCs should be applied in public libraries for their betterment as well as survival. A learning-centered library planning approach is the necessity of present day scenario. Library learning commons and learning space planners should seize the opportunity to invite and enable broad based input into redesign decisions from the start, so as to guarantee the furtherance of libraries' appeal and value on users.

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