

A study on Departmental Libraries of Assam University with Special Emphasis on Current Status, Services, Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on knowing the working scenario of the departmental libraries of the Assam University, Silchar. The survey method has been used to conduct the study and distributed a structured 40 questionnaire with the different departmental library in-charge, out of a total distributed questionnaire, a total 33 filled questionnaire was received by them and after the deep analysis of the questionnaire, it was found that the maximum of 4 departments was handled by professionally qualified in-charge, while the remaining departments' libraries are managed by different library in-charges who are not professionally qualified in the field of Library Science.

KEYWORDS: Departmental Libraries, Assam University, Issues and Challenges of Departmental libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries are universally recognized as important social institution for diffusion of knowledge and information. No community, institution or organization is considered complete without the support of a library and its services. The gradual spread of the concept of democracy, extension or education, growth of research activities, rapid industrialization, continuous increase in production of recorded knowledge both in print and non-print media, and advancement in information transfer, computer and communication technologies have contributed to the growth of libraries and information centers as well as to the development of user oriented services. ALA glossary of Library & Information Sciences (1990) defines university library as “a library, or system of libraries, established supported and administered by a university to meet the information needs of its students and faculty and support its instructional research and service programs”. The library is the core of a university, as a resource it reside the central and primary place, because it serves all the functions of a university teaching and research, the creation of new knowledge and transmission to posterity of the learning and culture of the present and the past, where the departmental libraries purpose is to disseminate information within a specific field of subjects.

ASSAM UNIVERSITY: AN OVERVIEW

The Assam (Central) University Act of 1989 was passed in 1994, creating Assam University. Assam University is working to establish itself as an elite institution through its pursuit of excellence.

The main campus of Assam University is located in Dargakona, around 20 kilometres from Silchar. The campus is surrounded by broad hillocks and a typical north eastern scenery. The 600-acre campus offers the perfect setting for scholars, students, and anyone interested in intellectual success. In the district of Karbi Anglong, in Diphu, is where the university's other campus is located. The goal of Assam University is to make the diverse collective dream of the local people a reality.

The Mission of Assam University is to accomplish the long-held desires of the Assamese people, particularly those in the Barak Valley, to have a top-tier national higher education institution and significantly contribute to the process of building the country. It will focus on multidisciplinary research, teaching, and learning while sustaining equity, access, and excellence to meet the requirements for a higher education that is recognised worldwide. Improve the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) while eradicating prejudice, discrimination, and bias based on gender, caste, community, regional, and linguistic barriers. Which will improve national welfare?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Khan and Bhatti (2012) have done their study on “**Departmental Libraries at the University of Peshawar: Current Status, Services, Issues, Challenges and Prospects**” This study aims to examine the current status; collection; services; use of information technologies, budget and sources of budget in the departmental libraries at University of Peshawar. Questionnaire was distributed among the population of all library professionals working in departmental libraries. Study identified that the respondents were to some extent satisfied with the present departmental library’s collection and budget. The study has practical implications for library administration and management, librarians and information specialists for improving the current situation and better services provision for maximum users’ satisfaction.

Gupta and Sharma (2020) have done their study on “**Present Status, Issues and Challenges of Departmental Libraries in the University of Jammu: A Case Study**”. This paper focuses on knowing the working scenario of the departmental libraries of the university of Jammu and Kashmir. The survey method has been used to conduct the study and distributed a structured questionnaire with different library in-charge out of a total distributed questionnaire a total of 34 filled questionnaire received, after the deep analysis of the questionnaire it was found that only 12 departments was handled by in-charge and their designation was “Professional Assistants” while additional supporting staff was “Library Attendants” in 14 departmental Libraries.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To find the existing status of the departmental Libraries.
- ✓ To make aware the administration about the position of the departmental libraries.
- ✓ To identify the challenges and issues of departmental libraries.

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- ✓ To examine deeply the organizational infrastructure of departmental libraries such as collection, organization of collection, use of information technology, automation, users, resources and services they offered, space, budget, staff, access System and other facilities
- ✓ To present suggestions and recommendations, which would help the competent authority of the Assam University in further promoting departmental libraries and its services.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was adopted to conduct the study. A survey is a research method used for collecting data from a predefined group of respondents to gain information and insights into various topics of interest. They can have multiple purposes, and researchers can conduct it in many ways depending on the methodology chosen and the study's goal. The data is usually obtained through the use of standardized procedures to ensure that each respondent can answer the questions at a level playing field to avoid biased opinions that could influence the outcome of the research or study.

For collecting data from different departmental libraries the structured questionnaire was designed and distributed among 40 departmental libraries in Assam University, Silchar campus.

After the collection of meaningful data from the departmental libraries, the data have been analyzed and interpretations were made in MS Excel Software.

