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# **Public Library Extension Service as a Community Development Programme: A Case Study**

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***Abstract:** The study dealt with three selected district (public) libraries which covered a large community of Upper Assam. It was carried out to investigate various extension services like reading circles, exhibitions, mobile library, book display, adult education programme, special talks, etc. which were performed by different public libraries of Upper Assam. The main focus of the study was to measure the awareness level about extension services among the users' community of the region. It also emphasized the special and social awareness programmes conducted by the libraries. It highlighted different problems faced by the libraries while delivering these extension services in real sense. The findings showed that most of the identified extension services had not been practicing in the three district libraries and also the awareness level was very pathetic among the community. Henceforth, some strategic planning should be deployed to overcome these challenges.*

**Keywords:** Extension Services, Public Library, Upper Assam, User Awareness.

## **1. Introduction:**

Library extension service is an effort to increase the number of its users to make the maximum use of its resources. It is an attempt to turn the library into a social centre which encourages reading. The primary aim of extension service is to convert non-readers into readers. The library can't reach the illiterate masses through its book delivery services; they create different activities under extension service programmes like organize a lecture or exhibition, musical concert, a puppet show, a drama, celebration of a local festival, a story hour, book display session, reading circle, mobile library services, adult education programme, etc. which will reach to literate as well as to the illiterate people of the society. This will lead to creating social awareness among the users' community (Kumari & Singh, 2017).

In the public library system in India, the district libraries are the major element. The district libraries provide free library facilities to all the community members of the district and this will lead to increase educational, cultural, moral, and spiritual development. These libraries also work for the development of economic, political, social welfare, and local community consciousness. The local or state or national governments are responsible for the administration and management of these district libraries and also these must be supported by specific legislation and financed by them.

## **2. Objective of the study:**

The main objectives of the study are-

- i) To explore the major extension services delivered by the district libraries of Upper Assam.
- ii) To enquire about the awareness level of extension services among the users' community of the surveyed libraries.
- iii) To identify the major problems associated while delivering the extension services.

### 3. Scope and Limitation:

The study was only limited to the extension services provided by District (Public) Libraries. It revealed only the extension activities performed by the three District Libraries of Upper Assam namely Dibrugarh District Library, Jorhat District Library, and Tinsukia District Library respectively.

### 4. Research Methodology:

A survey design was adopted for this study. For the study, three District Libraries of Upper Assam were purposively selected to visualize a clear picture regarding extension services. A structured questionnaire had been prepared for collecting relevant information pertaining to the subject. The collected data for each category were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and calculated them in percentages and presented in tabular form.

#### 4.1. Population of the Study:

The target population of this study comprised of users' communities like students, senior citizens, housewives, businessmen, government employees, etc. in each of the three district libraries of Upper Assam. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) copies of the questionnaire were distributed among the users' community, where eighty-two (82) completed copies were retrieved from the respondents.

**Table 1: Details of Population Study**

Questionnaires		Percentage (%)
Distributed	Respondents	
120	82	68.33%

## **5. Review of Literature:**

**Kala (2010)** discussed the public library system and services that were practicing in Bangalore city. In his paper, he tried to show the users' perceptions regarding public library services in Bangalore. **Kumari & Francis (2015)** in their study also discussed the public library system in Thiruvanthapuram, Kerala. They had basically emphasized on the 'A' grade public libraries and their uses and purpose of using the libraries by different categories of users. Further, they suggested for modernization of public libraries in the region with IT-enabled sources and services. **Kumari & Singh (2017)** in their study highlighted different forms of extension services provided by public libraries like library orientation, reading/ study circle, organizing meetings, public lectures/ talks; arranging cultural programmes, observation of events and festivals, book fair/ exhibition, mobile library services, etc. The primary goal of these services is to transfer a public library into a social and cultural institution. **Nanjunda (2017)** stated the different public library services in support of the social inclusion of different communities. The study also included social inclusion services like employment information, training programmes for competitive examinations, SC/ST cell, awareness about community development programme, etc. were not properly provided in the public libraries of South Karnataka districts. **Sarkar (2019)** discussed the community information services in various blocks of Sundarban region of South 24 Paraganas and its importance for the improvement of societal backlog conditions to modernization. It also revealed that public libraries had a very significant role in running up such community information centres in the district.

