



# Scenario of a Public Library:

*a survey report on Krishnanagar Public Library*

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## Abstract

A public library is intended as an auxiliary educational institution providing a means of self education which is endless, which is giving reliable information freely and without partiality or prejudice on a wide variety of subjects. It satisfies the interest of readers while they enter in to the library because it possesses large number of books, journals, magazines, periodicals, reports and news papers. The main aim of this study is to explore public library users' perceptions and expectations of the quality of library services in Krishna Nagar Public Library. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and data were collected using a questionnaire to the users of Krishnanagar Public Library. The respondents consider public libraries as a fundamental part of society, as they provide free and equal access to information; the respondents also believe that libraries deserve more financial support. On the other hand, they cite the Internet as their main source of information, and do not use public libraries because of lack of time, the convenience of the Internet, not living close to a public library, and being unaware of library services. The services that are perceived as "poor" by the respondents coincide with the services that have the potential to attract them to libraries.

**Keywords:** Public libraries, library users, user perceptions, user expectations, User's attitude, Krishnanagar Public Library.

## 1. Introduction

The Public Library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users, IFLA/UNESCO (1994). It is an organization which provides access to knowledge, information, and works of imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status, and educational attainment', IFLA/UNESCO (2001). However, a public library today is considered to be an intellectual powerhouse, which strives to fulfil and meet the educational, cultural and informational needs of the public through audio-visual materials. It is recognized as an engine of great potentialities for national welfare and as an essential foundation for the progress in education and culture.

A public library provides all sorts of information services from the available sources like Encyclopaedias, Dictionaries, Handbooks, Yearbooks, Manuals, Gazetteers, Atlases, and Almanacs etc. and it is used by the public in leisure for passing time in recreational reading like fiction, drama, poetry, newspaper and popular magazines to meet the information requirements of all categories of users such as Children, Women, Young Adults, Middle Adults and Old People.

Krishna Nagar Public Library is the pride of Krishna Nagar. In the year of 1856 Mr Ramlochan Ghosh, amin of that time, encouraged by Mr Hojson Pratt, the Distric School inspector of that time, called for a meeting with the residents of Krishna nagar at Krishna Nagar college Hall on 1st July. From that meeting they had decided to make “Krishna Nagar Public Library and Reading Club” [ The early name of Krishna Nagar Public Library]. The land of the library was donated by Maharaja Sreesh Chandra Roy.

Now the library is reached with 30,000 books. The library has a great collection of rare book (which are 100 to 300 years old), manuscripts (no. 165). It has a 162 years old globe. The collections are classified according to DDC19th edition. The librarian is the only one professional staff of the library. The library is so well organised. It has various sections like senior citizen section, children section etc. It is partially automated (only Cataloguing) with the library management software ‘Koha’.

## 2. Perception and Expectations of Public Library Users

Although public libraries emerged and developed in different ways in India, they all have the same principle: providing equal access, regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status, and educational level (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994, pp. 1–2). Children of all ages and genders, young people, students, teachers, homemakers, and people from all occupations are amongst the potential and actual users of public libraries. The users have a variety of educational levels and socio-economic backgrounds, and therefore, each user group has different needs and expectations. So, it is essential to determine the users’ perceptions of existing library services, as well as their expectations, in order to develop library services that fulfil the users’ different needs Stevenson (1997, p. 113) defines a perception as “an opinion about someone or something.” Perceptions are certainly not fixed notions—they may change as user experience changes. As pointed out by Cook and Heath (2001, p. 581), “library users approach the various dimensions of services with differing expectations. When it works well, the library is a place that enters into the consciousness of the user little more than the span over open water enters into the awareness of the traveller; the library is merely an entity that facilitates a more important undertaking. When expectations are not met – whether it be inadequate collections, insufficient hours, or otherwise – the perception of service quality can be altered.” Lilley and Usherwood (2000, p. 13) have indicated that the “user’s experience, past experience, language and present motivational state or goals for the future influence our perception of the present. Past learning has a significant influence on our perception.” The literature has also shown that expectations are pre-trial beliefs about a product or service (Olson and Dover, 1976). According to Zeithaml et al. (1988), what customers hear from other customers; individual characteristics and circumstances relating to personal needs; experience with using a service; and communications from service providers to customers, are all elements that determine expectations.

## 3. Problem Statement and Research Questions

In the present day, even more than in the past, libraries need to understand the background of their users, and determine whether they are meeting or exceeding expectations, or not. The overall purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and expectations of public library users in Krishnanagar Public Library, so that we can determine: (i) who the users are, (ii) the services provided for these users, (iii) their perception of these services, and (iv) their thoughts on the areas that need improvement. In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, a survey consisting of close-ended questions was prepared and distributed to Krishnanagar Public Library. The study findings will be important for Krishnanagar Public Library decision makers, and will give them an understanding of the users’ expectations and perceptions regarding adequate services. The following are the specific research questions for the study:

1. Frequencies of using the library
2. What are users’ main reasons for visiting Krishna Nagar Public Library?
3. Are the users satisfied with the facilities of the library?
4. Are they satisfied with the collection of resources of the
5. Types of Materials mostly used by them.
6. In which format they want the information about what is happening in the library?
7. What are the difficulties while Seeking Information?
8. What are the barriers that prevent people from using Krishna Nagar Public Library?
9. What are the features that would encourage more frequent visits?
10. What are the Perceptions of users of Library Services, Resources, and Facilities?
11. How important or unimportant do users think public libraries are as a service to the community?

## 4. Methodology

This study consists of both primary and secondary data. The required primary data is collected with the help of a suitable questionnaire. The researcher has collected 90 samples from the library users and its members in Krishnanagar Public Library on the basis of random sampling method. Secondary data is collected from the related registers, records and reports. The percentage is used as a statistical tool.

## 5. Data Collection

The data was collected by using empirical methods of questionnaire. At first, study was conducted to test the feelings of the respondents in answering the questions. Then the well tested questionnaires were distributed personally to the student users of Krishna Nagar Public Library. Sufficient time was given to the respondents in furnishing the information. At the time of collecting the filled questionnaire each respondent was requested to offer their comments and opinions on various concepts included in it. The data collected through the questionnaire was analysed with averages and simple percentages.

## 6. Result and Analysis

### 6.1. Gender wise distribution

Table1: Gender wise break-up of respondents

Gender	Number
Male	33
Female	7

It can be seen from the table that a large number of user are male and only few numbers of them are female user

### 6.2. Frequencies of using the library

Table 2: Frequency of Library Visit by the Respondents

Regularly -	34
Occasionally	4
Not responded	2

Frequency of visit to the Public library by the respondents is shown in table. It reveals that out of 40 respondents 34 respondents visit the library regularly and 4 respondents visit the library occasionally and 2 did not response.

#### 6.2.1 Frequencies of regular user

Table 3: Frequency of Library Visit by the Respondents

Frequency of library visit	No. of Responses
Once in a week	6
Twice/Thrice in a week	16
Once in a month	2
Twice/thrice in a month	4
Regular but did not response	6

Among the 34 regular user 6 respondents visit once in a week, 16 respondents visit twice/thrice in a week, two respondents visit once in a month and 4 respondents visit twice/thrice in a month.

### 6.3. Reasons for using the library

Table 4: Reasons for using the library

Parameters	No. of Responses
To read books or newspaper	30
To study/do homework	5
To conduct research	3
To check out books	3
To browse books	3
To attend an event or workstation	0
Others (to spend time after retirement)	1
Not responded	4

All of the respondents were asked to cite all of the reasons why they used the library. They choose multiple answers as the reason for using the library. The main reasons are depicted in Figure the most popular reason was to read books or newspaper, secondly to study/do homework. Other reasons for visiting the library included conducting research, to check out books and, to browse books for visiting the library.

These findings show that the most common reason for visiting a public library is to meet educational needs. The reasons for using public libraries do not seem to differ very much in terms of age, gender, or work status; however, as expected, the majority of users visit libraries for studying purposes. Some user comes only to spend time after their retirement.

### 6.4. Are you satisfied with the facilities of the library?

Table.5: Satisfaction of facilities available

Parameters	No. of Responses			
	High	Average	poor	Don't Know
Location	28	10	0	2
Arrangement of books	21	19	0	0
Furniture and equipments	22	17	1	0
Lighting and ventilation	28	10	1	1
Cleanliness	25	15	0	0
Helpfulness of library staff	28	9	3	0
Reading room	30	9	1	0

The above table shows that the users are mostly satisfied with the facilities of the library. Maximum number of user is satisfied with the reading room facility, lighting and ventilation, helpfulness of library staff and its location. Some of them are also not so much satisfied with arrangement of books, furniture and equipment, cleanliness.



### 6.5. Are you satisfied with the collection of resources of the library

Table 6: satisfaction with the collection of resources

Types of materials	No. of Responses		
	High	Average	poor
Books	21	19	10
Reference books	21	12	7
periodicals	16	20	4
News papers	16	19	5

The above table shows that the users are mostly satisfied with the books and reference book collection. Side by side some user also not satisfied with the collection of books and reference books. They are also not hopefully satisfied with the newspaper and periodical collection.

### 6.6. Types of Materials mostly used by the user

Table7: Types of Materials mostly used

Types of materials	No of responses	Types of materials	No of responses	Types of materials	No of responses
Book	40	Periodicals	13	Newspaper	18
CD/DVD	8	Magnetic tape	2	Video films	1
Picture	1	Maps	3	Globes	8
Manuscript	9	Government Publication	11		

The material mostly used by the user is book. The second most used materials is newspaper and periodical. Some user also uses Govt Publication, manuscript (mainly used by researchers), globes and CD/DVD. Maps, pictures, magnetic tape and video films are rarely used materials.

### 6.7. Difficulties while Seeking Information

Table 8: Distribution of Difficulties while Seeking Information

Parameters	No of responses
Language	2
Distance	2
Money	0
Electricity	0
Inadequate facility of library	15
Any other	15
Not responded	18

The user also asked to cite the difficulties while seeking information. The majority claimed that the library has inadequate facility. Some user also claimed the language and distance as difficulties while seeking information.

### 6.8. Barriers to use the library

The main reason given by the respondents for not visiting the library regularly was they get information via Internet. The next two most frequently cited reasons were the library is too far from home and they are too busy. They also prefer to purchase their personal copy.

Table 9: distribution of barriers to use the library

Parameters	No. of Responses
No time	3
Get information from internet	10
Too far from home	6
Unaware of library services	
Prefer to purchase own copy	2
Inconvenient hours	
Not responded	19

The participants cited Get information from internet as the main reason for not visiting the library regularly. The fact that the Internet search engines are cited as the main source of information by the survey's participants may be considered as evidence of this. Distance from home was also perceived by respondents as a main barrier to not using the library. Six respondents stated that the public library is too far from their home. It should be mentioned here that lack of time was also perceived by respondents as a main barrier to not using the library. However, the reasons for this scarcity of time are not clear, and need to be investigated further. Additionally, "Prefer to purchase own copy" was also stated as reasons for not visiting libraries.

### 6.9. Features that would Encourage more Frequent Visits

Table 10: Features That Would Encourage More Frequent Visits to Library.

Parameters	No. of Responses
Add more computers with internet	9
Improve selection of new books	21
Online library services	13
Extend opening hours	7
Offer more comfortable environment	10
Add materials in new format (e books)	14
Improve collection of CD/DVD	5
Staff need to be more knowledgeable/ helpful	14
Need to employ additional staff	18

The majority of the participants claimed that they would visit the library more often if the library improves the selection of new books. The user also claimed that the library needs to employ more staff. The average number of user wants online service, materials in new format (e books) and more knowledgeable staff. Some user also wants computers with internet. A few numbers of users want that the library should extend the opening hours and improve the collection of CD/DVD.

## 6.10. Perceptions of Library Services, Resources, and Facilities

Table 11: Perceptions of Library Services, Resources, and Facilities

Parameters	No. of Responses						
	Excellent	Fair	Very Good	Good	General	Poor	Don't Know
General attractiveness of the exterior of the library building	18	3	1	9	4	0	5
Ease of access entering the library	14	6	8	4	3	0	5
Ease of movement within the library	18	2	2	7	2	2	7
Layout and arrangement	12	5	1	7	7	0	8
Provision of seating and tables	15	2	2	9	5	2	5
Cleanliness	16	4	3	9	5	0	3
Lighting	19	3	2	12	2	0	2
Staff knowledge	13	3	4	10	5	2	3
Staff helpfulness	14	3	8	6	5	2	2
Book collection	10	4	8	5	7	0	6
Magazine collection	13	0	3	7	6	6	5
CD/DVD collection	5	5	2	1	5	4	19
Young adult fiction/ nonfiction	4	7	2	6	5	0	16
Children's books	5	8	7	3	5	3	7
Computers with Internet access	No Computers						
Online library services	No online service						

Table shows the descriptive statistics for the respondents' perceptions of certain library services, resources, and facilities. All respondents were asked to respond to a series of statements about the quality of library services, using a five point Liker scale, which used scores ranging from "poor" to "excellent". The survey results indicated that the perceptions of public library users were relatively positive for certain services and resources, and negative for others. Services and resources with relatively positive perceptions included: General attractiveness of the exterior of the library building, Ease of access entering the library, Ease of movement within the library, Layout and arrangement, Provision of seating and tables, Cleanliness, Lighting, , staff knowledge and helpfulness, and book collection. Services and resources with relatively negative perceptions included: Magazine collection, CD/DVD collection,

According to this, services A wide range of materials, including magazines, print and non-print media, as well as online resources, should be present in a typical public library collection

## 6.11. Attitudes towards Public Libraries

This figure shows the respondents' thoughts on the importance of public libraries. They were asked to rate their degree of agreement with the statement, "public libraries play an important role in our communities by providing free and equitable access to information," using a five-point Liker scale. The findings are highly encouraging: almost all of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

Table 12: |Public libraries play an important role in our communities

Parameters	No. of Responses
Strongly agree	19
Agree	19
Indecisive	2
Disagree	0
strongly disagree	0

## 6.1 Suggestion by the users for better service

The user also asked to suggest something for better service, some user suggest

1. to provide online service
2. appoint more staff
3. Improve the collection of newspaper and magazine
4. Improve the collection of new book.
5. The staff should be knowledgeable and try to keep the library premises quite.
6. Library building should be extended
7. OPAC should be provided

## 7. Conclusion:

The aim of this study is to explore the perception, expectations and users attitude towards public library sources and services of Krishna Nagar Public Library. A survey was conducted in order to reach this goal. Generally, the users are satisfied with the public library services in Krishna Nagar Public Library. The majority of users visit library to use books, newspapers, magazines, and also to read journals for competitive exams. The users have good opinion towards the library staff about their ability and the way of communication with the users. But the library needs to recruit more staff. As the librarian is the only one professional staff. However the library needs to provide computers with internet facility, acquire audio visual materials, photocopy facility to attract the user.

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