DATA ANALYSIS

1. Provision of Departmental Library

Out of 33 departments, 29 departments of Assam University have the provision of departmental library, and the remaining 4 Departments do not have such provision. It reveals that 87.88% of the surveyed departments have the Departmental Library.

Table 1: Provision of Departmental Libraries

S.No.	Departments	Nos. (N=33)	Percentage (%)
1	Having Departmental Library	29	87.88
2	Not Having Departmental Library	4	12.12
	Total	33	100

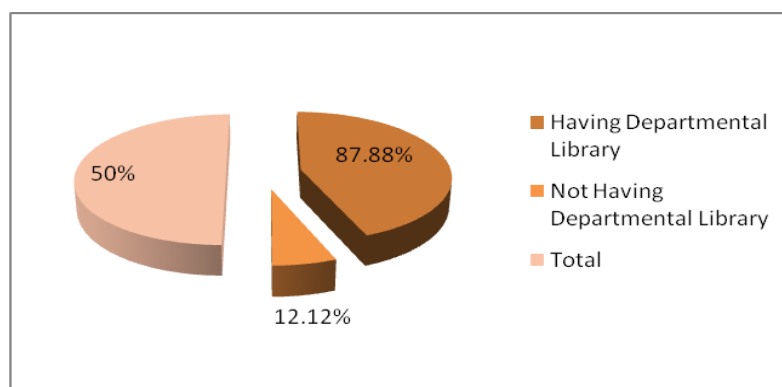


Figure 1 Provision of Departmental Library

2. Plan to Establish a Departmental Library

The respondents who do not have a library in their department were questioned about whether they have any future plans to start one. The question received a perfect 100% answer rate in favour of the establishment.

Table 2: planning for the establishment of Departmental Library

S. No.	Departments	Nos. (N=33)	Percentage
1	Having plan to establish Departmental Library	4	100%
2	Having no plan to establish a Departmental Library	0	0%

3. Professionally Qualified Librarians

Out of the 29 departments where a departmental library is available, only 4 departments have a librarian who is professionally qualified. Departments of Education, Library and Information Science, Chemistry, and Mathematics are among those that have librarians who hold professional qualifications. Only 13.79% Departmental Library has professionally qualified Librarian. While other Departments handle all the works of Departmental Library without having any kind of professionally qualified persons.

Table 3: Professionally Qualified Librarians

S. No.	Departments	Nos. (N=33)	Percentage(%)
1	Having Professionally Qualified Librarians	4	13.79
2	Having no Professionally Qualified Librarians	25	86.20
	Total	29	100

4. Sitting Arrangement for Departmental Library Users

Only 21 of the 29 Departmental Libraries feature seating arrangements. The departmental library's seating configuration number is represented graphically in the table below. Only 2 Departments can accommodate library patrons in a total of more than 50 seats. There are no seating areas for patrons in the other eight departmental libraries.

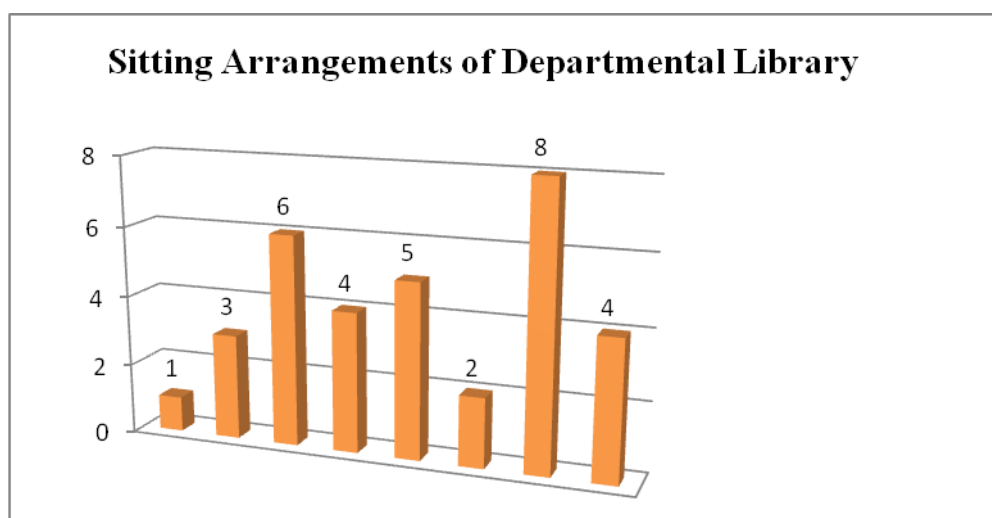


Figure 2 Graphical representation of the Sitting arrangement

5. Services provided by the departmental Library

Based on data gathered from the departmental library, assumption has been discovered that 26 Departmental Libraries offer the reading room service. The thirteen departmental libraries offer internet access. There are just four departmental libraries that offer photocopy services. Only one departmental library offers current awareness services, when there are 23 departmental libraries that have circulation (issue/return) facilities. Additionally, the Departmental Libraries do not offer any other unique services.

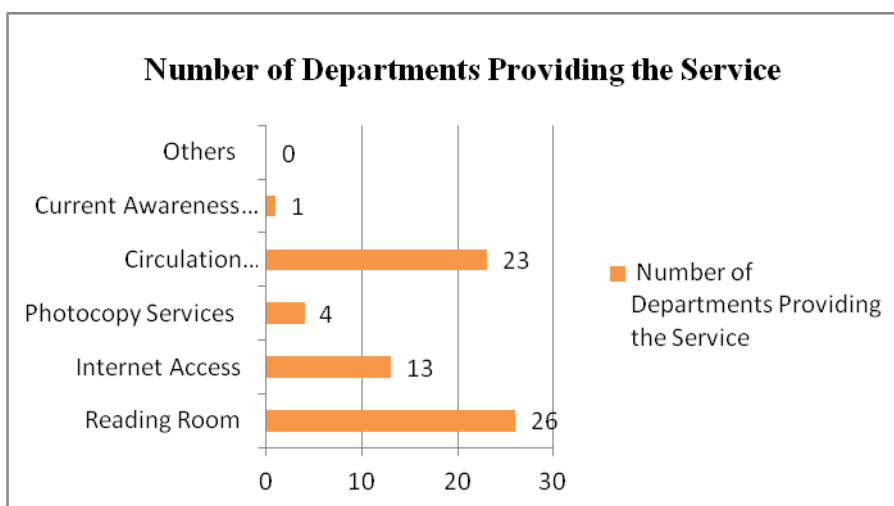


Figure 3 Different types of services provided by departmental Libraries

6. Issues and challenges faced by the Departmental Libraries

According to the answer in this section, Assam University's departmental libraries are dealing with a number of problems and difficulties. The most frequent problem is the lack of a professionally qualified librarian who can effectively supervise all of the library activities, as they are currently handled by departmental teachers as an added duty. The Departmental Library's space is not appropriate because the rooms are too small, which is the second most frequently raised concern. Some of the Departments also require book shelves. Another significant concern brought up by the respondent is the power supply, as IT services must be reinforced to ensure a constant supply.

Major findings of the study

- A total of 82.5% of the Departmental Libraries at Assam University, Silchar, responded to the survey.
- To all 40 Departments at Assam University, Silchar, a questionnaire was sent both online and offline.
- Only 33 of the 40 Departments were discovered to have answered the questionnaire that was provided. Only 29 of the 33 departments that replied have a departmental library provision.
- This study's key finding is that only 4 Departments have an officially competent library in-charge, including
 - Department of Library and Information Science
 - Department of Chemistry
 - Department of Mathematics
 - Department of Education

- Except for the Department of Library and Information Science, no other departmental library uses any software for its patrons.
- Four departments that didn't previously have a departmental library responded favourably to its creation because they saw how beneficial it would be for their students and professors.
- The Departmental Library's collection of books is inadequate. The departmental library had almost nothing in the way of computers. The Departmental Libraries did not offer any newspaper services.
- Only a small number of users have programmes arranged by departmental libraries at Assam Universities.
- The respondents spoke of a number of restrictions on the Departmental Library, including lack of space, librarians, and parental organization support.
- Some departmental libraries offer Internet access and photocopying services, however the number is quite limited. The majority of departmental libraries offer reading room services, but none of the departments offer any other specialised services, such as current awareness.
- The Departmental Library's seating capacity is found to be 50 people in most of the Departments.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide information on the problems and state of the Departmental Library at Assam University, Silchar. According to the assessment, out of the 40 departments at Assam University where the questionnaire was distributed, 33 departments responded. It has been also found that only four departments have library professionals working in their departmental libraries, while the remaining departments' libraries are managed by different library in-charges who are not professionally qualified in the field of Library Science.

The study was carried out using a survey method, with questionnaires sent online to the heads of each department at Assam University. Some of the Departments have been made physical visits as part of this survey. It was discovered that departments without departmental libraries were having a lot of issues with their academic goals, which is why respondents from those departments expressed an interest in starting a departmental library.

Most departments of Assam University struggle to manage their departmental libraries due to lack of space, a shortage of staff, and a lack of funding from the appropriate authorities. According to the majority of survey participants, the most critical requirement of Assam University's departmental libraries are for professionally qualified librarians.

This study has been conducted for the first time in the history of Assam University, to examine the current status, collection, services and issues being faced by the departmental libraries at the Assam University. The study found a big gap between Departmental libraries and latest trends in the field of libraries and information services. Library and information scientists should conduct further studies by evaluating and analyzing the departmental libraries system; status, services and learning facilities provided by them to their users.

On the basis of the study it can be concluded that each department at Assam University, Silchar, needs a well-equipped departmental library and the improvement of the existing Libraries and its services.

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