## 6. Results and Discussions:

### 6.1. Extension Services-

**Table-1: Availability of Extension Services**

Extension Services	Dibrugarh	Jorhat District	Sivasagar District
	District Library	Library	Library
1 Reading Circle	-	✓	-
2 Exhibition	✓	✓	✓
3 Seminars, Conferences, etc.	✓	✓	-
4 Story Telling Hours	✓	-	-
5 Meetings	✓	✓	✓
6 Special Talks	-	-	-
7 Book Display	✓	-	✓
8 Adult Education Programme	-	-	-
9 Mobile Library Services	-	-	-
10 Fair and Festival	✓	✓	✓
<b>Total Score (10)</b>	<b>6 (60%)</b>	<b>5 (50%)</b>	<b>4 (40%)</b>

The three district libraries of Assam are trying to attract the users' community by delivering different extension services (Table-1) like reading circles, exhibitions, organizing seminars, conferences, storytelling hours, book displays, etc. But, these services are not performed on a regular basis. Moreover, these libraries have not practiced some of the important extension

services yet such as adult education programme, mobile library services, organizing special talks on the current situation, etc.

## 6.2. Organizing Special Programmes:

**Table-2: Special Programmes**

Sl. No.	Programmes	Dibrugarh	Jorhat District	Sivasagar District
		District Library	Library	Library
1	Readers Club	✓	✓	-
2	Drama	✓	-	-
3	Dance	✓	✓	✓
4	Music	✓	✓	✓
5	Quiz Programmes	✓	✓	✓
6	Celebration of Book Week	✓	-	-
7	Story Telling Competition	✓	✓	✓
8	Readers Award	-	-	-
<b>Total Score (8)</b>		<b>7 (87.5%)</b>	<b>5 (62.5%)</b>	<b>4 (50%)</b>

The libraries have also organized some special programmes (Table-2) like organizing drama, dance, music competition, quiz programmes, celebration of book week, storytelling competition, etc. to attract the users and also to increase the reading habit among the people of knowledgeable society.

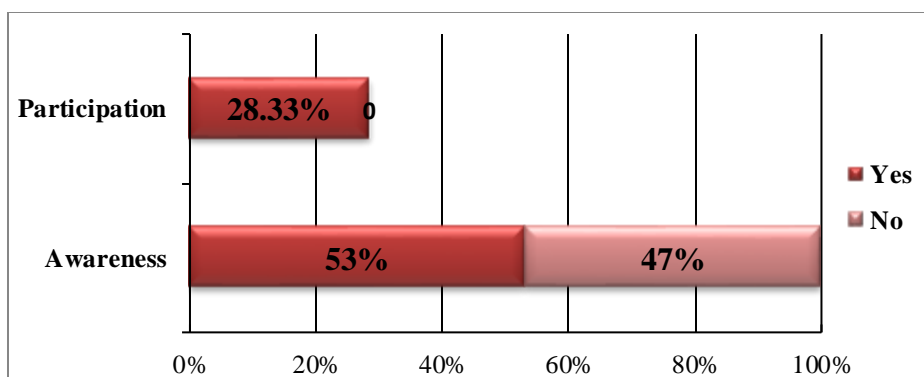
### 6.3. Activities for Creating Social Awareness:

**Table 3: Library's Social Awareness Programme**

Sl. No.	Social Awareness Programme	Dibrugarh	Jorhat	Sivasagar
		District Library	District Library	District Library
1	Public Awareness Programme	✓	-	✓
2	Environmental Programme	✓	✓	✓
3	Health Programme	-	-	✓
4	Cultural Programme	✓	✓	✓
5	National Festivals	✓	-	-
6	Competitive Exam Guidance Cell	-	✓	-
7	Literary Programme	✓	✓	✓
<b>Total Score (7)</b>		<b>5 (71.43%)</b>	<b>4 (57.14%)</b>	<b>5 (71.43%)</b>

The district libraries have organized various social awareness programmes on a timely manner (Table 3). Through such programmes, libraries are able to attract users' attention and interest. Being a part of the programmes, the users also benefit from the ongoing governmental schemes, cultural importance, societal bonding, carrier guidance, etc. which covered in many sophisticated areas.





**Fig-1: Awareness and Participation in Extension Programme**

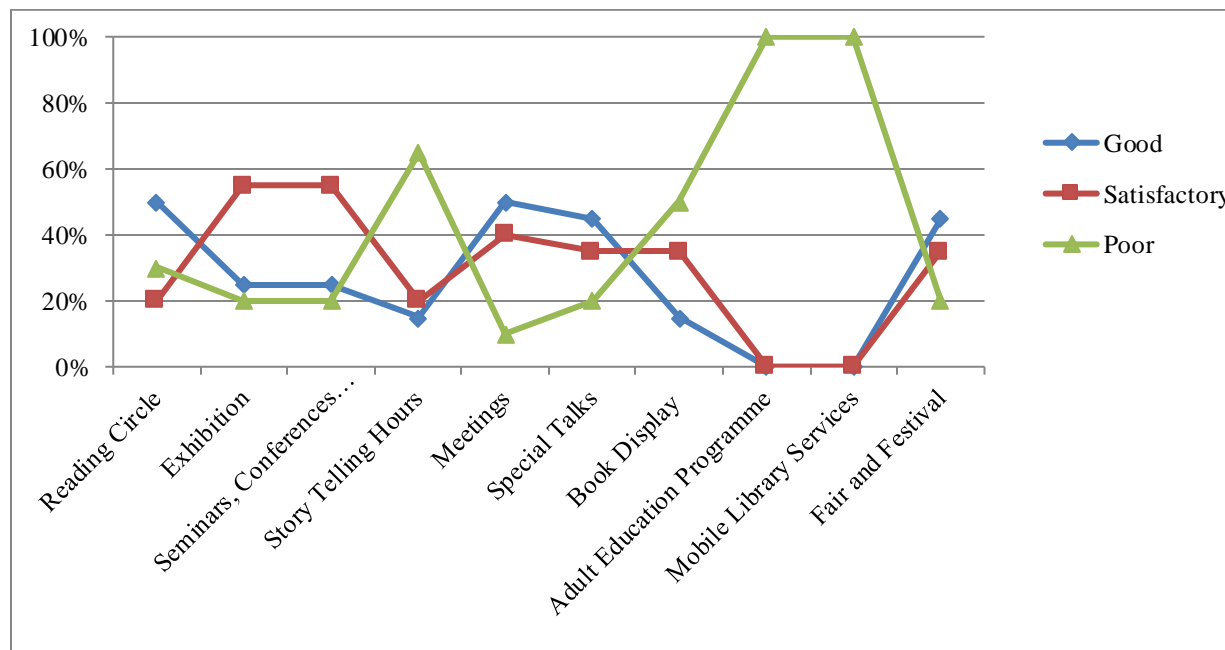
In this study, the popularity of libraries' extension services among the user community is average in nature. Among the respondents, 53% of users are aware of the extension services delivered by the three district libraries and out of them, 28.33% of users have participated such programmes on a regular basis (Fig-1).

#### 6.4. Overall Users' Feedback about the different Extension Services:

**Table 4: Overall User's Feedback**

Sl. No.	Extension Services	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
1	Reading Circle	50%	20%	30%
2	Exhibition	25%	55%	20%
3	Seminars, Conferences Cultural Shows, etc.	25%	55%	20%
4	Story Telling Hours	15%	20%	65%
5	Meetings	50%	40%	10%
6	Special Talks	45%	35%	20%
7	Book Display	15%	35%	50%
8	Adult Education Programme	-	-	100%

9	Mobile Library Services	-	-	100%
10	Fair and Festival	45%	35%	20%



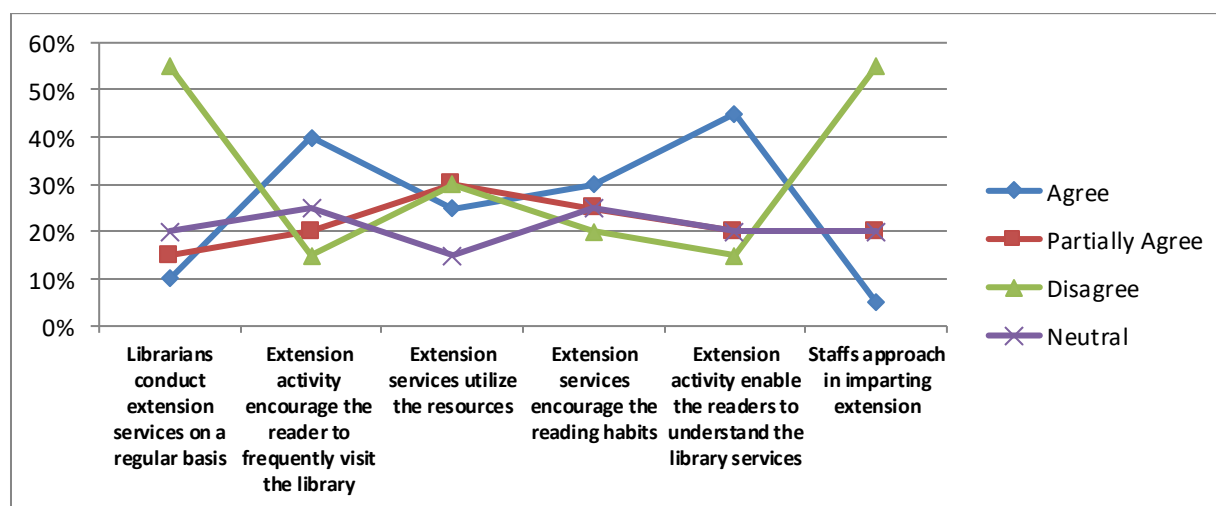
**Fig-2: Users' Feedback about Different Extension Services**

Users' feedback regarding different extension services (Table 4 & Fig-2) delivered by the three district libraries of Assam is not quite satisfactory. The services such as reading circle, organizing different meetings, special talks, fairs, and festivals are said to be good in users' point of view. But services like storytelling hours, book display, etc. are not good enough and some of them like adult education programmes and mobile library services have not been practicing yet.

### 6.5. General Opinions on Extension Services:

**Table-5: Users' Opinions on Extension Services**

Sl. No.	Questions	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1	Librarians conduct extension services on a regular basis	10%	15%	55%	20%
2	Extension activity encourages the reader to frequently visit the library	40%	20%	15%	25%
3	Extension services utilize the resources	25%	30%	30%	15%
4	Extension services encourage the reading habits	30%	25%	20%	25%
5	Extension activity enables the readers to understand the library services	45%	20%	15%	20%
6	Staffs approach in imparting extension services	5%	20%	55%	20%



**Fig-3: Users' General Opinions on Extension Services**

By delivering extension services, public libraries expand its popularity over society and it upholds its services and use of its resources. There are certain measures that can be considered for the success of extension services. For example, some of the measures like extension activity encourage the reader to frequently visit the library and it enables the readers to understand the library services are said to be quite satisfactory. But librarians' responsibilities towards the conduction of such programme and staff approach in imparting extension services etc. are not sufficient enough in the light of users (Table-5).

#### **6.6. Problems with delivering Extension Services:**

There are certain constraints or problems arise, while delivering such extension services by the district libraries of Upper Assam. The first and foremost problem is financial constraints. The libraries are lacking some financial problems. Because these libraries have not got adequate money, spending on such extension programmes in a wide manner. Lack of interest in authority is the main reason behind this. Here, authority means the local or state government which are not interested in such non-profit services delivered by the district libraries. The authorities don't even think about the modernization process or providing better infrastructural facilities to the district (public) libraries of Upper Assam. It is also noted that the staff strength of the libraries is very poor and thus proper delivery of such extension services cannot be possible in a frequent manner. Moreover, lack of publicity and lack of awareness about the extension services among the locality can also be considered as a hindrance to extension services.

#### **7. Conclusion:**

Public Libraries are always regarded as the mirror of society. Library extension services have been successful to create a positive impact on society. The district libraries of Upper Assam are unable to function properly due to insufficient infrastructure, manpower, financial support, and

proper planning. Therefore, the government should implement some useful plans so that these districts (public) libraries can get the utmost importance from the grass-root level. The success of the extension services totally depends upon the participation of the mass community. To attract more people, the libraries should have to change from their traditional system to an attractive and cooperative ICT environment.

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