

Historical Development of Public Libraries in Kerala State

Prasanth Moorkattil Prabhakaran^{1*} Senthilkumaran Periyasamy²

¹ Research Scholar, Library and Information Science, Research & Development Centre, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

² Deputy Librarian, Central University of Kerala, Tejaswini Hills, Periyar, Post-Kasaragod, District, Kerala, State, India- 671316)

Abstract – The Public library, the local gate way to knowledge, provides a basic location for lifelong learning independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. The primary purpose of the public library is to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. In the historical background of Kerala, Public libraries have an important role in the development and maintenance of democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, idea and opinions. This paper describes about the Historical role of Public Libraries and its present status in the Kerala state. In this study we reach a conclusion that the growth and role of Public Libraries in the State is bright and step-by-step progress is happening in the growth rate and in delivering different types of services to the society. Libraries are playing an active role in the social, cultural and educational development of the rural areas in state. The Kerala State Library Council has an on-going project to automate and network all the affiliated libraries moving in a positive path. The first phase aims to automate all the A+ and A grade libraries in Kerala State.

Key Words: Public Libraries, Library Automation, Kerala State Library Council, Cloud Technology and Historical Development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Kerala state is divided into 14 revenue districts for administrative purposes that are Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod. On the basis of geographical, historical and cultural similarities, the districts are generally grouped into North Kerala (Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram), Central Kerala (Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Idukki) and South Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam). The districts have the same name as the important town or city in the district, the exception being Wayanad district. The 14 districts are further divided into 75 Taluks. There are 14 District Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 941 Grama Panchayats, 87 Municipalities, 6 Corporations and 1 Township in the State. (1)

The Kerala State Library Council (KSLC) is an autonomous body under the Higher Education Department of Govt. of Kerala, the statutory apex

body of public libraries in the state. As per the Public Library Legislation in Kerala 1989, a three-tier system is followed in the administration of libraries in Kerala viz, the State Library council, District Library Councils and Taluk Library Councils. Members of each tier are elected in a democratic manner thereby ensuring representation from village library level onwards. There is strong participation of people in the public library movement in Kerala and it is an ideal network for reaching the grass roots in the State. The total number of libraries affiliated to the State Library Council is around 8495 libraries and these libraries are graded as A+, A, B, C, D, E & F grades on the basis of certain norms and criteria.

Kerala public library movement is considered as a unique public library system among Indian states. Kerala has the largest number, per head of rural libraries in India. Based on KSLC 2016-17 gradation details, 8495 public libraries are affiliated and function all over Kerala. Therefore, public library services are available in all the parts of the state. In a Panchayat ward, minimum one public library is functions in the rural areas. Based on the

KSLC gradation report, the distance between two libraries should be a distance of two kilometres. The public can enjoy the public library services very close to their home, school or office. The majority of the public libraries have their own building, reading room, library, career guidance cell, different types of electronic services, sports, arts and cultural activities as well as separate programmes for women and children.

2. REVIEW OF LITIRATURE

The review of related studies shows that most of the studies were conducted in Kerala, India to related to public library movement, legislation, services, development etc. It provides background knowledge to the public libraries in Kerala.

Sudha Azhikodan (2010) made a constructive study on the public libraries in Malabar. It is confined to the public libraries in Malabar comprising six revenue districts-Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Malappuram, and Palakkad. The major findings of the study are on public libraries that come under the purview of the State Library Council formed in accordance with the provision of Kerala Public Libraries Act, 1989.

Ranjith, K S (2004) made a survey on the rural libraries in Kerala. Data were collected on books and periodicals collection, membership, working hours etc. The important findings of the study are the 60% of the libraries have book strength in the range of 1001- 5000, 90% of the libraries have own land and building, 75% of the libraries have women membership of less than 30%, 45% of the libraries work 9 hours or more and 62% of the libraries have the membership of 500 or below.

Kishorekumar & Lokesh naik (2014) had made a study on the users of, District Public Library Tumkur, Karnataka. They made the survey using questionnaire to identify the adequacy of library resources, and services utilized by its users. The result shows that users are fully satisfied with the present location of the library, collection of the newspapers and books are adequate in comparison to magazines and general reading materials.

A study by R. Raman Nair (1993) entitled 'Peoples Library Movement in Kerala traces out the history of library movement in Kerala. He describes its beginning, organisational movement, the objectives and programmes of public library movement and many organizations coming under that. It points out the lack of scientific involvement in the movement.

