

Community Information Need and Barriers in Accessing Community Information: A Case Study of District Central Library, Kodagu

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ABSTRACT

The study was taken up to gain better understanding of community information need and problems in accessing the relevant information by the users of District Public Library, Kodagu. In the context of development of the society there is every need to consider the public library as an agency which emphasizes the development of various groups of the community by providing relevant information. There is a need to re engineer the public library services, as it is closely linked with the community. Public libraries corollary to the people's university should bring an awakening about "Information for all" but the situation in the public library in Kodagu is not encouraging to be considered as a community information centre. The main reason is fund crunch, which affects the public libraries in their proper development. In the changing network environment public libraries are not able to play their special role in the cultural, educational, social process, as their position is not protected. Application of Information and communication technology (ICT) in public libraries are still in the infant stage which hinders the provision of proper information services to the community people. The public library should assess and recognize the users information need and should find the best mean to disseminate meaningful information for the sustainable development of the community. This paper examines the barriers in accessing community information by the users of District Public Library, Kodagu.

1. Introduction

Information is considered to be the most important driving force for the development of the modern society. Information is needed by the people to develop their potential through education and training to succeed and enrich their cultural experience and to take control of their daily lives. Information is a key contributor to the development of individuals and communities. Access to information is not just equal. Harnessing information resources for development can only be achieved when the rural communities, value information such that they are ready to seek and solve day to day problems. Empowerment of rural people can be done by making them understand the importance and role of the information for development. The accessibility of relevant information is important in the context of socio economic development of the society. There is every need to consider the public library as an agency which can help the development of the society by providing information. Re engineering of public library services are very much required, as it is considered as "people's university". Public library should bring an awakening about "Information for all". In this digital era public libraries are facing problem to play their special role in cultural, educational, social process, as their position are not protected. Community information is "information for everyday living". Community information service is the process of collecting, organizing, storing and disseminating the community information such as information relating to health, housing, employment, education, government welfare schemes, transportation, recreation etc. Application of information and communication technology (ICT) in public libraries are still in the infant stage which hinders the provision of proper information services to the community people. The public library should assess and recognize the

users information need and should find the best means to disseminate the meaningful information for the sustainable development of the community.

The District Central Library, Kodagu came into existence in 1956 and then it was called Mahatma Gandhi Library. It was under the control of the state education department. In 1971 it was brought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Libraries. The Director of Public Libraries in Karnataka, Bangalore is its immediate superior.

2. Review of literature

An effective review of relevant literature creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge. It facilitates the researcher to know and assimilate what others have already done in the field of study.

Behera, krupasindhu and parida, Baman (2014) conducted a study to find out information needs, use pattern and reading habit of different communities in rural areas of Orissa state. The researcher is of the view that the reading habit, use pattern, and information need varies according to the demographic composition of different kinds of communities.

Das, Kailash, C (2013) stress upon the responsibility of public libraries and corporate sectors. The study suggests that corporate sector can provide innovative solutions to societal and environmental challenges. The study opines that public libraries and corporate sector have a pivotal role to play in ensuring development of those rural areas that have been left out of the development process so far and also work for sustainable development of rural areas in general. Public

library can become a positive agent to bring change in the community.

Pettigrew, K.E. and others (2002) The paper presents findings from a two year study that comprised a national survey with public library staff, followed by extensive case studies in three states. Data were collected using online surveys, field observations, in depth interviews and focus groups with internet users and library staff. On the basis of data collected, the authors discussed about 1) How the public is using networked community information systems and the internet for daily problem solving 2) The types of barriers users encounter and 3) The benefits for individuals and physical communities from public library and community networking initiatives.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To find out the frequency of visit and preference of time to visit the library by user community.
- Ascertain the information needs of the community
- To find out the sources of information
- To know the barriers that hinders the users to access community information.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted using survey method of research. The data were collected using structured

questionnaire. The universe of the respondents of the present survey constitutes the users of the District public library, Kodagu. Altogether 80 questionnaires were personally distributed to the users and collected their opinions. Out of 80 questionnaires 75 valid responses were received with the response rate of 95.75%. Duly filled questionnaires were used for data analysis using simple frequency count and percentage.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

5.1 Frequency of the visit and preferable visiting time to the library

Table 1 and Table 2 indicates the frequency of the visit and preferable visiting time to the library respectively. Data shows that 40% respondents visit the library everyday followed by at least once a week visit made by 48% and occasionally by 12%. Further the respondents also mentioned the preferable time of visit to the library. From the survey it was found that 24% of the respondents visit in the morning, 32% of the respondents visit in the evening, 36% of the respondents visit the library during free time and only 8% prefer to visit in the afternoon.

