CHAPTER 6
Observations, Problems and Suggestions for Improvement

The present status of the public libraries in terms of their topographical locations, physical facilities, collection, management and administration, organization, services, membership pattern, manpower, finance, governance, technical and other factors have been analysed in the preceding chapter. This chapter deals with the observations of the study, their problems and suggestions for improvement with conclusion at the end.

From the analysis of data as noted in the preceding chapter the following observations may be listed below:

6.1 Observations

6.1.1 History of Libraries: Talking about the history of libraries in Darjeeling hilly areas only few evidences in the form of documents are available. The history of Deshbandhu District Library, Darjeeling; Government Central Library, Kalimpong; Sub-divisional Library, Kalimpong and Bloomfield Sub-divisional Library, Kurseong has been briefly elaborated in chapter three. Histories of these libraries are collected from few documents available and in consultation with the staffs of these libraries and with some persons attached with the libraries.

It is found from the survey that most of librarians are not aware of the history of the library and they are not interested to pay any effort in collecting the proper history of the library. No library provided any separate sheet of additional information as it was asked for. Between the years 1958-59 six Area libraries attached with Community Center were established in various parts of Kalimpong sub-division. Among them only one area library was established at Mungpoo in Kurseong sub-division in 1959 and which is now attached with Rabindra Bhavan. The Rabindra Bhavan at Mungpoo is the one where great poet Rabindranath Tagore used to stay during his visit to the hill.

It can also be noted that maximum number of libraries established were by the local enthusiastic people who were concerned for the
development of the society. The libraries established by these people were on the memory of some respected person of the society. For instances R B Yonzon Memorial Rural Library, Sattal Singh Gurung Memorial Rural Library, Premchandra Memorial Rural Library, Niraj Niran Memorial Rural Library, K B Gurung Memorial Rural Library, Tikadevi Rural Library, Madan Syangbo Rural Library, Acchalal Rural Library, Sengupta Memorial Rural Library, Bishnu Maya Rural Library, Kalus singh Rural Library, Kapan Das Memorial Rural Library, etc. The contribution of their families in terms of land, cash and other material is worth to note.

Some libraries were established in the name of great men in Nepali literature like Bhanubhakta Rural Library, Deokota Rural Library, Lekhnath Rural Library, Bhanu Pustakalaya, Motiram Bhatta Rural Library, etc. and some are in the name of world’s great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi Rural Library, Dr. Radhakrishna Rural Library, Lenin Smarak Rural Library, etc. Similarly some libraries which were earlier established by local club with the contribution of many social workers have been recognized later as a government sponsored public library. These are Nava Yuvak Sangh Rural Library, Sewa Sangh Rural Library, Bhai Sammelan Sangh Rural Library, Sakyong Rural Library, Youth Association Rural Library, Samaj Kalyan Kendra Rural Library, Pragatisil Yuva Pustakalaya, Kalyan Sangh Rural Library, etc.

In the case of Jaldhaka Hydel Project Rural Library the library was first established by Hydel Project authority with the help of local employed people and later it became government sponsored rural library in 1976. It is also found that regarding the key persons and significant donors to the libraries, the respondent libraries supplied very little information.

6.1.2 Establishment of the library: Public library exists to serve the reading and information needs of the society. Regarding the establishment of various libraries in the Darjeeling hill, Bloomfield Sub-divisional Library, Kurseong was established before independence in 1944. It was the only and first library in the region so far as the record is concerned. In the year 1950, Deshbandhu District Library, Darjeeling was established. Later in the year 1961 Government Central Library, Kalimpong was established. The above
two libraries Deshbandhu District Library and Government Central Library are fully government libraries in the region. In between the year 1970-1980 maximum numbers of libraries across the hill areas were founded by the government. The reason of this foundation was the interest of government to promote public library services in the region and also the fruit of enactment of West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979.

