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SAFEGUARDING ASSAMESE CULTURE THROUGH INDIGENOUS LIBRARIANSHIP: AWARENESS AMONG THE LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS OF USTM

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ABSTRACT

In the present day context, indigenous knowledge is unraveled and isolated in many parts of the world. Most of the indigenous knowledge is not documented, in spite of being a vital cradle of information. It is generally transferred orally from generation to generation; wherein the role of Libraries should be to preserve and disseminate such indigenous treasure among the common masses, especially the users. Considering its usefulness in uplifting one's ethnic cultural characteristics, the aim of the study is to find out the level of awareness among library and information science professionals and students on the importance of indigenous knowledge in keeping the cultural fabric of the Assamese people intact. Moreover how the library and information science professionals and students together exchange and mutually share indigenous knowledge among them is also explored. This study further focuses on the preservation technique used by the library by using web 2.0 to preserve, decipher cultural symbolism of Assamese traditions and disseminate relevant tactual information.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous Librarianship, Cultural, Assamese Culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge has been affirmed as power which brings development in every human endeavour that is useful for decision making. Indigenous Knowledge is home-grown and cultural knowledge of a specific society. It is a way of life, skills, experiences, culture,

insight and values embraced by people in local community. Every society or community has their local knowledge which cuts across all aspects of human living on which livelihood and survival depend. These include health, fashion, food preparation, education, agriculture, religion, festivals, recreation, norms and values, institutions, politics and technology.

Indigenous knowledge is transmitted orally which is passed on from generation to generation. Every community has their own indigenous knowledge like cultural knowledge, agricultural knowledge, healthcare knowledge etc. But most of the knowledge is not documented properly. So every library come forward to collect, store, preserve and disseminate such rare knowledge. Libraries focus on providing services for propagating relevant information for the indigenous people. In this context, libraries also use different Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools to preserve and disseminate indigenous knowledge among the users.

Assam is a state formed by a combination of different tribes of people, holding within itself a host of indigenous ways of the multitude of diverse ethnicity. Be it arts, culture, food and many other related symbolic information; everything needs to be carefully organised and dispersed keeping the essence of the Assamese community intact. This role can be effectively carried out through indigenous librarianship, which remains the basic content of the research paper.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To find out the extent of awareness among library and information science professionals and students regarding the utility, preservation, dissemination and barriers of indigenous knowledge in safeguarding Assamese ethnic cultural identity.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hangshing (2019) studied about the progress of librarianship in India till the present day and discussed about Indigenous knowledge and its intersection with the LIS sector in India, drawing attention to its significance and relevance to Indigenous Indian. Plockey (2014) focussed on the role of public libraries in Ghana in digitizing indigenous knowledge for posterity and accessibility to the general public. Thorpe and Galassi (2014) investigated the principles and protocols guiding the work of the Rediscovering Indigenous Languages project, in particular the importance of encouraging active discussion with

communities and linguists in regards to the use and revitalisation of these historical documentary resources. Adeniyi (2013) explored on how libraries in Oyo State, Nigeria provide access to Indigenous Resources (IK) and the problems encountered ehile managing them. He found that IK resources were not adequately represented in libraries in Oyo State. The study discovered that special, academic and public libraries have differing means by which they provide access to IK resources. Hunter (2013) identifies unresolved issues that will require further collaborative research and development and cooperation between Indigenous communities, researchers and software developers.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method: The present study has adopted Descriptive Survey method of research for collecting data.

Research Sample and Sampling technique: The samples of the study are professionals and students from the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya. Purposive sampling technique has been applied to collect a sample size of 42, including the library and information science professionals and students.

Data Collection Tools and procedure: A self-constructed questionnaire and interview have been used as tools for collecting primary data. Questions were designed in both structured and unstructured format. All questionnaires were prepared in Google Forms and distributed through e-mail due to the pandemic scenario. In this research telephonic interview has been also used to supplement data.

Area of the Study: The area undertaken for this study is Department of Library and Information Science, University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM), which is a private university situated in Assam and Meghalaya border.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1. Distribution of questionnaires

Table- 1 Distribution of questionnaires

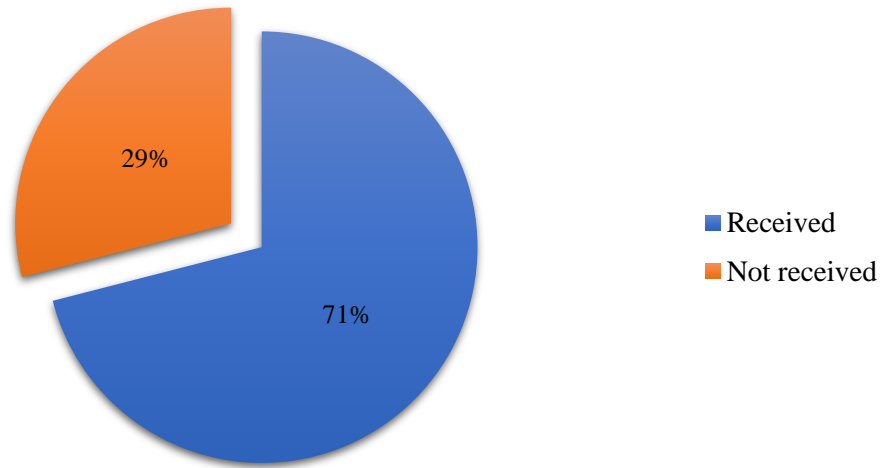| Name of the institution	Total Questionnaire distributed	Responses	Percentage (%)
University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya	42	30	71%

Figure- 1 Distribution of questionnaires

Out of 42 questionnaires, 71% questionnaire were received from the respondents and rest 29% questionnaire were not received.

5.2. Gender wise distribution of questionnaire

Table- 2 Gender wise distribution of questionnaire

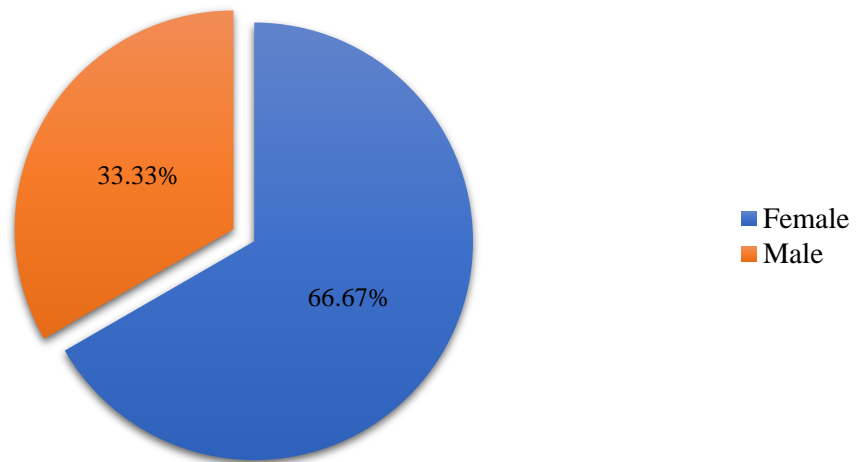| SL No.	Category	Responses	Percentage (%)
i	Male	10	66.67%
ii	Female	20	33.33%
Total		30	100%

Figure- 2 Gender wise distribution of questionnaire

Out of 30 respondents, 66.67% responses were received from Male and rest 33.33% responses are from Female.

5.3. Category wise distribution of questionnaire

Table- 3 Category wise distribution of questionnaire

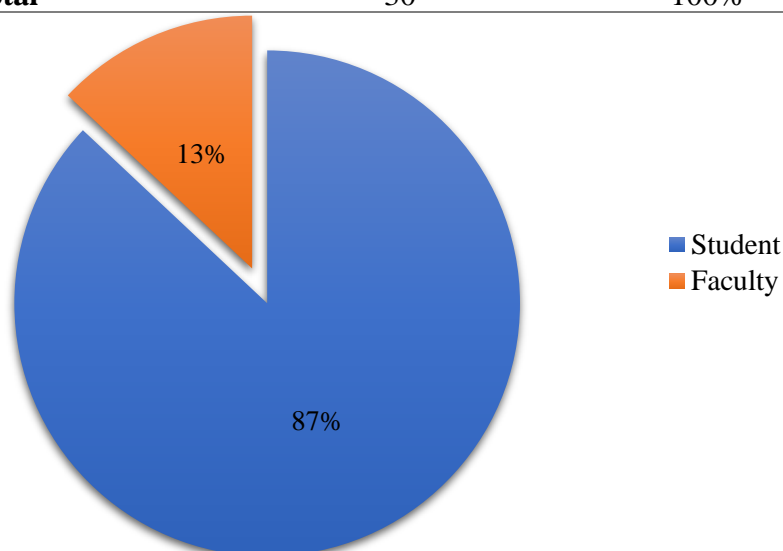| SL No.	Category	Responses	Percentage (%)
i	Faculty	4	13%
ii	Student	26	87%
Total		30	100%

Figure- 3 Category wise distribution of questionnaire

Out of 30 respondents, 87% responses were received from students and rest 13% responses are from Assistant Professors of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya.

5..4. Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge

Table- 4 Awareness of the concept of Indigenous Knowledge

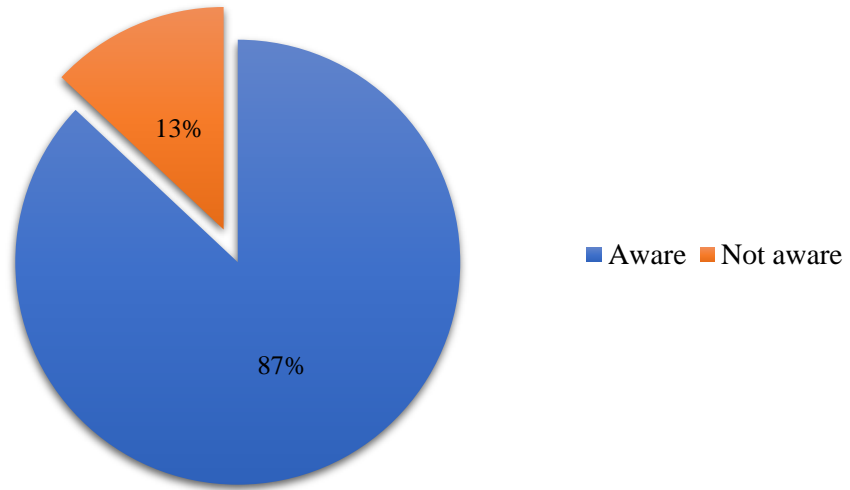| SL No.	Awareness	Responses	Percentage (%)
I	Yes	26	87%
II	No	4	13%
Total		30	100%

Figure- 4 Awareness of the concept Indigenous Knowledge

Above figure represents the information regarding awareness of indigenous knowledge among library and information science professionals and students. Out of the 30 responses, 87% are aware of indigenous knowledge and the rest 13% are not aware.

5.5. Areas of importance of Indigenous Knowledge

Table- 5 Areas of importance of Indigenous Knowledge

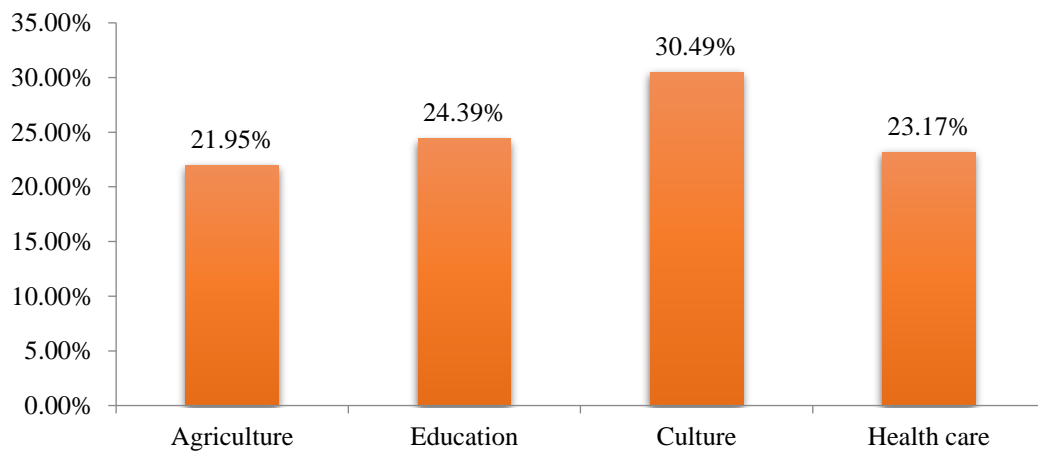| SL No.	Areas	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Agriculture	18	21.95%
ii	Education	20	24.39%
iii	Culture	25	30.49%
iv	Health care	19	23.17%
	Total	82	100%

Figure- 5 Areas of importance of Indigenous Knowledge

The above figure represents the areas of importance of Indigenous Knowledge. It can be clearly seen that most of the respondents feels that indigenous knowledge is important in the aspect of safeguarding of one's culture (30.49%).

5..6. Need of Indigenous Knowledge in daily lives

Table- 6 Need of Indigenous Knowledge in daily lives

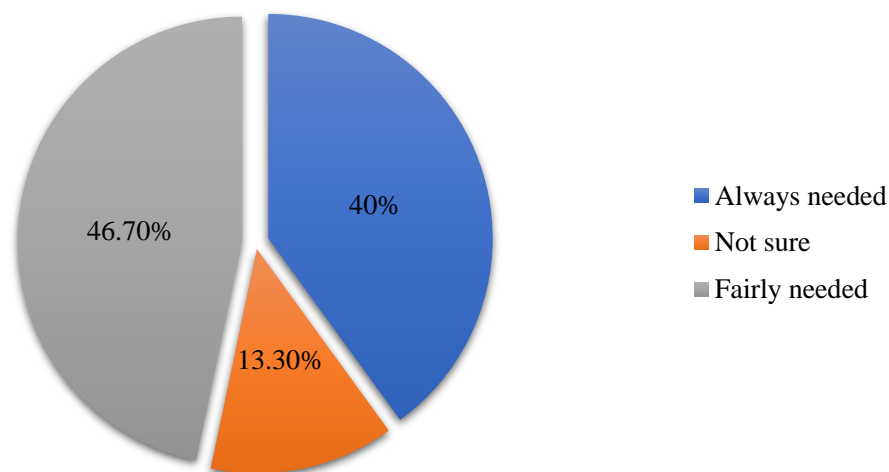| SL No.	Need	Responses	Percentage (%)
i	Always needed	12	40%
ii	Not sure	4	13.3%
iii	Fairly needed	14	46.7%
Total		30	100%

Figure- 6 Need of Indigenous Knowledge in daily lives

It can been seen from the above that 46.7% people thinks that indigenous knowledge is fairly needed in daily life, 40% people think that indigenous knowledge always needed in daily life and other 13.3% people not sure about that.

5.7. Libraries responsible for indigenous knowledge preservation

Table- 7 Libraries responsible for indigenous knowledge preservation

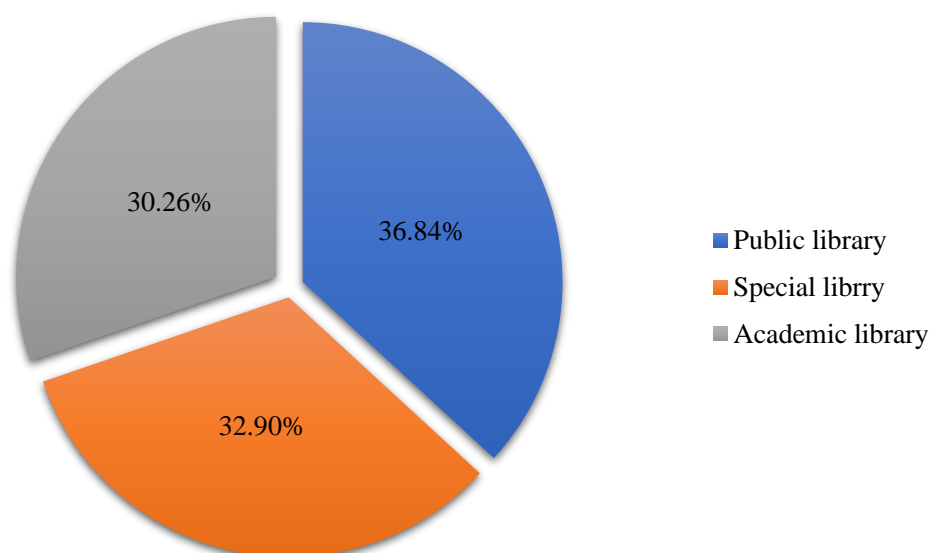| SL No.	Types of library	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Public library	28	36.84%
ii	Special library	25	32.90%
iii	Academic library	23	30.26%
Total		76	100%

Figure- 7 Libraries responsible for indigenous knowledge preservation

The above figure clearly shows that the public library has received 36.84% responses. Most of the respondent thinks that public libraries are responsible for preservation of indigenous knowledge.

5.8. Methods to develop an indigenous collection

Table- 8 Methods of develop an indigenous collection

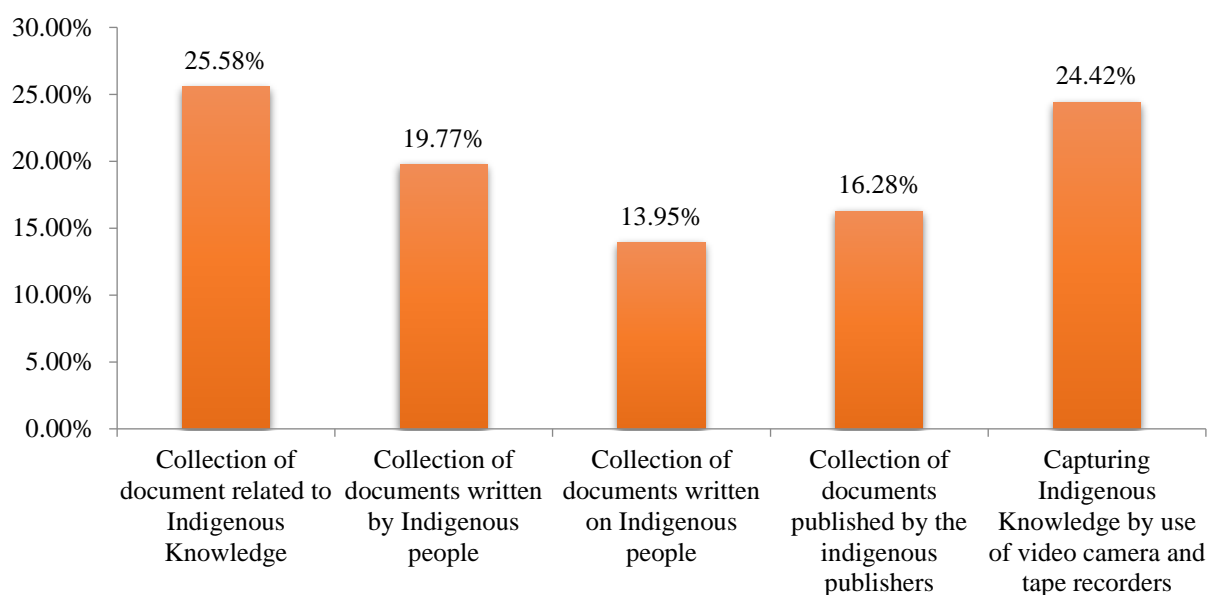| SL No.	Methods	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Collection of document related to Indigenous Knowledge	22	25.58%
ii	Collection of documents written by Indigenous people	17	19.77%
iii	Collection of documents written on Indigenous people	12	13.95%
iv	Collection of documents published by the indigenous publishers	14	16.28%
v	Capturing Indigenous Knowledge by use of video camera and tape recorders	21	24.42%
	Total	86	100%

Figure- 8 Methods of develop an indigenous collection

The above figure shows the methods of developing an indigenous collection where 25.58% responses thinks that the collection of indigenous knowledge can develop through collecting document related to indigenous knowledge. Other methods of developing indigenous knowledge like Capturing Indigenous Knowledge by use of video camera and tape recorders got 24.42% responses, collection of documents written by Indigenous people got 19.77% responses, Collection of documents published by the indigenous publishers got 16.28% responses and collection of documents written on Indigenous people got 13.95% responses.

5.9. Dissemination of the indigenous knowledge

Table- 9 Dissemination of the indigenous knowledge

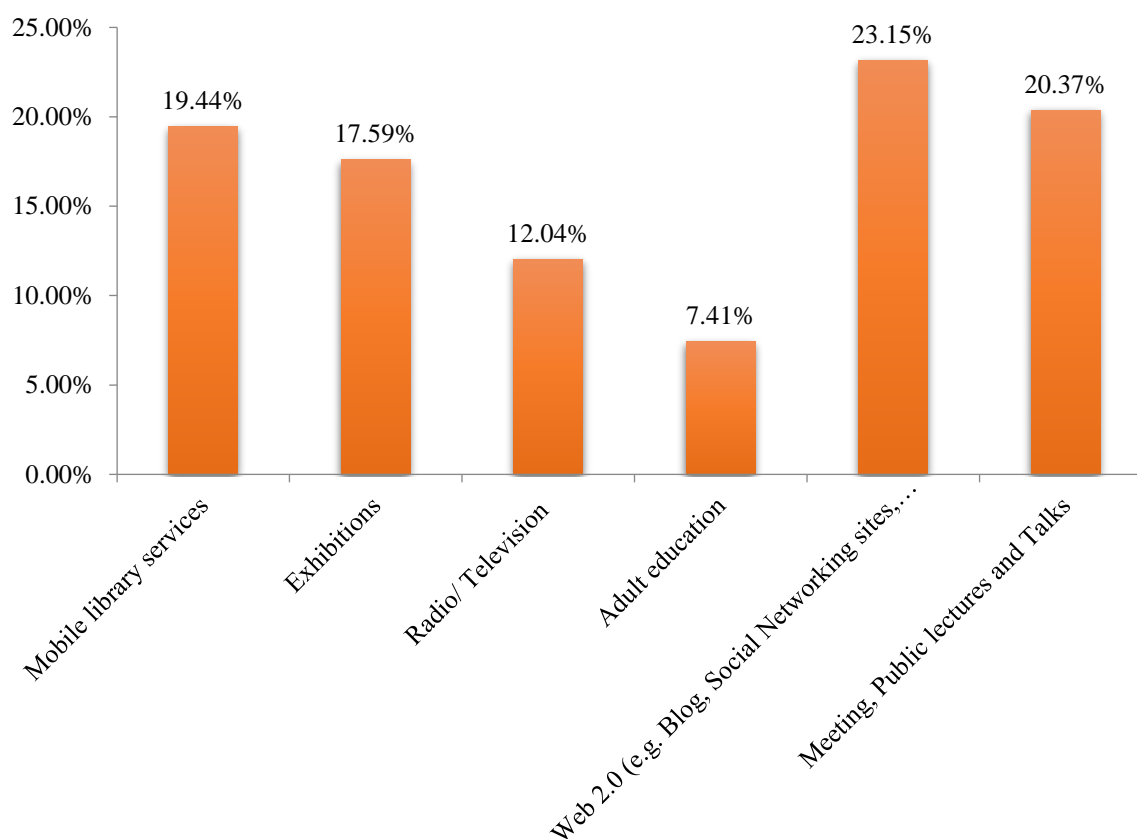| SL No.	Methods	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Mobile library services	21	19.44%
ii	Exhibitions	19	17.59%
iii	Radio/ Television	13	12.04%
iv	Adult education	8	7.41%
v	Web 2.0 (e.g. Blog, Social Networking sites, Podcast/Vodcast etc.)	25	23.15%
vi	Meeting, Public lectures and Talks	22	20.37%
	Total	108	100%

Figure- 9 Dissemination of the indigenous knowledge

The above figure represents the methods of disseminating indigenous knowledge in the library. Most of the responses (23.15%) given to the web 2.0 (e.g. Blog, Social Networking sites, Podcast/Vodcast etc.) for disseminating indigenous knowledge. Very few responses (7.41%) given to the adult education.

5.10. Sharing of Indigenous Knowledge with the help of ICT

Table- 10 Sharing of Indigenous Knowledge with the help of ICT

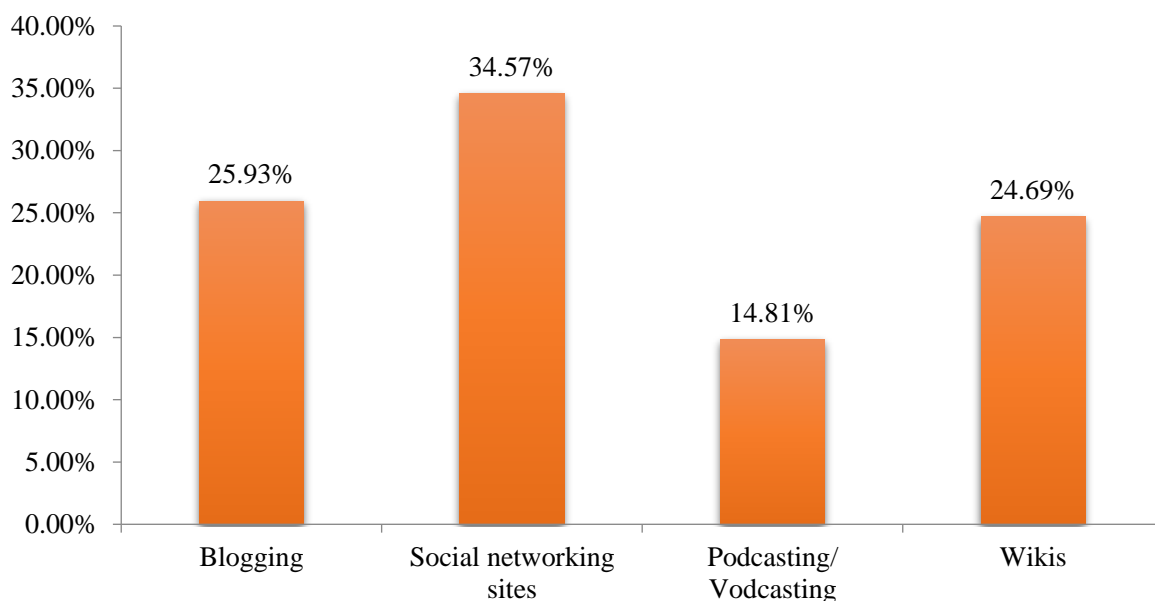| SL No.	ICT tools	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Blogging	21	25.93%
ii	Social networking sites	28	34.57%
iii	Podcasting/ Vodcasting	12	14.81%
iv	Wikis	20	24.69%
	Total	81	100%

Figure- 10 Sharing of Indigenous Knowledge with the help of ICT

The above figure shows that 34.57% of the responses are given to social networking sites as a tool for share indigenous knowledge. 25.93% responses given to the blogging, 24.69% responses given to the wikis and 14.81% responses given to the podcasting/ vodcasting as tool of sharing indigenous knowledge.

5.11. Barriers of indigenous resources acquisition

Table- 11 Barriers of indigenous resources acquisition

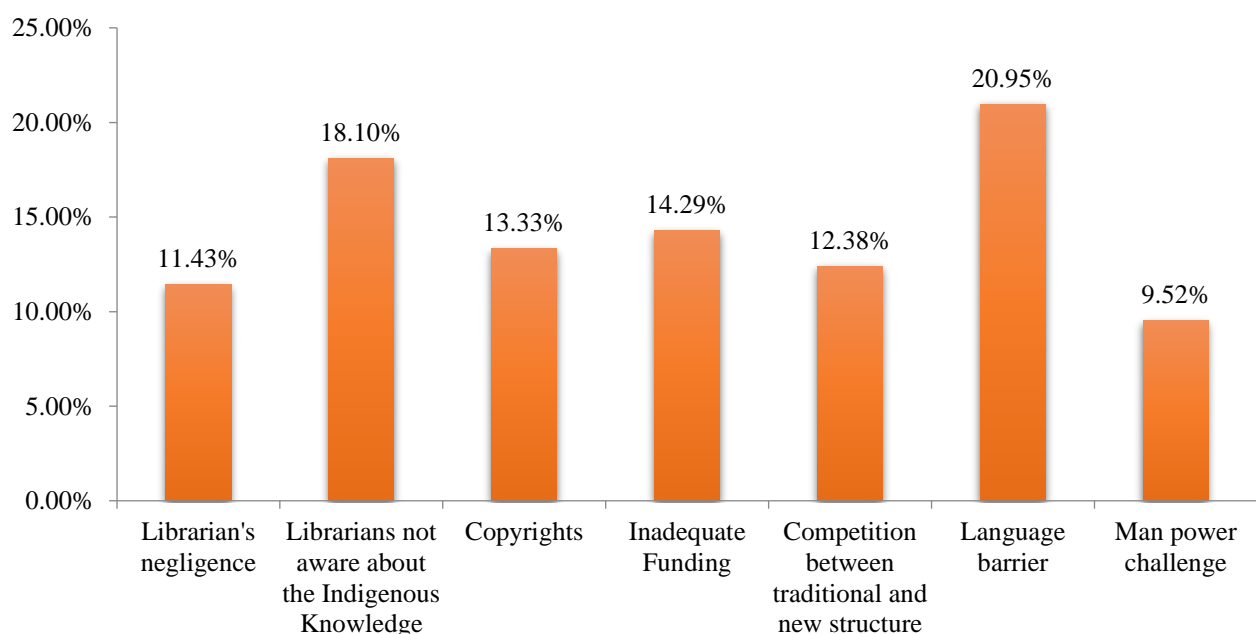| SL No.	Barriers	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Librarian's negligence	12	11.43%
ii	Librarians not aware about the Indigenous Knowledge	19	18.1%
iii	Copyrights	14	13.33%
iv	Inadequate Funding	15	14.29%
v	Competition between traditional and new structure	13	12.38%
vi	Language barrier	22	20.95%
vii	Man power challenge	10	9.52%
	Total	105	100%

Figure- 11 Barriers of indigenous resources acquisition

The above figure represents the barriers of indigenous resources acquisition. Most of the respondent (20.95%) indicated language barrier for indigenous resources acquisition. Second majority of the respondent (18.1%) indicated the lack of librarian's awareness for indigenous resource acquisition. 14.29% respondent think inadequate fund, 13.33% respondent think copyrights, 12.38% respondent think competition between traditional and new structure, 11.43% respondent think librarians negligence and 9.52% respondent think man power challenge barriers of indigenous resource acquisition.

5.12. Promotion of indigenous knowledge

Table- 12 Promotion of indigenous knowledge

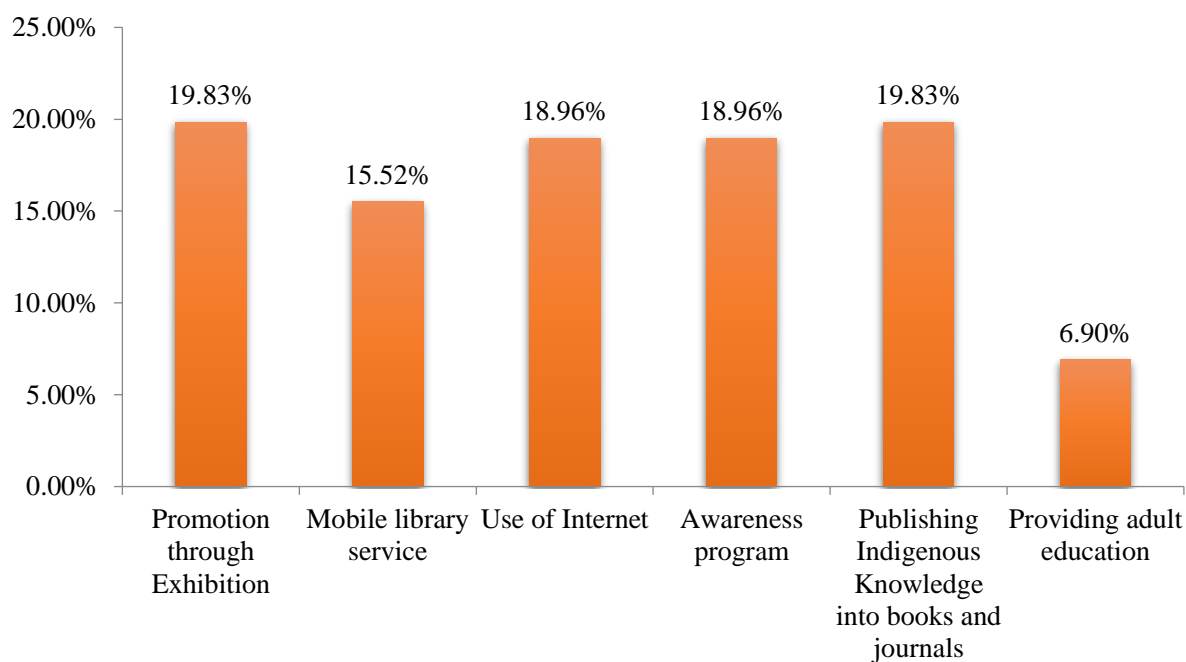| SL No.	Techniques	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Promotion through Exhibition	23	19.83%
ii	Mobile library service	18	15.52%
iii	Use of Internet	22	18.96%
iv	Awareness program	22	18.96%
v	Publishing Indigenous Knowledge into books and journals	23	19.83%
vi	Providing adult education	8	6.9%
	Total	116	100%

Figure- 12 Libraries promote indigenous knowledge

The above figure provides information about how libraries promote indigenous knowledge among the users. Promotion through exhibition and publishing indigenous knowledge into books and journals promotion techniques get 19.83% responses and other technique like use of internet and awareness program has get 18.96% responses.

5.13. Techniques for preserving Indigenous Knowledge

Table- 15 Techniques for preserving Indigenous Knowledge

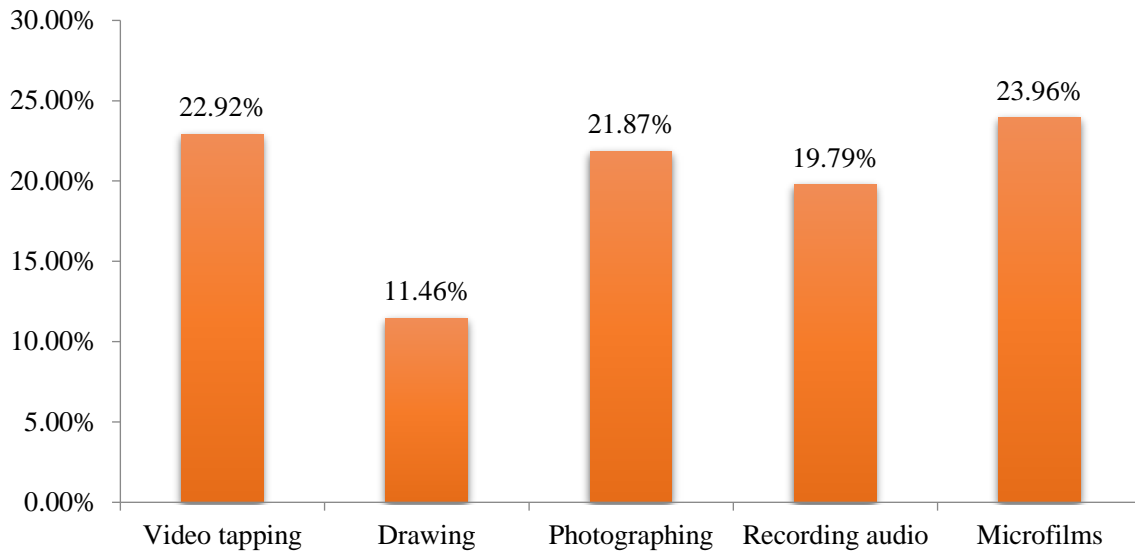| SL No.	Techniques	Choices	Percentage (%)
i	Video tapping	22	22.92%
ii	Drawing	11	11.46%
iii	Photographing	21	21.87%
iv	Recording audio	19	19.79%
v	Microfilms	23	23.96%
Total		96	100%

Figure- 13 Techniques for preserving Indigenous Knowledge

The above figure shows that Microfilms (23.96%) as the most useful technique to preserve indigenous knowledge in libraries.

5.14. Extinction of Indigenous knowledge

Table- 14 Extinction of Indigenous knowledge

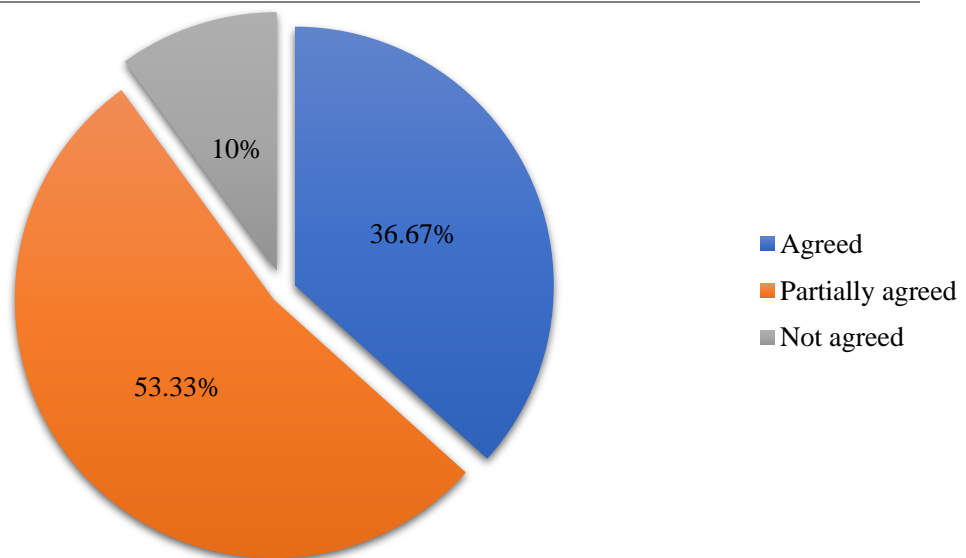| SL No.	View point	Responses	Percentage (%)
i	Agreed	11	36.67%
ii	Partially agreed	16	53.33%
iii	Not agreed	3	10%
	Total	30	100%

Figure- 14 Extinction of Indigenous knowledge

The above figure shows that 53.33% of the respondents partially agree that indigenous knowledge is on the verge of extinction. The other 10% respondents do not think that indigenous knowledge is on verge of extinction.

6. FINDINGS

The findings of the research study have been discussed in various sections depending upon analytical interpretation of data.

a. **Participant individuals**: The number of individuals participating in the research study was found to be 30, with females accounting more in the response mechanism of the study.

b. **Awareness regarding utility of indigenous knowledge:**
   ➢ Most of the respondents were found to be well aware of the prevalence of indigenous knowledge embedded in our cultural set up as well as acknowledged the vulnerability of its existence.
   ➢ The participants corroborates with the fact that a fair knowledge of indigenous flavors in our social experiences helps in smoothening our material progress keeping our ethnicity intact.
   ➢ At the same time, the individuals identified culture as the most important area for practicing indigenous knowledge followed by education, health and agriculture.

c. **Awareness regarding preservation of indigenous knowledge:**
   ➢ The sample respondents felt that Public libraries should play a vital role in preserving ancient knowledge as it is open to the common masses for study and contemplation. Off course the role of Special and Academic libraries was not ruled out as it catered to the need of the student and teaching community.
   ➢ The participants were of the opinion that the involvement of the indigenous publishers in documenting and publication of relevant literature both in printed formats and audio-visual recordings could be evolved as methods to develop an indigenous storehouse of information.

d. **Awareness regarding dissemination and promotion of indigenous knowledge:**
   ➢ ICT tools like Web 2.0 blog, social networking sites, vodcast/podcast were considered as the most popular methods of spreading indigenous information. Public meetings, mobile library services, exhibitions, radio/television and adult

education were next in effecting the dissemination of concerned knowledge as per the opinions of the respondents.

- ➢ The participants favored microfilms, video tapes and photographing followed by audio recordings and drawings techniques for preserving Indigenous Knowledge
- ➢ Publishing indigenous knowledge into books and journals and exhibiting them through internet & awareness program were considered effective in desired promotion activities. Even mobile library services and ethnic excerpts in adult education served well in promoting indigenous knowledge.

e. **Barriers of indigenous resources acquisition:**

- ➢ Most of the respondents indicated language barrier for indigenous resources acquisition.
- ➢ Second majority of the respondents indicated the lack of librarian's awareness and negligence for indigenous resource acquisition.
- ➢ Fewer respondents pointed inadequate fund, copyrights, fierce competition between traditional and modern elements and man power shortages as recognizable barriers of indigenous resource acquisition.

7. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the responses and suggestions given by the respondents and on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are listed below:

- Indigenous knowledge can direct useful experiences in many aspects like education, agriculture, culture, healthcare etc. Efforts should be made to link and incorporate new knowledge with ethnic characteristics.
- People feel that public libraries are mostly responsible for the preservation of indigenous knowledge. But academic libraries should equally come forward in such promotional activities.
- Most of the indigenous knowledge is circulated among the people through verbal format. So it is needed that all useful indigenous knowledge is written in book or other formats and preserved in the library for easy accessibility.
- Libraries must include concepts on indigenous theories in adult education either through formal curricular structure or instructional awareness programs on indigenous knowledge.

- Podcasting/Vodcasting is a useful technique for sharing indigenous knowledge. Now-a-days different Podcasting and Vodcasting mobile applications are available at the user's disposal, which can be handy even for library technical sections.
- Indigenous knowledge can be availed only in local languages. In this context, Library indigenous sections should employ professionals having fair knowledge in local vernacular languages for essential documentation and publication.
- Ethically every Library and Information Science professional must come forward and contribute individually in promotion and preservation of indigenous knowledge.

8. CONCLUSION

It is necessary that every library professional should be aware of their local knowledge. It is the responsibility of a library to collect, store and disseminate indigenous knowledge among the library users. It has been seen that language is a barrier and there are many local knowledge spoken in the area. So, it is very difficult for a library professional to learn all the local languages. It has been also seen that most of the documents on indigenous knowledge has not been stored in the library and some library professional have also avoided it.

Library professionals should be aware of preserving indigenous knowledge, so that everyone can access that knowledge very easily. Libraries should collaborate with indigenous people to collect, store and disseminate indigenous knowledge among the users. Libraries are non-profit organization, so the government and local authority should support the libraries in funding so that libraries can preserve and collect indigenous knowledge.

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