Table -1
Frequency of Visit to the library

Every day	30	40%
At least once a week	36	48%
Occasionally	09	12%

Source: Primary Data

Figure-1
Frequency of Visit to the library

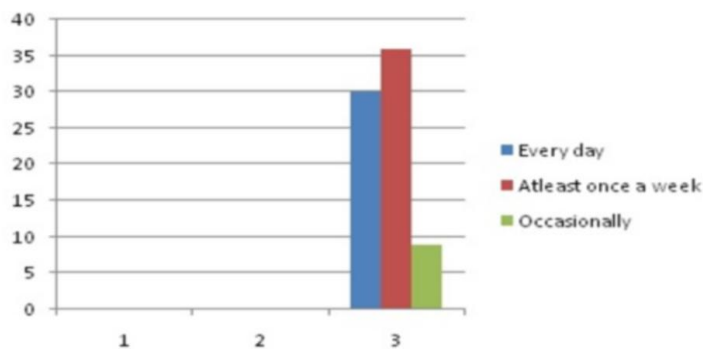
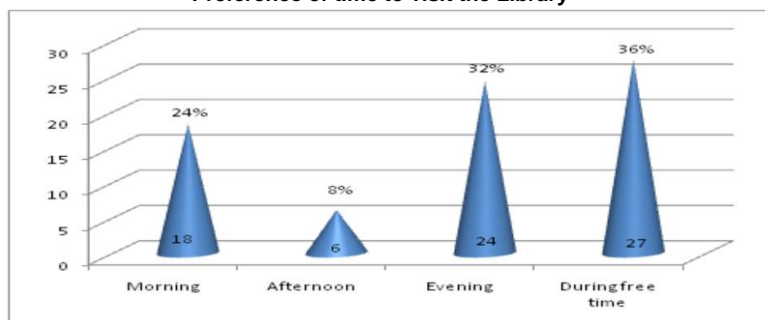


Table-2
Preference of time to visit the Library.

Morning	18	24%
Afternoon	06	8%
Evening	24	32%
During free time	27	36%

Source: Primary Data

Figure-2
Preference of time to visit the Library



5.2 Information needs of the users

Respondents were asked to indicate their informational needs. Based on their responses these needs are categorized broadly as shown in the table and chart. Table 3 shows that health information is the most common information need of user community, as indicated by 66 (88%) of the total respondents. This is followed by political information as indicated by 54(72%) of the total respondents. This is followed by education/employment information sought by 48(64%) of the total respondents. 42(56%) the total respondents sought information on entertainment and 30(40%) of the total

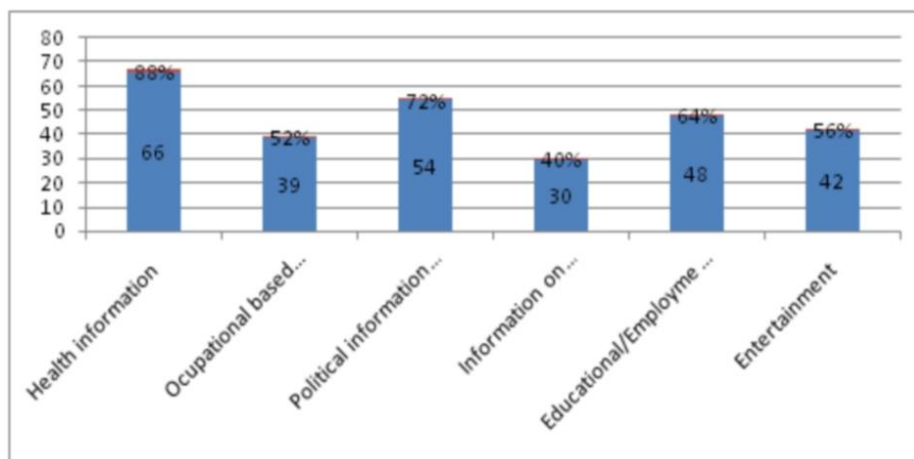
respondents on agriculture and animal husbandry. The responses are further depicted in Fig 3.

Table - 3
Information needs of the users

Health information	66	88%
Occupational based information	39	52%
Political information and legal information	54	72%
Information on agriculture/Animal Husbandry	30	40%
Educational/Employment information	48	64%
Entertainment	42	56%

Source: Primary Data

Fig - 3
Information needs of the users



5.3 Sources of Information

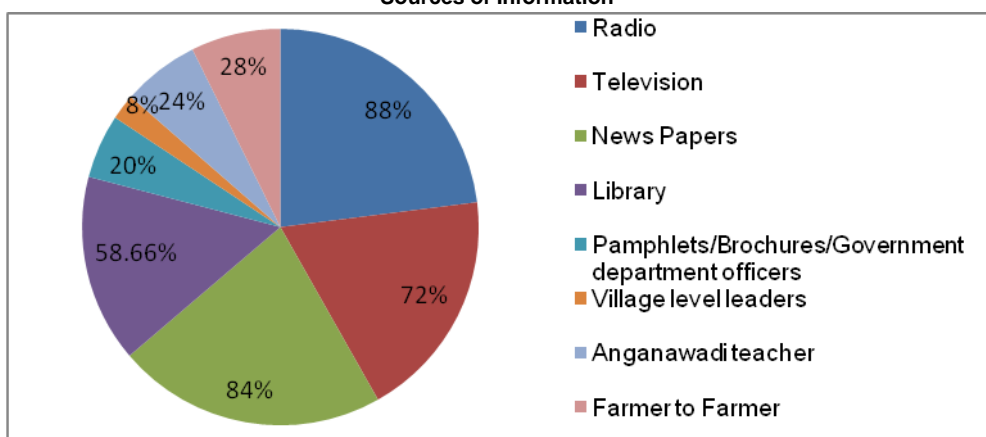
Table 4 and Fig 4 depicts the picture of major means of getting information. There were several sources of information used by people in the study area. The information sources they used included radio, television, newspaper, library, pamphlets and government officers, village level leader, anganawadi teachers and farmer to farmer. Among them radio was most commonly used by 66 (88%) of the total respondents. Other major resources were newspapers 84%, television 72%. library 58.66%. The other sources identified by the respondents were farmer to farmer 28%, pamphlets/government department officers 20%. The least identified by respondents were the village level leader 8%.

Table - 4
Sources of Information

Radio	66	88%
Television	54	72%
News Papers	63	84%
Library	44	58.66%
Pamphlets/Brochures/Government department officers	15	20%
Village level leaders	6	8%
Anganawadi teacher	18	24%
Farmer to Farmer	21	28%

Source: Primary Data

Fig-4
Sources of Information



5.4 Barriers in accessing community information

Respondents were asked to indicate the barriers that hinders them from accessing community information. Responses were summarized in Table 5 and represented by Fig 5. Table 5 shows that 48 (64%) of the total respondents opined that lack of ICT application in the library, 39(52%) respondents have the opinion that lack of internet connectivity, followed by 18(24%) respondents points out that lack of suitable information sources and 15(20%) respondents have

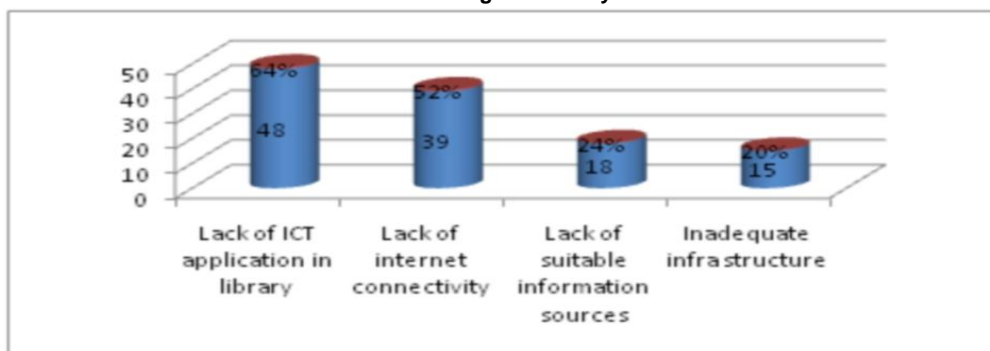
the opinion that inadequate infrastructures were the major barriers in accessing community information.

Table -5
Barriers in accessing community information

Lack of ICT application in library	48	64%
Lack of internet connectivity	39	52%
Lack of suitable information sources	18	24%
In adequate infra structure	15	20%

Source: Primary Data

Figure - 5
Barriers in accessing community information



6. Findings

- The study’s finding shows that user community have a real need for all types of information, ranging from health to political, education, employment, agriculture and entertainment, occupational based information. Social and economic profile also influences the information needs of the users.
- On the whole, the finding shows that radio (88%), newspapers(84%), library (58.66%),were used as main sources of information by the respondents. For enhancing the use of information sources in the area, it is important to increase the accessibility of community information needed for day to day decision making and present such information resources in the appropriate manner to suit the information need of user community.
- The study’s finding shows that there are some barriers to access community information. They are lack of ICT application in the library ,lack of internet connectivity, insufficient information sources and inadequate infrastructure provided.
- Finally it was found that the public library in Kodagu is not up to the mark in providing community information services to the society. They can re engineer and upgrade their services including rural libraries or grama panchayat libraries at village level by incorporating ICT facilities to provide community information services.

7. Suggestions

- To keep pace with the social and technological change, the library professional should consider the social responsibility of the libraries and have to upgrade themselves.
- It is important to have frequent assessment of information need before providing information services to user community.
- For improving information usage, they have to market their services, provide information literacy instruction, and solicite feedback of user. Public libraries should repackage information in appropriate form suitable to user community.
- Specialized materials can be provided to meet the needs of non-literate residents (like audio and video programs).

8. Conclusion

Public libraries are the best organizations to give community information services in this “cyber age”. Public libraries have to redesign or re engineer their services to cope up with the latest technological advancement and information explosion. Finally it is strongly felt that the needs of the user community is to be identified carefully and accordingly the required information are to be made available with the help of the emerging technologies.

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