6.1.3 Sponsordisation of the Library: West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979, envisages that after the establishment of public library, it has to get sponsored by the government to avail full benefits from the government. It is observed from the survey that most of the libraries got government sponsorization within ten years from the year of their establishment. Between the years 1970-1985 maximum numbers of libraries were sponsored. Only few libraries like Bloomfield Sub-divisional Library, Kurseong, and Jawahar Pustakalaya took more than 20 years for sponsorization. In the same way Seokbir Area Library took more than 17 years, Sonada Bazar Rural Library took more than 16 years, Kashyam Rural Library took more than 15 years, Sattalsingh Gurung Memorial Rural Library took more than 13 years, and Ladenlahatta Rural Library took more than 10 years.

Even some of the libraries are not aware of the date of sponsordisation of their libraries. In some cases, the sanctioning letter regarding date of sponsordisation by the government are not found in the library. Date of sponsordisation of the libraries as reported by the librarian and incorporated in this survey report, are not authenticated by the proper documents.

6.1.4 Physical Facilities Available: Among the three important components of any public library viz. collection, user and library building, the building has an important role to play to provide effective and efficient library services to the people. The design of library building should be functional rather than monumental. It is seen from the above survey that all the libraries across the region are running in their own houses except Mungpoo Area Library which is housed in the Rabindra Bhavan and Jaldhaka Hydel
Power Project Rural Library which is homed at parent bodies’ house. One District Library, one Central Library, two Sub-divisional Libraries, four Town Libraries and only 3 Area and 35 Rural libraries have pucca buildings. But majority of Rural and Area libraries have kutcha buildings having meager floor space below 500 sq. feet. Recent earthquake in the region has caused several cracks and damages to various libraries. The Sittong Cincona Plantation Rural Library, Algarah Area Library and Pubong Rural Library are in the verge of collapse.

Deshbandu District Library, Darjeeling and two Sub-divisional Libraries at Kalimpong and Kurseong have more than four rooms and a hall facility but not up to the mark. The majority of Rural and Area libraries are running in a single room if not more than in two rooms. It is also found excluding District Library Darjeeling; Central Library Kalimpong; Sub-divisional Library, Kalimpong; Bloomfield Sub-divisional Library Kurseong, four Town Libraries, and a few Rural Libraries like Ladenlahatta Rural Library, Sherpagaon Rural Library, Sengupta Rural library, Yanku Rural Library, Mahatma Gandhi Rural Library, Mirik Rural Library, Saureni Rural Library, and Takdah Rural Library, the remaining 82.9% libraries are not electrified. Most of the libraries do not provide drinking water and urinal facilities, and those that provide urinal are mostly common. Regarding electronic equipments as said, maximum numbers of libraries do not have electricity connection as such, the services through TV, DVD, CD, Computer, and Projecter are found nil. Very few libraries reported that they have telephone connection which is most of the time remain dead. It is also found that Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation had donated four computers to Sub-divisional Library, Kalimpong and two computers to Bijanbari Town Library, but these are not yet in use.

6.1.5 Working Hours and Holidays: Every public library should have its own opening and closing time in accordance with its rules and regulations, geographical location and user’s attendance. Working hours of the surveyed libraries is found to be seven hours a day. It is also seen that most of the libraries remain closed on Sunday, 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month besides government holidays.
6.1.6 Library Committee: A library committee is an inevitable system of management to look after the smooth functioning of a library. It acts as an interpreter of the needs and demands of the library and its controlling authority. It is observed from the survey that the functions of library committee of all the libraries are not satisfactory. Committee meetings are not held at regular basis to look after the smooth functioning of the library. Re-election of new members, annual general meetings appear neglected in most of the libraries.

6.1.7 Management Rules: Every organization must be abided by some rules and regulations. Public Libraries are not exception. One thing which is found very well for the development of public libraries in the region is that all the libraries are following the management rules under the West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979. It is also reported that all employees are governed by the ‘service rules for the employees of sponsored libraries’ prescribed by the Government of West Bengal. The surveyed libraries have also opened the service books for their employees.

6.1.8 Library Account: The survey reveals that majority of libraries have their account in Nationalized Banks, like State Bank of India and Central Bank Of India. But fewer numbers of libraries serving in the remote places have their account in local Co-operative Banks.

6.1.91 Different service sections in the Library: Public Library provides various services except common service like reading and lending of books to its users. So it needs various sections and every section has to perform according to the work assigned. As found in the survey maximum number of libraries are single storied having single room. So they can not keep all the needed sections separately. Most of the area and rural libraries have maintained text books and reference sections only. Fewer libraries have also maintained carrier guidance and children section along with these sections. Sub-divisional Library, Kalimpong and Bloomfield Sub-divisional Library, Kurseong maintain almost all the sections as given in the survey questionnaire. Distinct service given by the Sub-divisional Library,
Kalimpong is its Braille service for it’s visually disables users. Deshbandhu District Library, Darjeeling also provides almost all the services to its users except Braille and a section for women.

6.1.92 Mode of Disbursement of Salary: Regarding disbursement of salary, it is found as good sign that most of the libraries surveyed are disbursing their salaries to the staff in cheque basis. Only the Central library and Sub-divisional library followed the disbursement of salary in cash basis. But it is also reported that salaries are not disbursed in time.

6.1.93 Library Stock Verification: The analysis of data reveals that 84% of all the libraries do stock verification, but the frequency of verification differs from library to library, 56.9% of libraries do annual stock verification, 13.9% do biannual and 22.7% do in irregular basis. Since the stock verification is at irregular basis most of the libraries are unable to give the exact details of book lost during a particular period of time. It has been reported that on an average of 10-15 books are lost in period of stock verification. Some libraries also reported that the lost of books are informed to the managing committee of the library. But no record of any steps taken by the committee concerned is found during the survey.

6.1.94 Membership Statement: It is observed that there is no scientific and detailed procedure to maintain a membership record for each library. Most of the libraries do not bear any differentiation in sex, age etc. Although it is found in a little manner that urban areas people are more aware about library services in comparison to rural people. The growth rate of membership in urban and sub-urban libraries are quite high but the membership in some rural and area libraries are stagnant and some are in diminishing condition. The male membership is relatively higher than female and children in most of the libraries which are surveyed.

6.1.95 Library Services: Regarding the kind of services provided by the libraries almost all the libraries surveyed provides reading room service, lending service, reference service, and text book service. Most of the rural
libraries because of their meagre space and collection are not in a position
to provide better library services to the users. Though, in some libraries the
picture of daily attendance and book issue shows quantitative improvement
because of educational and intellectual development of the people. Apart
from these services only few libraries provide carrier guidance, children
service, neo-literate and community information services. No libraries under
survey are found providing xerox services, mobile to home, inter library loan
services till date. As the library service is entering in a new era necessary
efforts should be made from both the provider and receiver side of the library
services.

6.1.96 Book Issue and Reader’s Attendance: Most of the libraries
surveyed have little facility for reading room. Those libraries which have such
facilities are not upto the marks. The issue system should be modernized
and it is hardly found any librarian taking suitable steps. In most of the cases
there is no separate issue register and the overall average of issue of books
in all cases are not satisfactory. Maximum libraries have low standard
collection of literary works, science and technology, reference books, etc.
There is no separate reference collection and those available are not
properly maintained. Small number of libraries like District Library,
Darjeeling; Sub-divisional Library, Kalimpong; Bloomfield Sub-divisional
Library, Kurseong; Govt. Central Library, Kalimpong; Mirik Town Library,
Pedong Town library, Bijanbari Town Library, R. B. Yonzan Rural Library
and few other libraries have well equipped reading room and reference
collection. It is found that except in a few libraries, books other than fiction
should be increased. The librarian should take necessary measure to
improve collection on other genre of literature. Books on general text should
be increased in order to facilitate the local people, who are not in a position
to buy all books for reading purpose. Majority of libraries are issueing two
books at a time for home reading, duration of which is two weeks. Due to the
minimum stock some libraries are unable to do so. Librarians are using
ledger system for book issue and rarely card systems are found.
6.1.97 **Book Selection:** No definite book selection policy has been found in any library during the survey. The collection development programme in most of the libraries surveyed is not satisfactory. It appears that the participation of users, administrators, library committees is less. In most of the cases librarians themselves have played vital role in book selection. Only a few librarians are taking users’ suggestions while doing so. The procedure for selection of books should be in such a way that librarians, users and administrators may become the part of this process. Most of the respondent libraries have filled up the columns in questionnaire but in actual practice the scenario is not the same.

6.1.98 **Library Extension Services:** Ranganathan in his “Library Manual” has said that “the object of Extension Service may be said to be to turn the library into a social center with the encouragement of reading as its ultimate objectives. Its ultimate is to create an ultimate desire for good reading and to bring the reader and the book together. It is noted that the different libraries organize different extension services according to the need of their users and locality’s needs. Though in my survey area, some of the libraries along with the co-operation of Non-Government Organizations, Local Clubs, Religious Organization, and Educational Institutions organize some extension services like cultural activities, arranging meeting to make non-members to library member, Celebration of birthdays of famed personalities, Independence Day, Republic Day, Library Day etc. to attract users towards the library. It is also found that times and again the District Library, Darjeeling has been organizing District Book Fairs, lecture program on special topics and also seen its participation in various cultural programs. It is also reported by some urban libraries that occasionally user orientation programs were organized in past few years. The librarians are found very much indifferent in organizing various extension activities. As a social institution, the public library should organize such social gathering to promote the cultural activities among the people of the locality.

6.1.991 **Classification and Cataloguing Section:** The quantitative strength of collection is not sufficient. The resources of the Public Library
should be properly classified, catalogued and served to the users so that the maximum utilization is obtained from the collection of the library. It is found from the filled up questionnaire that most of the libraries do not follow any standard classification scheme and cataloguing code. Only a few libraries like the District Library, Central Library, Sub-divisional Libraries of Kalimpong and Kurseong, 2(50%) Town Libraries and 30(37.5%) Rural libraries follow classification scheme (DDC 16th & 19th Ed). Among 94 libraries only 5(5.3%) libraries maintain card catalogue, 8(8.5%) libraries follows catalogue on bound register. Regarding standard catalogue code all responded libraries reported that they use to follow AACR code of different revision. Arrangements of books on the shelves are mainly under broad subject heading in most of the libraries surveyed. District Library, Sub-divisional libraries and Town libraries had arranged the books by call numbers. It is found unfortunate that though maximum librarians have their trained certificates, yet they are indifferent in this respect.

6.1.992 Qualification of the Library Staff: Professionally trained staff is a vital pre-requisite for effective functioning of any organizations. The success of the library would primarily depend upon the quality, expertise and attitude of the library personnel. So, there should be sufficient number of competent staff to provide variety of services to the users. District Library is running with acute shortage of staff. Only three permanent non-professional staffs are running the library. Same is the case with Bloomfield Sub-divisional library, Kurseong. It is seen that more than 57 posts of Librarians, Assistant Librarians, Junior Library Attendant and other posts are lying vacant across the libraries in the hilly areas of Darjeeling since many years. It is also found from the survey that Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has appointed number of staffs; most of them are untrained across the libraries in the region. From the qualification statement of the librarians it is found that only 20.2% of the total libraries surveyed reported that they have librarian and library-in-charge have Graduate and above degree. 32.9% libraries claimed that their librarians have Higher Secondary Degree and rest 25.5% librarians have Madhyamik Degrees. Regarding professional qualification only 11% librarians have Bachler Degree in Library Science while rest 63%
claimed that they have Certificate Degree in Library Science. Most of the lower grade staffs have minimum qualification like class VIII passed. It is observed that some of the librarians are not performing, though they have trained certificate.

6.1.993 Library Records: Maintaining record of every activity and services of any Public Library is very essential. Beside few libraries most of the libraries surveyed reported that they maintain almost all the records like Accession Register, Attendance Register, Stock Register, Leave Register, Staff Attendance Register, Membership Register, Cash Book, Daily Issue Register, Minute Book etc. Suggestion Book and Ledger Book are the two records which are not maintained by most of the libraries. It is also found that maintaining various records appears neglected in many Area and Rural libraries than other Libraries. 75.5% of total libraries reported that they maintain membership forms and 39.3% libraries issues membership cards to their readers. No Rural and Area libraries maintain any book card, book pockets, demand slip, requisition slip etc. in their libraries.

6.1.994 Library Collection: Collection development is an important function of any library. A library can not serve its users properly without a strong and balanced collection. The efficiency and effectiveness of a library depend largely on the quantity and quality of its collection. A Public Library should have a balanced collection of all knowledge. In the present survey area depending on the type, location and user of the library its collection also varied. 26.6% of all libraries mainly include District Library, Central Library, Sub-divisional Libraries, Town Libraries and very few Rural Libraries have their collection to one’s satisfaction. While majority of Area and Rural Libraries’ collection is found to be stagnant or diminishing since few year back due to limited fund, shortage of spaces, improper stacking and preservation facilities. So, it is found from the survey that numbers of books added in past few year are not satisfactory. It is also seen that almost all the libraries provide open access to stack to its users.
6.1.995 Newspaper and Periodical Acquisition: Regarding the periodical acquisition it is clear that except District Library, Central Library and Sub-divisional Libraries all the other libraries procure not more than two periodicals one in English and one in regional Nepali language. District Library provides four newspapers in Nepali, English, Hindi and Bengali languages. Sub-divisional Libraries and Town Libraries also keep Nepali, English and Hindi newspaper. It is found that emphasis has been given on adult general periodicals, literary periodicals, general knowledge magazines and fewer employment oriented periodicals which are in English and Nepali language only. Procurement of some subject specific periodicals can be found in District Library in four languages, though the English periodicals are in lead. It is also found that the District Library receives number of periodicals as complimentary copies from various sources. It is reported that most of the rural libraries are not getting daily newspaper in time because of lack of transport and communication facilities. Standard scientific and technical periodicals should be increased in all libraries. Emphasis should be given to purchase periodicals on social science, literary and children literature in the libraries across the region.

6.1.996 Book Acquisition: District Library, Darjeeling reported that it adds more than 400 books annually whereas Central Library adds only less than 50 books in a particular year. It is reported that Sub-divisional, Town, Area and Rural libraries are not in a position to purchase books because of meagre fund. So it is found from the survey that number of books added by the libraries by purchase or by gift through RRRLF and any other sources in past few years is not satisfactory.

6.1.997 Income of the Library: Finance is vital to ensure smooth functioning of any organization. In this respect the Public Libraries in Darjeeling hills have to depend wholly on Government grant. The income of library other than the government grant is very low. Only some libraries like District Library, Sub-divisional libraries earns some income from membership subscription, caution deposits, donation from municipalities, etc. Some Rural libraries claimed that sometimes they receive a little donation from interested
person from the society. So, in overall, it is found that the income other than the government grant is very meager across the region.

6.1.998 Expenditure of the Library: It is observed that the most of the Public Libraries in this area spend major portion of money out of govt. grant for recurring heads like books and periodicals, binding, stationary, furniture, etc. Some of the money is spend for construction, repairing, traveling purposes, etc. The Government Libraries like Deshbandu District Library, Darjeeling and Central Library, Kalimpong are also allotted major portion of govt. grant for the same purpose. It is reported that most of the libraries have their bank account in nationalized banks like State Bank of India, Central Bank, and local Co-operative banks, etc.

6.1.999 Computers in the Library: The application of computer in library operations has been experienced advantageous to cope with the changing user demand. It has been observed that almost all the library surveyed responded that they are not using computers in their library. However, it is found that sub-divisional library, Kalimpong have acquired 5 computers gifted by Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) but these are not in use till now. So there is hardly found any instance of library automation in the region.
6.2 Factors behind the present scenario of Public Libraries and Community Information Services in Darjeeling Hill.

The present situation of Public Libraries and Community Information services in Darjeeling Hills has been observed in above section. A series of factors has ultimately paved the way to the present situation. Some of the major contributing factors or problems that have been observed during the survey are briefly listed below:

6.2.1 Lack of Proper Planning: It is obvious that no desired target could be achieved without proper planning. In Darjeeling hilly areas the proper planning for public libraries and community information services is hardly seen. No library in the region has developed any well defined planning for the development of library services. It is also found that the libraries have been built without any proper building planning. No care has been taken in terms of site selection, location, landform structure, building materials and other factors related to the library building. This has surely affected the services of the public library system in the region. So, there is an immediate need of long term well defined planning to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of Public Libraries in the region.

6.2.2 Administrative Failure: As found in the study, administrators, policy makers, managing committees and even government officials, responsible for the development purposes are not fully aware of the importance of Public Library and Community Information Services especially in the hilly areas. They have been found failure in discharging their responsibilities for the development of libraries in this region.

6.2.3 Lack of respect of Librarians: As the librarians are not fully able to discharge their duties because of various constraints in terms of resources, administrative and management policies, rules and regulations, professional training etc. So, they have been found failure to keep any respectful position in the society.
6.2.4 Shortage of Staffs: There is a severe shortage of staff in Deshbandhu District Library, Darjeeling and the Office of District Library Officer. As a result, there is lack of regular inspections of the libraries and the implementation of many decision have been delayed. Many other libraries surveyed are found running with extreme shortage of staffs. Sanctioned posts are lying vacant in many libraries since many years. It is also seen that many staffs of the libraries across the hilly areas have neither been offered any in-service training program nor deputed in any refresher course. They are also not getting promotion in time. So, vacant posts should be immediately filled up and provision of staff development programme should be introduced for smooth functioning of the libraries in the region.

6.2.5 Insufficient Grants: It is observed that the existing grants for purchasing of books and other materials are not at all sufficient taking into account the rising cost of books and other materials and also the varied demand of services by the people of the locality. So the lack of sufficient fund has seriously obstructed the smooth functioning of Public Libraries in the region.

6.2.6 Short of Infrastructural Facilities: It is also found during the survey that the physical facilities like library building, outer look, internal space, furniture, electricity, drinking water, urinal and other facilities have been proved inadequate to serve the people properly. Most of the Libraries have kutcha building with limited internal space. Only libraries situated at principal town and prominent areas have pucca building with more or less adequate internal space and other facilities. Large number of Area and Rural libraries are running with shortage of space, furniture, book racks, electricity, telephone, urinal, drinking water and other equipments essential in the library. So, inadequate physical infrastructure has ultimately hinder the growth and development of libraries.

6.2.7 Failure in Organizing Documents in the Library: It is assessed that majority of libraries are found failure in organizing documents properly on the shelves. No library has followed any proper classification
scheme and cataloguing code to organize their documents which has ultimately hindering the overall services of the libraries.

6.2.8 Absence of Collection Development Policy: Library collection is regarded as a mirror of the library. Without an adequate and judicious collection of reading materials no library can provide better services to its users. So enumeration of a careful and definite collection development policy is vital for each and every public library. It is seen that in Darjeeling hill areas no library has followed any collection development policy. This is surely affecting the public library services of the region.

6.2.91 Lack of Document Preservation Policy: To enhance the usability and longevity of documents, its proper conservation and preservation is vital in any library. Owing to the climatic condition of the hilly areas the library needs to maintain proper preservation activities throughout the year. It is found from the survey that no library till date has followed any effective preservation methods to preserve their documents against damages. So, there is an immediate need of proper document preservation policy for libraries in the region.

6.2.92 Lack of Extension Activities by the Libraries: Library’s extension activities in the form of book exhibition, cultural competitions, book displays, special lectures, reading programme for neo-literates, meeting non-members to make them members, user orientation programs, mobile libraries etc. have been considered as a best way to attract users and to increase the members of the library. It is observed from the survey that a very few extension activities organized by the libraries have been recorded. Therefore a well planned extension activities should be introduced by the libraries to promote public library services in the region.

6.2.93 Lack of Special Collection: A Public Library should have a special collection for the disadvantaged section of the people, such as Braille literature, talking books, audio-visual aids and other non-book materials. It is seen that Sub-divisional Library, Kalimpong has kept small
number of Braille literature for visually handicapped people, which is not up to the mark. Besides one sub-divisional library no other library in Darjeeling hill areas has developed such collection. Therefore, there is need of these special collections in every public library so that it can provide services to the special section of users at par with the other users.

6.2.94 Lack of library automation: With the change in the society by the advent of the Information and communication technologies (ICT) especially the computer technologies, public libraries has to change its way of providing various services in accordance with the changing demand of the user community. Introduction of computer in library’s activities will help the libraries to achieve its ultimate objective. But in my survey, it is found that no library has introduced computer technology or any other technology for automation. Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation has donated some computers to a few libraries but no automation initiative has yet been started by these libraries. In this case, both the factors come hand in hand that is, trained manpower as well as computer. So, the libraries of these areas should be provided with computers to initiate the library automation program. Training to library personal to carry out the automation activities should also be organized by the authority at all levels of public library system in the region.

6.2.95 Lack in providing community information services: People need information in every sphere of life. Every public library should be able to provide information to the people it serves. In order to carry out the activity, public library should be equipped with all sorts of infrastructure which are needful. It is assessed from the study that in Darjeeling hilly area only a few public libraries are seen providing community information services with their available resources, though the scenario is not up to the level of satisfaction.

6.2.96 Lack of co-operation between Public libraries and other Information providing agencies: it is observed from the study that there is an acute lack of co-operation in providing community information services
between the public libraries and the other government departments, non-government organizations, trustees, charitable bodies, educational institutions and other information generating agencies. This ultimately has led to the non-availability of community information by the people. So, the strong bond of cooperation between them at all level is needed.

6.2.97 Lack of initiative of professional bodies: Professional association plays a vital role in promotion and development of any profession. Lack of initiative of professional bodies hinders the services of the public libraries. In the Darjeeling hilly areas no such professional body is found strengthening the profession.

6.2.98 Absence of Leadership: Absence of creative and dynamic leader in the field of library profession has lessened the effective functioning of public libraries. Since long Darjeeling hill has experienced the absence of dynamic leadership in public library system in the region.

6.2.99 Impact of Gorkhaland Agitation: Gorkhaland movement started in Darjeeling during 1980’s has resulted adverse effect on the public library services across the hill areas. Along with many old, beautiful and important monuments and offices, a number of public libraries were also reduced to ashes. The library personnel, its services and its users, were affected a lot. However, after the establishment of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in the year 1988, those libraries which had been vandalized were revived to some extant and brought back into existence under the supervision of DGHC. Along with the overall supervision of public libraries across the Darjeeling Hilly areas, DGHC also made appointment of library staff on adhoc basis, but the appointment they made did not match library professional criteria, as only fewer are trained staff in different public libraries. As such still there is acute shortage of trained library personnel in different levels of libraries.
6.3 Suggestion for Improvement

From the above findings of the survey some measures can be suggested for the improvement of Public library and Community Information Services in the region.

1. Full implementation of the guidelines and provisions under West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979 should be encouraged.
2. Necessary amendments in the Act to incorporate separate framework for the establishment and control of the Public Library system in the hilly areas should be emphasized.
3. Owing to the topographical and climatic factors the design of public library buildings in the hilly areas should be well planned and well structured.
4. The library building should be conveniently located so that all sections of users would find comfortable to visit the library.
5. Adequate space for reading room and stacks to be provided. There should be sufficient light in the stack, circulation and in the reading area of the library.
6. Adequate space for other sections like children, text book, neo-literate, reference, carrier guidance and section for differently abled person should be provided.
7. Comfortable and adequate furniture and sufficient book racks should be provided to each and every public library.
8. Electricity facility to each rural and area libraries should be immediately provided.
9. Drinking water, urinal, and emergency light facilities should be arranged.
10. The opening and closing time of library should be properly maintained by the library authorities.
11. All the Area and Rural libraries should be connected with telephone for better communication.
12. Adequate financial assistance should be given to each library considering number of members, total collection, services rendered and actual requirement. Grants for purchasing of books and periodicals, furniture, contingency, etc. should be increased taking into account the price hike, increasing number of books, increasing population and changing demand of services. Grants should be increased very regularly at the beginning of the year and not at the fag end of the year.

13. The definite collection development policy should be properly formulated. The funds allotted for purchasing books and periodicals should be properly utilized.

14. The participation of users and administrators for book selection process should be emphasized.

15. Separate book and periodical acquisition policy should be formulated.

16. All the libraries should follow standard cataloguing code and classification scheme to maintain uniformity for organization of documents in the library.

17. The number of book-issue should be increased by all the libraries.

18. Stock verification programme should be followed by all the libraries at regular interval.

19. To make a library more popular, provision of special collection, like braille literature, audio-visual aids and other non-book materials should be made in the library.

20. In order to preserve the library materials, proper conservation and preservation policy best suited to the hilly areas should be formulated by the library authority.

21. Literature on regional languages and local history collection should be emphasized to attract the readers in the library.
22. Extension activities like book exhibition, cultural programmes, seminars, lectures, reading program to neo-literate, meetings, and gatherings should be organized by all libraries to popularize the library among the people.

23. Inter library co-operation and loan system should be established.

24. All the rural and area libraries should maintain a cordial relation with town, sub-divisional and district library.

25. Mobile library service especially by town, sub-divisional and district library should be introduced. The RRRLF scheme of assistance for mobile vans should be increased and this should be fully exploited.

26. Staff requirement of the libraries should be decided based on membership strength, number of documents, type and quantum of services rendered, etc. Qualified staff should be provided immediately where necessary.

27. To motivate and encourage the library personals, training programmes, refresher and orientation courses, seminars, etc. should be organized at regular interval by the library authority. Promotion of staff should be encouraged at each level.

28. User’s orientation programmes should be introduced by all the libraries.

29. Appropriate IT based infrastructure facilities, especially computer should be provided in all the libraries to automate the library operation. Technical knowledge should be provided to the library personals to carry out the process.

30. Hill Area Public Library Networking (HAPLN) should be established for resource sharing among the libraries.

31. All the libraries should work as Community Information Centers to provide various community information services to the people of the locality.
32. Every public library should establish a close co-operation with other information giving agencies like other government departments, non-government and voluntary organizations, trustees, charitable bodies, local literacy centers, clubs, educational institutions, etc. to cater the information needs of the community.

33. Professional bodies like Indian Library Association, Bengal Library Association, District Library Association if any, should come forward to aware the librarians and users about the advantage of public library and community information services among the people in the region.

34. The professional bodies should draw the attention of state authorities and public library policy makers to convince and make them understand the means to promote and develop the public library and community information services especially in the hilly areas.

35. Proposed model plan mentioned in the next chapter should be followed to establish public library in the hilly areas of Darjeeling.

36. Adequate steps should be taken by the respective authority and the Government to implement the above-mentioned suggestions in order to improve the public library and community information services in the hill areas of Darjeeling District.

References:


