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Public Library System In Assam: A Study

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Abstract-

Public Library Is A Library Which Provide Information Resources And Services To The General User Or Community . Public Library Play An Significant Role In The Development Of Society And It Serve As A Community Knowledge Centre By Providing Opportunities Of Lifelong Learning To The Community. It Provides Free Access To Books, Digital Resources And Various Educational And Recreational Services Including Basic Library Services, Community Information Services, Promoting Local History, Preservation, Adult Education, Mobile Library Services, Internet Access, Workshops , Community Events Etc. To The Community .Public Libraries Act As A Community Hub And Undertake All Such Activities Which May Help Knowledge And Wisdom Of Society. In The 1994 Public Library Manifesto, International Federation Of Library Association And Institutions (Ifla) And Unesco Jointly Emphasized The Essential Role Of Public Library . They Highlighted – “ The Public Library Is The Local Centre Of Information, Making All Kinds Of Knowledge And Information Readily Available To Its Users”. The Main Objectives Of This Paper Are- To Study About The History And Structure Of Public Library System In Assam And To Explore Explore The Offerings And Facilities Of The Public Library In Assam. This Paper Is Based On Secondary Data And Data Are Collected From Various Books, Journals And Websites.

Keywords-Public , Public Library, Public Library System And Assam.

Introduction-

A Public Library Is A Library That Offers Information Resources And Services To The General Public Or The Community Within A Society. Public Library Play An Important Role In The Development Of Society And It Serve As A Community Knowledge Centre By Providing Opportunities Of Lifelong Learning To The Community. Public Library Also Known As People University. The Primary Purpose Of The Public Library Are To Provide Information Resources And Services To The People. It Provides Free Access To Books, Digital Resources And Various Educational And Recreational Services Including Basic Library Services, Community Information Services, Promoting Local History, Preservation, Adult Education, Mobile Library Services, Internet Access, Workshops , Community Events Etc. To The Community .Public Libraries Act As A Community Hub And Undertake All Such Activities Which May Help Knowledge And Wisdom Of Community And User. These Library Ensure That Every Citizen Has The Right To Enjoy Equal Information Use And Access .

In The 1994 Public Library Manifesto, International Federation Of Library Association And Institutions (Ifla) And Unesco Jointly Emphasized The Essential Role Of Public Library . They Highlighted – “ *The Public Library Is The Local Centre Of Information, Making All Kinds Of Knowledge And Information Readily Available To Its Users*”. Again In 1922, The Updated Ifla- Unesco Public Library Manifesto Underscore The Importance Of Adapting Public Libraries To The Evolving Technological And Societal Landscape While Maintaining Their Original Purpose Of Making Knowledge And Information Accessible To All.

Assam Is One Of The Largest State Of North East India With Total Population Of Approx. 3,28,66,165 As On April 2024. Assam Has A Rich History Of Library From The Past And Public Library Plays A Significant Role In The Society. The Public Library System Of Assam Is Currently Managed By The Directorate Of Library Services Under Ministry Of Culture, Govt. Of Assam. It Comprises State Central Library, District Library, Sub-Divisional Library And Rural Library.

Objectives-

The Main Objectives Of The Study Are-

1. To Study About The History And Structure Of Public Library System In Assam.
2. To Explore The Offerings And Facilities Of Public Library In Assam.

Methodology-

The Paper Employed A Descriptive Research Approach . Data Are Secondary In Nature And Collected From Various Books, Journal, Conference Proceedings And Websites.

An Overview On Public Library System In India-

India Is A Democratic Country And Believe On Information Are For All. To Ensure Access To Information For All And To Promote Educational, Artistic, Heritage, Innovative And Technological Knowledge, The Government Has Established Public Libraries Across The Country By Implementing Various Schemes From Time To Time. The Calcutta Public Library Was Existence Around 1836 And Another Library Namely Imperial Library Was Formed In 1881. The Calcutta Public Library And Imperial Library Was Amalgamated In 1903 To Became Imperial Library At Calcutta . The First Three Decades Of 20th Century Can Be Marked The Golden Period Of Indian Library System. In This Period ,Shri Sayajirao Gaekward-iii Of Boroda Invited Mr. M.A. Borden To Introduce The Indian Public Library System In 1910. After Independence , The Name Of The Imperial Library Was Changed To The National Library In 1948 By The Central Government Of India. In 1951, Delhi Public Library Was Founded Under The Ministry Of Tourism & Culture And Was Managed By The Delhi Library Board. The Year 1972 Was A Golden Year In The History Of Library Movement In India . The Department Of Culture, Govt. Of India Established Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (Rrrlf) In The Month Of May 1972 To Spread Library Services All Over The Country In Cooperation With State Governments, Union Territory Administration And Organization Working In The Field. The Foundation Has Been Taking Responsibilities For A Long Time In The Field Of Library Services.

At Present India Has 46746 Public Libraries Including State Library, District Library, Sub- Divisional, City Library And Panchayat/Rural Library, / Village Public . Following Chart Showing Different Types Of Library Has Been Running In India .

No Of Public Libraries In India-

State Name	State Central Library	District Library	Regional//Sub-Divisional Library	Panchayat/Rural/Village Library	Other	Total
Andaman Nicobar Island	1	-	1	16	-	18
Andhra Pradesh		13	4	782	179	978
Arunachal Pradesh	1	21	22	72	2	118
Assam	-	26	15	199	-	240
Bihar	1	20	16	155	1	192
Chandigarh	1	20	16	155		192
Chhatisgarh	1	27	-	-	-	28
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	-	-	9	-	10
Daman & Diu	-	2	-	-	-	2
Goa	1	1	7	126	1	136

Gujrat	1	26	-	182	3255	3464
Haryana	1	19	7	-	-	27
Himachal Pradesh	1	11	-	13	920	945
Janmu& Kashmir	2	22	51	41	24	140
Jharkhand	1	6	9	-	6	21
Karnataka	1	30	-	5766	1001	6798
Kerala	1	3	5	8405	1	8415
Lakshadweep	1	-	9	-	-	10
Madhya Pradesh		36	5	-	1	42
Maharashtra	1	35	6		12149	12191
Manipur	1	12	-	-	144	157
Meghalaya	1	7	-	-	-	8
Mizoram	1	5	-	-	500	506
Nagaland	1	11		610	-	622
Orrissa	1	17	1	-	8	27
Pondicherry	1	1	2	39	38	81
Punjab	1	14		1	-	15
Rajasthan	1	33	7	282	-	323
Sikkim	1	3	6	-	3	13
Tamil Nadu	1	32	314	1915	2360	4622
Telangana	1	31	2	99	539	672
Tripura	1	7	10	7	21	46
Uttar Pradesh	1	75		200	297	573
Uttaranchal/ Uttarakhand	-	9	16	-	22	47
West Bengal	1	26		2216	3008	5251
Total	31	582	531	12714	133821	46746

Source- Rrrlf Official Page , <https://www.rrrlf.gov.in/> (Accessed -03/02/2025)

History And Structure Of Public Library In Assam-

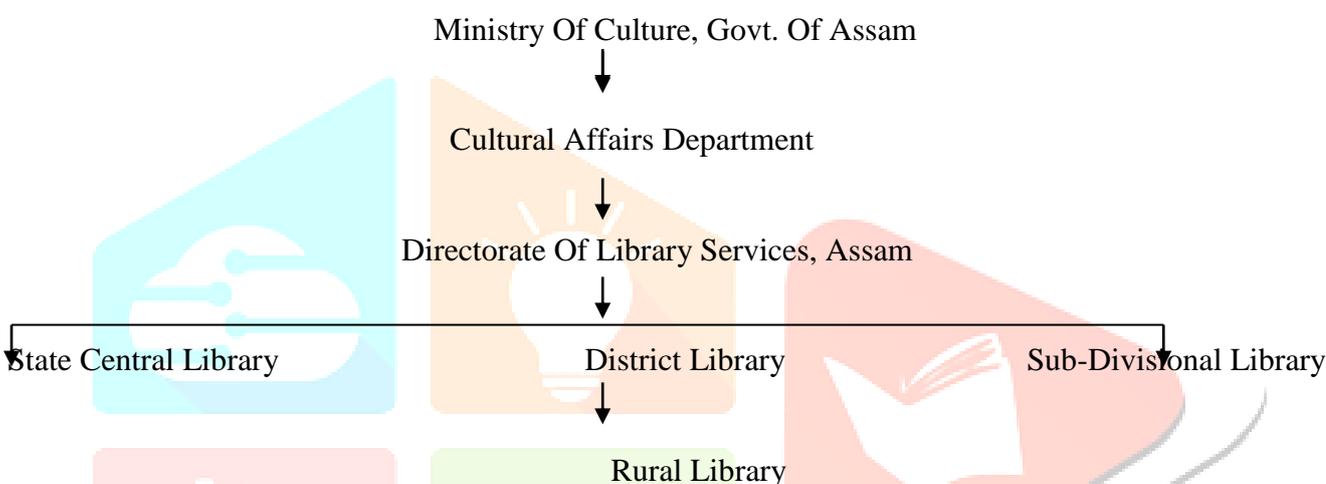
The Concept Of Library Emerged In Assam At The Very Early Time . Assam Has A Rich And Vivid History Of Art, Culture And Literature From The Era Of The Ahom Rulers. During Their Reign, The Ahoms Established A Unique Repository Known As The “ GandhiaBharal “ Which Served As A Storage For Handwritten Manuscripts .The Concept Of Modern Public Library In Assam Has Started In 1903 When The British Government Established The Assam Government Public Library In Shillong To Provide Library Services To The Government Officials And Inhabitants Of The Then Capital Town Of Assam. In This Period Several Departmental Libraries Also Set Up. KumudeswarBorthakur, The Father Of Public Library Movement In Assam Was Taking Initiative To Develop Libraries In Assam And His Efforts Lead To The Establishment Of The “ Sadou Assam PuthibharalSangtha (Assam Library Association) In 1938.

After India’s Independence, Assam Government Adopted Public Library Services In Assam In December 1954 Under Education Development Scheme Of “ Improvement Of Library Service” During The First Five Year Plan (1952-57). Under This Scheme Seven District Libraries I.E. Guwahati, Tezpur, Dhubri, Dibrugarh ,Nagoan ,Jorhat And Silchar And Along With State Central Library Were Established In Shillong . The State Central Library Was Also Shifted To Guwahati In 1974 When Assam Divided In Two States Namely

Assam And Meghalaya And The Capital Of Assam Shifted From Shillong To Dispur, Guwahati . Later, The State Central Library Was Upgraded To A Separate Directorate Known As “ Directorate Of Library Services.” In The Year Of 1967-68, Two District Libraries At Diphu And Halflong Were Established In Two Hill District Of KarbiAnglong And N.C. Hills Respectively And Ten Sub-Divisional Libraries At Sivasagar, Golaghat, North Lakhimpur, Goalpara, Karimganj, Nalbari, Barpeta, Hailakandi, Mangaldoi And Kokrajhar Were Also Established. After That , With The Creation Of New Sub-Division At Morigoan, Tinsukia And Dhemaji, Sub-Divisional Library Were Established In Those Place. All The Above 13 Subdivisional Libraries Were Upgraded To District Library After Formation New District. Later, One New District I.E. Bongaigoan Was Form And Another New District Library Was Established. Now, Total 23 District Libraries Were Functioning Under The Directorate Of Library Services.

Apart From That,14 No Of Sub-Divisional Libraries Are Functioning At Jonai, Majuli, BishwanathChariali, Sodiya, Charaideo, Sarupather, Hojai, Hamren, Pragjyotishpur, Rangia, Gossaigoan (Btad), North Salmara, South Salmara And Udalguri. In 1985-86, 204 No Of Rural Library Were Established Under The Provision Of One Rural Library In Each Goan Panchayat In The State. Now , There Are 199 Nos Rural Library Are Actively Functional Out Of 204nos.

The Present Structure Of Public Library System Can Be Illustrated By The Following Figure-



(Source- Official Page Of Directorate Of Library Services, Accessed 03/02.2025)

Offerings And Facilities Of Public Library In Assam-

As Other Library, All The Public Library Of Assam Has Issue Cum Lending Services And Reading Room Services. Only District Library Of Guwahati Has Science & Technology Section Where Reader Can Get Medical And Engineering Books ; In This Section Reader Can Read But Can't Borrow Books From The Library. Readers Of The Public Library Of All Category Have To Take Membership Card From The Library With A Fee Of Rs. 15/-. Two Books Are Issued For 15 Days To Each Member. . All The Public Library Provide Old Newspaper For Xerox Without Membership Card. All The District Library Has Installed Koha Open Source Software . Only District Library Of Guwahati And Jorhat Installed Rfid(Radio Frequency Identification) Technology. Apart From This, Public Library Has Other Services Like-

1. Reference Services- All The Public Library Provide Reference Services To Their Member. They Have Been Trying To Make Direct Contact Between A Reader And His Document. Most Of The Library Has A Separate Area For High Use, Super Helpful Book Etc. Major Library Has A Reference Section Where User Can Easily Get Reference Books Like Encyclopedia, Dictionaries, Treasurers, Handbook, Manuals, Atlas Etc. Generally , Reference Books Are Not Issued To The Borrowers But Reader Can Use And Read In The Library.
2. Ready Reference Services-Ready Reference Service Is A Library Service That Helps People To Find Their Information In A Short Or Proper Time. Computerize Cataloguing Service Is Available In Major District Libraries Of Assam.
3. Photocopies Or Documentation Services- Public Libraries Of Assam Has Documentation Services. There Are No Provision Of Issue In Reference Section And Reader Can Make Photocopy Or Xerox Of Important Page According To Their Information Needs.
4. With The Help Of Financial Assistance From The Rrrlf, Kolkata, The Directorate Of Library Services Established 21 No's Of Children Corner In Different District And Sub-Divisional Libraries Of Assam . It Is

Open For The Age Group Of 4-14. The Main Objectives Of Establish Children Corner In The Libraries Are To Built Up Reading Habit Of The Children. Apart From Books, There Are Lots Of Different Kinds Of Games, Audio-Visual, Dvd's, Tv's Etc. So That Children Can Acquire Knowledge For Their Future.

Conclusion-

The Public Library System Of Assam Play A Vital Role In Literacy, Lifelong Learning And Cultural Preservation. Besides This, The System Faces Several Challenges Like Inadequate Fund, Lack Of Infrastructure And Limited Digital Resources. However, Government, Library Association And Other Community Are Taking Initiative To Modernize Public Library System In Assam. To Ensure Effective And Inclusive Public Library System , There Is A Need Of Public Library Act In Assam. Focuses Should Given More On To Develop Better Infrastructure , Integrating Digital Resources And Promoting Community Engagement . Strengthening Policies, Increasing Financial Support And Adopting Technology-Driven Solutions Will Enhance The Accessibility And Utility Of Public Libraries In Assam . By Fulfilling These Challenges, The State Can Develop Better Public Library Services To The Society .

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