3. HISTORY OF KERALA PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT

The History of the Public Library movement Kerala can be divided to 4 stages;

1. First stage or called the beginning stage of this movement started in the early years in the period of 1829 - 1945.
2. The second stage or call the developing stage begins in middle of 19th century or on Independence period 1945 - 1977. In this stage actually started the structured movement because of the formation organization for the development and monitoring the public libraries, after the formation of the Kerala state in the year 1956. After that in the year 1958 officially registering an organisation called 'Kerala Grandasala Sangam (KGS)'. The first organisation representing the whole state of Kerala. Before that regional wise organizations functioning in the state. These regional organizations merged with new organization. The Kerala Grandasala Sangam began a new chapter in the Public Library movement in Kerala.
3. In the third stage is the crucial period in history of this movement. In the period 1977- 1994. In this period Kerala Government involved and take over the administration of KGS in the year 1977 as per a Government ordinance dated 16-03-1977 and Act No.19. The Government appointed a Control Board for the day to day activities of the KGS. In the year 1987 Left Democratic Front government starting the movement for Public Library Legislation. In the year 1989 passed Kerala Public Library Act. As per this Act re-structuring the KGS and formed three tier system in force they are Kerala State Library Council (KSLC), District Library Council (DLC) and Taluk Library Council (TLC).

The fourth and the present stage begin after 1994. The Kerala Public Library Act passed in the year 1989 but another three more years took to framing the new statutory organisation in force. In 2004 only the new organization has started Kerala State Library Council (KSLC) in force. After the formation of KSLC the Public Library movement in Kerala in the new face and fast developments in the total library set up in the state.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to reveal the historical role and present status of public libraries in state of Kerala under Kerala State Library Council in the year 2018. It is aims to review the function of the libraries and recommend to adopting new possibilities and changes in the operation of libraries and Aims to show the usefulness to

general public for their knowledge and cultural development.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study under the purview of the Kerala State Library Council affiliated libraries in the State including 14 districts. Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Trissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur, and Kasaragod. Highest number of libraries affiliated to KSLC and in the state, is Kannur. The total number of libraries from Kannur is 843 and least number Wayanad district is 189 as per KSLC 2018 gradation report.

6. METHODOLOGY

The research data is collected through different methods using Kannur District Library Council gradation report in the year 2017, survey and interview with different library authorities. This study aims to assess and evaluate the present status of library books, members, circulation, serials, newspapers and infrastructure facilities of libraries affiliated to the Kannur District Library Council. The gradation report based on the structured questionnaire was prepared and data is collected at the time of each library visit and physical verification done. 826 libraries have been physically visited and filled questionnaires collected.

7. PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

The State Library Council has already undertaken various innovative programmes aimed at the invigoration of all the affiliated libraries under its ambit. Some of the programmes are given below:

1. Survey of Reading habits
2. Enhancement of Library grant and Librarian allowance
3. Establishment and Modernization of District, Taluk and Model Village libraries
4. Establishment of Academic Study Centres
5. E-Vijnana Kendram
6. Launching of Career Guidance Centres
7. Model Non-Formal Education centres
8. Book Distribution scheme for Rural women
9. All Kerala Reading competition for School students
10. Sanatorium Library Service

11. Jail and Juvenile home library service
12. Book Banks
13. Children's activities- 'Balakairali' Nursery school and 'Balavedhies'
14. Establishment of Rural Information centres
15. Taluk Reference Libraries
16. Book Binding Units
17. Certificate Course in Library & Information Science
18. Training programme for Library workers
19. Cultural and Literary programmes
20. Establishment of Tribal Libraries
21. Establishment of 'Vanitha vedhies'
22. Orphanage Library Service
23. Hermitage Library Service

8. LIBRARY GRADATION

1. Kerala public libraries grade begin with F and Ending with A+, i.e. in this system first entry grade is F then E, D, B and most performing libraries got grade A+.
2. A gradation committee physically verifies the library and records based on the gradation parameters. Conditions to get affiliation to KSLC is that the the library should get the required minimum 20 marks for the 'F' grade.

Based on marks the following grade has been given to libraries;

Sl No.	Mark	Grade
1.	90-107	A+
2.	75 to 89	A
3.	60 to 74	B
4.	50 to 59	C
5.	40 to 49	D
6.	30 to 39	E
7.	20 to 29	F

9. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study the data was collected from 843 public libraries in Kannur District in terms of library grade,

total number of books, total number of members, annual circulation of books, total number of periodicals, infrastructural facilities and annual programmes. The collected data was analysed on the basis of these parameters.

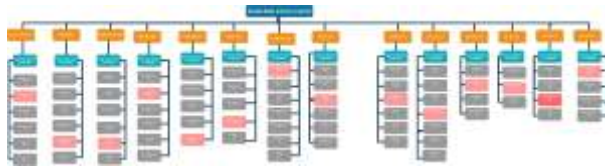


Diagram No.1 number of libraries under Kerala State Library Council based on Taluks and number of libraries under each taluk.

Below chart based on the 2018 Gradation based grand distribution on Taluk based library list. On the basis of certain prescribed gradation norms and conditions of Kerala state library council graded public libraries are as A+, A, B, C, D, E, & F. It is clear from the table No. 1.1 that in Kannur district highest number of libraries that is 876, total 6026 libraries on 12 districts 14.48% in the district of Kannur itself. Limited number of libraries in the district of Wayanad is 189 (3.13%) only. Table no 2 reveal the details of district library percentage.

Dist.	Taluk	A+	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Thiruvananthapuram	1 Neyyattinkara	1	33	24	22	23	20	5	128
	2 Tytti	1	38	31	35	16	12	11	144
	3 Nedumangad	0	16	23	12	24	15	19	109
	4 Chirayinkeezh	0	3	6	11	19	5	5	49
	5 Varkala	0	9	15	7	8	4	5	48
	6 Kattakkada	1	9	15	8	12	9	7	61
	Total	3	108	114	95	102	65	52	539
Kollam	7 Karunagappally	2	13	12	19	8	16	9	79
	8 Kummathur	0	7	8	10	7	17	28	77
	9 Kollam	2	26	33	25	25	42	36	189
	10 Pathanapuram	0	1	4	8	7	10	9	39
	11 Kottarakkara	1	20	22	31	24	60	50	208
	12 Punalur	0	1	8	9	7	12	33	70
	Total	5	68	87	102	78	157	165	662
Pathanamthitta	13 Mallappally	0	0	3	5	4	6	6	24
	14 Ranni	0	0	6	7	8	12	3	36
	15 Kozhuchery	0	10	4	10	9	12	7	52
	16 Thiruvalla	0	9	5	7	6	8	15	50
	17 Adoor	0	7	14	7	16	18	12	74
	18 Konni	0	3	6	3	9	11	4	36
	Total	0	29	38	39	52	67	47	272
Alappuzha	19 Chengannur	0	4	9	6	5	9	3	36
	20 Cherthala	0	3	5	7	13	24	14	66
	21 Ambalapuzha	1	11	15	7	6	9	8	57
	22 Mavelikkara	0	1	11	11	9	6	9	47
	23 Kuttanad	0	4	17	7	2	4	0	34
	24 Karthikapally	0	5	14	8	8	8	6	49
	Total	1	28	71	46	43	60	40	289
Kottayam	25 Meenachil	0	18	16	13	18	13	5	83
	26 Changanassery	0	9	20	3	9	20	10	71
	27 Vaikom	0	5	7	7	11	15	4	49
	28 Kanjirappally	1	10	13	15	8	4	10	61
	29 Kottayam	1	15	29	13	9	10	11	88
	Total	2	57	85	51	55	62	40	352

Idukki	30 Udumpanchola	0	1	5	8	5	15	6	40
	31 Devikulam	0	3	1	7	9	6	6	32
	32 Peeramedu	0	1	3	2	4	3	1	16
	33 Theodupuzha	0	7	8	13	19	14	14	75
	34 Idukki	0	4	4	10	20	20	4	62
	Total	0	16	21	40	57	58	33	225

Ernakulam	35 Kunnathunadu	1	21	23	23	15	17	19	119
	36 Kanayannur	0	19	17	10	6	9	2	63
	37 Aluva	2	19	6	7	16	19	13	82
	38 Kothamangalam	0	7	13	13	7	8	5	53
	39 North Paravoor	0	13	13	8	7	8	4	53
	40 Moovattupuzha	0	9	8	13	12	4	14	60
	41 Kochi	0	12	7	4	6	2	1	32
	Total	3	100	87	78	69	67	58	462

Thrissur	42 Thalappilly	0	7	20	18	21	18	19	103
	43 Mukundapuram	0	7	14	11	14	10	9	65
	44 Thrissur	1	21	31	22	25	16	8	124
	45 Kozhungalloor	0	4	5	12	12	12	7	52
	46 Chavakkadu	0	3	8	13	9	14	14	61
	47 Chalakkudy	0	6	10	16	15	11	9	67
		Total	1	48	88	92	96	81	66

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Based on this study the following recommendations are made for the effective utilisation of resources and funds of the Kannur district public libraries.
- The state government should increase the yearly grand to the public libraries.
- The State Library Council should increase the librarians grand
- Formulate new strategies and programmes for attracting youth to library
- Every year must conduct training programmes for librarians and library secretaries.
- State Library Council should aim to improve quality and technological Development of existing libraries.
- More focus on library automation and training
- Coming years spend more funds for the library computerization.

11. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In the state total affiliated libraries 8295 out of this 6026 are graded and received different types of grands from State Library Council. Kannur district is having more number of public libraries in Kerala State. This study conducted interaction with State Library Council secretary, Council executive member, Development officer, Librarians and library secretaries and all of them have responded positive attitudes towards their library services and functions. The present status of public libraries in the state is very commendable and most of the

public libraries are performing well. The District library council is also very active in organizing different types of programmes and functions. Public Library is regularly organizing a national level two days' seminar for the benefit of affiliated library librarians and authorities. Raja Ram Mohun Roy Foundation (RRRLF) and Parliament Members and Legislative Members are utilising the different kind of funds for the construction of library building and different developmental activities. The most of the libraries are active in the social, cultural and educational development of the rural areas. The library council aimed to automate all the A+ and A grade libraries before 2020.

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Corresponding Author

Prasanth Moorkattil Prabhakaran*

Research Scholar, Library and Information Science,
Research & Development Centre, Bharathiar
University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu