CHAPTER 3
PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ASSAM: AN OVERVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Post Independence era in the history of India experienced manifold development in the different field of activities. Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad introduced compulsory elementary education in the year 1883 under the support of the libraries in the District of Baroda. Thus the beginning of the free public life services developed as a system in the year 1907. So the year 2007 is observed as the centenary year of the public library services in India (Kumara Swamy, 2014).

Indian republic being the largest sovereign in south Asia is the seven largest one by Geographical area. It’s also the second most populous country and the largest democratic country in the world. The Indian Ocean on the south, the bay of the Bengal in the east and, the Arabian Sea on the west. India has a coastline of over 7500 kilometers. Pakistan to the West, China, Nepal, Bhutan to the North- East, Bangladesh, and Myanmar to the East surrounded India neighboring County. India comprises of 29 states and 7 union territories. There are a total of 54,851 public libraries in India, of which, 30 state central libraries, 40 regional and divisional libraries, 364 district libraries, 4658 city/town libraries and 49,758 village libraries (Ramaiah & Sankara Reddy, 2010). At present only twenty states have enacted public library legislation (https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/epgpdata/)
3.2 Public Libraries in India- History

The public library is regarded as the Peoples’ University. It has development vigorously in India from the ancient period through evolving stages till date. Presently, most Indian states have free public library services for the sake of developing the people of India at different levels. A brief statement of the same is presented below.

3.2.1 Ancient period (before 1200AD)

The development of education and public library in India has the oldest history. It was a usual practice in the Vedic period that the ‘Shisha’ (pupils) used to stay in the ‘Ashrams’ of ‘Gurus’ (teachers) for several years to receive their education. There was a quest for knowledge and wisdom in India ever since the ancient days. As there was no scope for writing, the oral tradition was the only means of communication amongst the people of India then. The earliest written and recorded materials found in India are the inscriptions on stone pillars of King Asoka (300 BC); these inscriptions could be called the first outside open libraries (Patel, 2004). Later big Ashrams took the shape of the ‘Vidyapeeths’ where some ‘Gurus’ (teachers) performed their teaching to the student like the modern universities. Many manuscript was preserved in the ‘Ashram’ for the use of ‘Gurus’ as well as the outside visitors. Since the ancient time, the libraries have been playing a key role of torchbearers for those who were willing to read and expand the boundaries of various disciplines. There are records found in Nalanda University showing multistoried library in 600 AD (Ekbote,1987) There was a massive collection of manuscripts here. The huge collection of books was stockpiled in three buildings, each having nine floors and three hundred rooms. King Davapal the then emporer in India inaugurate this library. The library allowed the scholars and all sections of people
interested to read and broaden the areas of various disciplines, interpreting and even copying the documents in the library. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveler was known to have consulted this library in the seventh century and to have taken hundreds of treatises to China and Japan. At the time invaded India in 1205 A.D., Muhammad Bin Bakhtiar Khilaji destroyed this library and burnt it (Kumar, 2008). There was a large collection of the Hindu manuscript in the northern part of India at Nalanda, Vaishali, Pataliputra, and Taxila jointly with the libraries of the ancient period which were the good examples of ancient libraries in our country (Esparanza, 1991).

3.2.2 Medieval Period (1200-1757 AD)

The Medieval period of India marks the Mughal Period. Muslims ruled India during this period. The period of Mughal is considered as the golden period of Indian history for its educational, literary, and library activities. Babur the king of Kabul invaded India and annexed Delhi to his kingdom. He also set up the Mughal Imperial Library in 1526. His son Humayun established a library Agra Fort with books, gilded pen cases, portfolios, pictures, and works of calligraphy. After the death of Humayun, Akbar technically managed and improved the library with some technical works and appointed the calligraphers to copy excellent manuscripts. He also built a women library separately for women at Fatehpur Sikri. Another ruler of the period Jahangir, enacted a law that in the event of the death of wealthy man being heirless, the same property should be used for building and repairing schools, monasteries, libraries, and other institutions that helped the development of libraries in the late Medieval period. During this period the library staff had distinct designations like ‘Nizam’ (Head librarian) and ‘Muhatin’ (Assistant librarian) and scribes, illustrators, calligraphers, and copyists assisted them. The medieval period libraries worked as private libraries having the
advantage of any open access for the people in general. The Christian Missionaries had also a contribution towards the development of education and libraries for the common mass in the late Medieval Period (Ngurtinkhuma, 2007).

3.2.3 British Period (1757-1947)

The concept of public library had its roots in the western world. With the British rulers and men of administration, the idea of the Public library also originated and flourished in India. Some important library initiatives of this period were in 1808 Bombay Government (now Mumbai) initiated a proposal to register libraries for financial grants. These libraries were to receive free copies of reading materials published from the “funds of Encouragement of Literature”. This step was the first step towards library movement in modern India. During this period, libraries of princely states were having a good collection of books and other materials. The imperative libraries started in this country appearing infrequently here and there, among them are:

- Bengal Royal Asiatic Society library (1784)
- Rampur Raza Library at Rampur
- Maharaja Sarfoji (1798-1833)’s Saraswati Mahal Library at Thanjavur
- Safadar Jung collection at Hyderabad
- Khuda Baksh Oriental Library at Patna
- Bahar library at Calcutta
- Bombay Royal Asiatic Society (1804)
Public libraries were established in the various parts of the country by the princely states, Britishers, religious institutions and other influential individuals. Some public libraries are enumerated below:

- Calcutta Public Library in 1835. It was a landmark development in the history of the public library movement in India. It became National library in 1948. John Macfarlane was the first librarian of the Imperial Library.
- Native Library at Ahmedabad in 1850
- Andrews Library at Surat in 1850.
- Indore General Library founded in 1854 by Maharaja Tukoji Rao Holkar II
- Richand Dipchand Library at Broach, 1855
- Gaya Public Library, Gaya, 1855
- Lang Library at Rajkot, 1856
- Connemara Public Library at Madras started in the year 1860 as a small museum.
- Institute Library at Delhi 1862 (now Hardyal Municipal Public Library)
- Stuart Library at Godhra, 1866
- Government Library at Junagarh, 1867
- Town Lakhajiraj library at Rajkot, 1868
- Apparo Bholanath Library at Ahmedabad, 1870
- Khuda Baksh Oriental Library at Patna, 1876. Opened to the public in 1891. It has the richest collection of oriental manuscripts.
- Adyar Library at Chennai, 1876. The library was opened to public on December 28, 1886.
- Mahuva Library at Mahuva, 1877
• Barton Library at Bhavnagar, 1882
• Bhagvatsinhji library at Bondal, 1884
• Victoria Jubilee Library at Vankaner, 1891.
• Dahi Laxmi Library at Nadiad, 1892
• Tikhtasinhji Library at Board 1892
• Victoria Dimond Library at Jalapur, 1897
• Maharajah’s Public Library, Jaipur (1899),
• Punjab Public Library was established in 1900. It was the first Central Library in Punjab.
• Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad – III of Baroda (1862- 1939), promoted public library system in his state. He established a full-fledged system of public libraries, including a central library at Mandvi, Baroda, nearly 800 branch libraries and mobile libraries. He invited Mr.Wiliam Alanson Borden (an American Librarian in 1910 to introduce a free public library system in the state (Ngurtinkhuma , 2007).

Other related events are:

• The Government of India passed the Press and Registration Act in 1867.
• The government of India passed the Imperial Library Act in 1902
  Dr. S.R. Ranganathan also played a significant role in the library development as well as knowledge of library science. After joining the post of University Librarian at the University of Madras in 1924, Ranganathan went to the United Kingdom and gained knowledge in libraries. Ranganathan published his Five Laws of Library Science (1931), Colon Classification (1933) and Classified Catalogue Code (1934) and also prepared Model Public Library Bill, which
helped to enact public library legislation in Indian states. Dr. Ranganathan had made noteworthy contributions to the domain knowledge of library science through his 60 books and 2000 seminal research articles during his life time and has been revered as the “Father of Library Science in India” (Patel, 2004).

3.2.4 Post Independence (1947 onwards)

There was a tremendous growth of Public Libraries in the post independence era of India in 1947. Both the State and the Central government ventured bold steps for the development of education and the library which they felt is the most essential part for nation building. Socila and adult education of the populace since 1910 motivated the Provincial and Central Government for the execution of the programme by enacting library laws and rules for grants in aid in the country. Therefore public library became a vital part of the education budget. The Government under took some important programmes like extension services, continuing education, social education, nonformal education and adult education with a motive to raise the level of literacy of sixteen percent in 1941. There was a further initiative on the part of the government to have community development to organized some projects to that effect. As an essential part of the community development project during the first plan period, libraries were given much focus. The government felt the need of socio economic ex celleration through the development of public libraries (Kumara Swamy, 2014). Madras Public Libraries Act 1948 made the Connemara Public Library in Madras the State Central Library in 1950. This was one of the three depository libraries in 1955. The establishment of Delhi Public Library was made in 1951 as one of the first UNESCO Public Library Pilot Project jointly by UNESCO and Government of India to bring “Modern Techniques to Indian Conditions” for serving a modern library for Asia (Kumara Swamy, 2014).
Delivery of Book Act in 1954 passed to included newspapers. As per this act, one copy of each publication should be deposited in the National library in Calcutta, the Asiatic Society Library in Bombay, Delhi Public Library in New Delhi and Connemara Public Library in Madras. The Government of India formed the Advisory Committee of Libraries in 1957 under the Chairmanship of K P Sinha. The Committee drafted Model Library Bill in 1959 and submitted its report. The Planning Commission also constituted a Working Group on Public Libraries in 1964. In the year 1965, it submitted its report on Model Public Libraries Act. All the states/UTs were supplied with this model bill having no Public Libraries Act.

The Planning Commission of Government of India constituted a working group on Development of Public Libraries in 1972 to recommend for library development. In the same year in 1972 Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation came into existence under the Department of Culture, Ministry of Education. The chief objective of the foundation was the assistance to State Library Services in the works of developments. In 1979 came in the Department of Culture under the Ministry of Education. Where and undersecretary took up the charge. The promotion and the development of Public Libraries were the chief ideas behind it (Kumara Swamy, 2014).

The planning Commission in 1983 appointed to a working group on the modernization of library services and informatics and submitted its report in 1984 to formulate National Policy on Library Services and Informatics. So, Delhi Public Library turned to a copyright library in 1982. The adoption of National Literacy Mission 1986 gave weightage to education for women with the setting up of rural libraries. At the national level institutions, library networks and systems were strengthened for developing literature in neo-literates. The period 1948 to 2006, 14 states, Tamil Nadu, Andhra
Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Manipur, Kerala, Haryana, Mizoram, Goa, Orissa, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan enacted Public Libraries Bills. In the year 1985 Department of Culture, Government of India appointed to a committee on national policy on library and information system. The National Policy on Education 1986 highlighted a nationwide movement to improve the existing libraries and construct new ones. There was a provision made for library facilities in all educational institutions improving the status of librarianship (Kumara Swamy, 2014). The impact of the The National Book Policy, 1986 was observed as follows:

- The involvement of all the agencies for providing reading materials for children
- Utilization of 10% government annual education budget for the purchase of books for libraries

Use of non-formal and open channels of learning could help to achieve these goals (Jhambekar, 1995). Rural libraries would play a pivotal role for post-literacy and continuing education programs. Assistance was provided by the National Education Policy on Education in 1986 under the “Operation Blackboard Scheme” to Publishers, voluntary organizations, and school library programs to undertake.

3.3 Development of Public Libraries during I – XI Five Year Plans

After 1947, the imperative turning point in the development of library services is the incorporation of the plan of "Improvement of Library Science" in the Five Year Plans.

1951-1956 – First Five Year Plan Period

A proposal for “Improvement of Library Service” was included in the First Five Year Plan for Educational Development. This proposal had a vision for the network of libraries all over the country. Which would co-ordinate the National Central Library at
New Delhi (Planning Commission of India, 1952). This plan ensured District Libraries to be build up in each state bolstered by a State Central Library. The State Government supported a scheme of integrated library services to be initiated by the Government of India. Under this plan, a zone was selected for five community centers to disseminate books to 20 towns focusing on a prime library with branches. 29 territories of the nation executed this plan. This Plan gave birth to Delhi Public Library (1951), Central Reference Library, Calcutta (1955) etc. was set up. The Delivery of Books Act passed in the year 1954. The nation got the opportunities to gate 32,000 libraries towards the close of March 1954. 142 District libraries and 9 state Libraries appeared under the First Year Plan (Jaganayak, 1999).

1956-1961 – Second Five Year Plan Period

The Government of India year mark an amount of nearly Rs. 140 lakhs to construct a national network of libraries in 320 Districts under the second five-year plan. This helped most states for the setting of State Central Libraries and District libraries in form of main distributing centre (Planning Commission India, 1956).

1961 – 1966 Third Five Year Plan Period

The pattern of Central Government assistance to the states during this period underwent a change. There was a minimum funding for libraries. It was the responsibility of individual states to take steps for developing their concerned public libraries. The Scheme of Assistance in the establishment of State Central Libraries, District Central Libraries, and Block Libraries was canceled. The decision hundred terribly the development of public libraries, 4 National Libraries at Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras came in to picture by the period.
The planning commission appointed to a working group on libraries in 1964 to take stock of the library development.

The following were the submission and recommendation by the working group of libraries on 7th September 1965 with the following:

- There should be a joint responsibility by both the Central and State Governments for providing adequate library service. There should be a State Library Advisory Council to be set up in each state to execute the program effectively under the Minister of Education, a Directorate of libraries by the new Government agencies.
- Madhya Pradesh, Mysore, Nagaland, and Orissa should have the State Central Libraries.
- Library buildings should be provided to those states having no adequate functional buildings for their State Central Libraries.
- Children section is mandatory for the State Central Library.
- 335 District libraries for the 327 District in the country should be there. States having a larger population may be provided with two District libraries.
- The existing 100 District Libraries should have their new buildings.
- Considering block libraries are the principal feeding centre for the rural reading public 2500 new block libraries with coverage of 75% of blocks in the country should be build up.
- Such libraries of urban and rural areas depending on subscription and donation should be provided with grants in addition of a some of 10 million rupees.
- There should be a set up of tree public libraries as per the model of Delhi Public Libraries.
• Steps to be taken to revive the Institute of library science closed in the year 1962 that was established by the Ministry of Education at Delhi University in 1958-59. In order to meet the future requirements institutes of such reputation should be set up at the states level to trained graduate and undergraduate librarians.

• For creating library awareness in the country organizing seminars, conducting surveys and producing library literature a sum of Rs. 10,000 shall be allocated in form of financial help to all national and state level libraries.

• There should be a programme of book production to be taken up.

• There should be a Library Act to be produced (Sarma, 2014).

1969-1974 Fourth Five Year Plan Period

The working group of on development of Public Libraries by the Government of India designed a development plan for public libraries under the chairmanship of V. K. R. V. Rao in the year 1972 recommended by the working group. But during this period only Rs. 20 million was spent for the purpose. The following information on public libraries as of 1973 was advanced

• State Central Libraries cover only 15 out of 21 states/ UTs

• Out of 376 districts, there had to be 235 State Central Libraries

• There were 1500 Central Libraries out of 3100 sub-district

• There were only 50,000 village libraries out of 5,66,878 villages.

• Only 1800 town libraries existed out of 2641 towns.

The most epoch-making event of this plan period was the emergence of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation with the fundamental aim to develop and promote public library services in the country.
1974-1979 Fifth Five Year Plan Period

Measures were taken for strengthening the buildings, collections, and staff of the central and state libraries along with the district and block and village libraries during this period. Attempts to improve a district library system to make district library to take leadership for this smaller library in the district was undertaken during this period. This plan also covered adult education programme as a significant feature. A network of libraries supported the programme at the village block levels with various community centres. The steps were a total in strengthening village, block, central, state and district libraries as a whole (Sarma, 2014).

1980-1985 Sixth Five Year Plan Period

This plan stress on the establishment of rural public libraries network for sustaining literacy and disseminating information to the grass root areas. There was a discussion to feel the necessities integrate school and college libraries with the public library system. 26 states or union territories out of 31 (in 1982) could established state central libraries and 291 district libraries (Thomas, 1997).

Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation built up 1972 succeeded providing a fund of Rs.25 crores to rural libraries during this period. Delhi Public Library came out as a copyright library (Sarma, 2014).

1985-1990 Seventh Five Year Plan Period

The prime focus of this plan period is to undertake the National Literacy Program in 1986, that pressed the education of the women and libraries construction. The chief concern of the commission was to meet the needs of 90 million people in the Adult Education Programme. The Department of Culture, Government of India in 1985
appointed NAPLIS committee. For promoting research in librarianship and database of public libraries in the country (Planning Commission India 1991). The RRRLF setup an integrated research cell come computer unit. Library Act was passed in the state of Manipur in 1988, Haryana in 1989.

1992-1997 Eighth Five Year Plan Period

Books promotion was the important aspect of this plan period. Numbers of important books were converted to the different Indian languages during this time. This planning period took a proposal for recognizing Central Reference Library (CRL) to National Bibliographical and Documentation Centre and they would have a computer center also. The newly Delhi Public Library also brought two within its service area. RRRLF programmes were taken to assist the State Central Libraries for procurement of reprographic machine for processing libraries rare books (Planning Commission India, 1992).

1997-2002 Ninth Five Year Plan Period

The National Library, Kolkatta undertook some notable activities in updating, modernizing its collection building programme. Readers services and library materials preservation were also taken in to consideration during this ninth five-year plan period. Automation of the circulation system in the circulation section Local Area Network (LAN), readers services improvement, efficient collection management were some of the striking activities of that period. The activities relating to preservation in the libraries made an eye-catching progress by acquiring modern equipment for preserving rare books and various materials.
Throughout the ninth plan the Central reference Library Calcutta automated multiple functions. So, publication of Indian National Bibliography (INB) was forwarded and assessable on the web. Funds were sanctioned by the Central Secretariat Library and Delhi Public Library, Delhi for the purchase of new materials on different dilects. It also modernizes their framework. There were an improve reader's services to experience the advantages of these initiatives. There were also facilities for networking and resource sharing. Various computer training programme for resource sharing, cataloguing former standardization and co-operative acquisition were organized under the Central Secretariat Libraries (Planning Commission India 1997).

2002 – 2007 Tenth Five Year Plan Period

The commission in the 10th plan period made a planning of advanced modernization of central and public libraries. The enhancement of a reader’s service and empowerments of resource sharing and networking developed through a national bibliographic database. The public library infrastructure was tightened through the RRRLF by the commission. The plan concentrated on improving existing libraries with the private collection and broadening the programme on bibliographic control and documentation. The National Library rested on to move a definitive Referral center on different subjects for making the readers service much more effective and intelligible. To respond to the latest development in information technology in public libraries, the process of updating and networking of Central and State libraries were also planned out (Planning Commission, India, 2002).

2007-2012 Eleventh Five Year Plan Period

National Policy on Library and Information System (NAPLIS) during the 11th plan was
decided to be dropped by the planning commission. Keeping in mind the major shortage of facilities in the public libraries and the necessities for their improvement, a proposal to bring a National Library Mission (NLM) to overcome the problems of the public library sector and providing their facilities to the maximum level period of three to five years were taken up. The National Library Mission had to discharge the assignment shown below:

- Undertaking a national census of public library for the creation of an adequate database on the infrastructure up-gradation programs for public libraries jointly with the state governments.
- To take up a widespread training program for the total human resource development in the library sector with an urgent sense.
- For the justifying customizing technology in the library sectors for Indian conditions steps to encourage R&D projects.
- Special schemes to be taken up for improvement and collections in public libraries to help to create locally relevant materials.
- Innovating materials with special and technological support to help the disable persons (challenged and hearing impaired persons);
- To create at least a Knowledge Centre for each block
- Connecting networking of Public libraries throughout the counties.

3.4 Library Legislation in India

Public libraries are authorized by legislation. To run public libraries smoothly and effectively, library legislation is much essential. Library legislation suggests a system,
its objectives, methods for providing service, and above all, ensures a budgetary support and qualified personnel, to plan and organize the services. India has developed a network of the public library system in all its states.

Several attempts are being made by individuals and library associations to provide public libraries under the law. It is only after India’s independence, in 1948, through Dr. Ranganathan public Library Act enactment was fulfilled. Public Libraries in India owe a debt to Dr. S.R. Ranganathan for his sincere and meaningful efforts towards the development of public library services and movement.

India attained freedom in 1947 and became a republic in 1950. After Independence now for facilitation Government has a National Capital Region of Delhi, 28 States, and 6 Union Territories. Since the independence of India the following states have passed Public Libraries Acts :

5. Mysore Public Libraries Act (1965) (now called as Karnataka Public Libraries Act)
7. West Bengal Public Libraries Act (1979)
15. Uttarakhand Public Library Act (2005)
(Source: https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/epgpdata/uploads/epgp_content)

3.5. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF)

The Government, Non-government organizations and corporate houses have taken various initiatives to promote public library system in India. The year 1972 has been an important landmark in the history of public libraries in India. In this year, India celebrated the silver jubilee of independence. The same year was the bicentenary year of the birth of Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1972), a great social and educational reformer who devoted his life to modernize India. International Book year was also celebrated in 1972 with the slogan ‘Books for All’ as proclaimed by UNESCO (Bhattacharjee, 1999).

Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) was established in May 1972 by the then Department of Culture, Government of India. The Minister of Culture, Government of India, financially support RRRLF. It is a registered autonomous organization under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act 1961. This foundation is devoted to public library development in India. It is working in the close and active cooperation with the
State Government and Union Territory Administrations. For developed District Youth Resource (DYRC) the foundation has taken an initiative. The headquarter of RRRLF has five stories building located at Salt Lake in Kolkata. The RRRLF has four Zonal Offices namely Eastern Zonal Office attached with the headquarter Kolkata, Western zonal office at Mumbai, Northern Zonal office at New Delhi and Southern Zonal Office at Chennai. These Zonal Offices started functioning from 1987 with four Assistant Field Officers.

3.5.1 Objectives

The main objectives of RRRLF are to function as a promotional agency, advisory and consultancy organization, a funding body of public library development in India. Other objectives are (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in):

- To promote library movement in the country;
- To enunciate a national library policy and to help build up a national library system;
- To provide financial and technical assistance to libraries;
- To provide financial assistance to organizations, regional or national engaged in the promotion of library development;
- To publish appropriate literature and to act as a clearing house of ideas and information on library development in India and abroad;
- To promote research in problems of library development;
- To advise the government on all matters pertaining to the library development in the country.
3.5.2 Organizational Structure of RRRLF

The below given diagram, clarifies the organizational structure of the RRRLF. The Minister of Culture, Government of India or his nominee is the Chairman of RRRLF. Director is the executive head and ex-officio Member Secretary of RRRLF. Under this direction, it will find

**ORGANISATIONAL CHART**

![Organizational Chart](http://rrrlf.nic.in/OldWebsite/org_chart.asp)

**Figure 3.1 Organizational Chart of RRRLF**

(Source: http://rrrlf.nic.in/OldWebsite/org_chart.asp)

The Deputy Director, System Manager, and Deputy Director Administrative and Accounts comes under Director General. Under the Deputy Director it will find Assistant Director and under the System Manager, it will find the Statistical officer, Programmer, and Assistant Director. Under the Deputy Director Administrative and Accounts, it will find Section Officer and Accounts Officer.

RRRLF has various committees to perform the task. These committees are the foundation. It is a supreme policy making body. It consists of 22 members. The
members are nominated by the Government of India form the eminent Educationist, Administrators, Librarians etc.

3.5.3 RRRLF Sub-committee

a) State Library Committee (SLC): The foundations, functions in each state and Union Territories through State Library Committee.

b) Administrative Committee: This committee looks after the administrative and financial affairs of RRRLF. The Administrative Committee constituted with 11 members.

c) Book Selection Committee: This committee is responsible for selecting books from specimen copies. It consists of 11 members. This committee distributed books to State Central Libraries, District Libraries and selected public libraries all over the country.

d) Grant Committee: This committee is responsible to approve the grants under the various scheme. Presently the grant committee consists of 6 members.

e) Research Committee: This committee advises the foundation on issues of research activities. Presently it has 7 members (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in).

3.5.4 Activities of RRRLF

RRRLF is involved in various activities to promote the public libraries in India. Such as:

a) Assistance programme

RRRLF promotes various public library services. It also provides financial assistance to the public libraries. There are various schemes, such as:
Matching scheme: Under this scheme assistance is given for the following purposes:

- Assistance towards building up of adequate stock of books and reading materials.
- Assistance towards development to Rural Book Deposit Centre and Mobile Library Services.
- Assistance towards organization of seminars, workshops, training, book exhibitions and library awareness programmes.
- Assistance towards purchase of storage materials, reading room furniture and library equipment.
- Assistance to public libraries towards increasing accommodation
- Assistance to public libraries to acquire computer with accessories.
- Matching schemes are implemented with the contribution of made by the State Governments and Union Territories with a similar matching grant from RRRLF. The ratio is 50:50 for developed states, 40:60 for developing states i.e. forty percent state contribution and sixty percent matching share of RRRLF. For Northe- Easter states it is 10: 90 i.e. 10 percent state contribution and 90 percent matching scheme share of RRRLF. This revised matching scheme is effective from 2005 (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in).

Non-matching schemes: Under this scheme, assistance is given to the following purposes:

- Assistance towards building up an adequate stock of books through central selection.
- Assistance to voluntary organizations (NGOs) for providing public library services.
- Assistance to children’s libraries.
- Assistance to public libraries towards the celebration of 50/60/75/125/150 years and the like.
- Assistance towards organization of seminar/ conference by professional organizations, local bodies, NGOs engaged in public library development library movement and development of library services.
- Assistance towards collection and compilation of library statistics through official and non-official agencies,
- Assistance to centrally sponsored libraries and
- Assistance towards the establishment of RRRLF children corner (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in).

b) Promotional Activities

RRRLF has undertaken a number of promotional activities for the qualitative improvement of library services. It is associated with and interacts with different national and international library professional associations like IFLA, ILA, IASLIC and different state-level library

- It organizes seminars and conferences on the topics related to the development of public libraries in India.
- It plays a major role in the preparation of National Policy on Library & Information Systems and also issued guidelines on public library systems and services.
• RRRLF Best Library Award’ for the Best State Central Library in India. The Award carries a Citation and a cash incentive of Rs. 1 lakh.

• RRRLF Best District Library Award’ in each of the six regions. The Award carries a Citation and cash incentive of Rs.50, 000/-. 

• The Foundation instituted ‘RRRLF Best Rural Library Awards’ one for each state since 2005

• ‘Raja Rammohun Roy Award’ was introduced annually to the best contributor of an article covering the area of development of Public Library Systems and Services or suggesting measures for the promotion of reading habits (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in).

c) Publications

RRRLF has brought out various publications for diffusion of library and information science related contents. These are:

• Indian libraries: Trends and perspectives

• Raja Rammohun Roy and the new learning

• Directory of Indian Public Libraries

• Granthana an Indian journal of library studies (bi-annual)

• RRRLF Newsletter (bi-monthly)

• Annual reports (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in)

d) Digital library initiatives

Digital Repository will be created for digitizing of rare books, including pre-Independence journals, newspapers and other copyright-free selected materials including photographs, paintings, manuscripts etc., available inside
public libraries will also be digitized and made available to the public (http://www.rrrlf.nic.in).

(e) Research Project

A research cell has been established with special library on library and information science. It is engaged in research projects in public libraries. This cell also provides advisory and consultancy services.

3.5.5. Modernization Programme

RRRLF has taken steps to meet the new technologies of information for the promotion of library services. It has a Computer Section for building-up databank of public libraries for the country. This section is planned to give information storage, retrieval and data processing support for all the application areas. It has a keen interest with enthusiasm for computerized state libraries in India.

RRRLF with its various activities has prompted the concept of public libraries and made efforts to the reach the library services to a larger number of people. India there is an urgent need to strengthen public library system in a more co-operative way. The states have low priority in this regard. RRRLF can play a vital role in the establishment and development of public libraries in India.

3.6 Public Libraries in Assam: Historical study

3.6.1 Ancient Period

Assam was popularly known as ‘Kamrupa’ or ‘Pragjyotishpura’ with a strong heritage of culture civilization and education since the ancient days. Great scholars with their learning were found in Assam. The scholars were motivated by the ruler to engage
themselves in the writing of manuscript on varied subjects which were preserved with great care. Assam at present stance the testimony and enough evidence to justify the scholarship and the highest standard of literally achievements of the scholars of ‘Kamrupa’ of that period and the highest patronage recive by the monarchs of that time. The ruler of the ancient period had shown adequate interest and love for education reading of books and for libraries. In the olden days, the only means to record the writings of the scholars were used by the materials collected from the leaves, barks of trees and blades of metals. The bark of ‘Agaru’ was well known as ‘Sanchia’ the foils which were made from the six century till the beginning of the last century. A number of invaluable presents to Harshavardhana, the ruler of Kanauj by Bhaskar Barman the ruller of Kamrupa in these foils stood a leaving testimony of the noble ideas and thoughts contained. King of Naranaryana of Koch Bihar took a leading role in the spread of the ‘Vaishnava’ religion in the nook and corner of the undivided Assam. The iniciator of ‘Vaishnava’ renaissance in Assam Srimanta Sankardeva (1445-1566) brought a new movement of Assamese culture and education which was augumented by the king Koch King Naranarayana (Sharma, 1997). The royals of sovurance were the great patronage of the manuscript written and coppied then and inspired their growth to a large extent. The Koch King Naranarayana being a great patron of art and letters gave a new dimension to this great movement of learning. So emerged the contribution of the great saints to an unprecedented institution like ‘Satras’, ‘Namgharas’, and ‘Kirtanghars’. Religious and sacred books were stocked in those great institutions. This institution by themselves developed a system where the adult illiterate and neo-literate got attracted towards informal education. Sankardeva is the greatest pioneer to achieve a grant success in this historical movement of learning.
and educating the mass belonging to different caste, religion, and communities. Every Hindu householed was affiliated to the ‘Satra’, ‘Namghar’ and ‘Kirtanghar’. The ‘Satras’ stored books mainly for the followers of the faith in its vicinity (Hussain, 2007).

The rulers of the Ahom Periods were persons of wisdom and had great regards for these holy books preserved in the Satras. With a great care and devotions, these books were consecrated at a place which was known as ‘Gandhia Bharal’. Due importance was given to the act of composing ‘Buranji’ (History) for that Tai dialect was being made use of. This was ‘Oblivious learn store” one predominante in Assam. Ahom king who ruled Assam for long six hundred years advocated for the compiling or writing of ‘buranji’ or history under their genuine patronizations. In addition to the compiling of ‘buranji’ the Ahom king also encourage the compositions of books on subjects like old stories, sacred Tax, prescription, tank exhibition and exploration of house building etc. (Bordoloi, 1997).

The ruling king made a provision for training in manuscripts writing and copying which were available under their patronas. The example of Rani Fulleswari Kunwari, wife of Shiva Singha proves the point. Arrangements for all assessment items like pen, inkpot, books were made ready for use and the custodian of those materials was ‘Gandhia Barua’ who was appointed as an officer by the ruler. The possession of this historical and religious manuscript by every family was considered to be holy and sacred tradition. It was highly essential and obligatory on the part of an Assamese gentleman to acquire knowlge of his country. There was another manuscripts ‘Vamsavali’ which was popular at that time. The book was meant to study the genealogy history which were available in Assam. It intended to view and record the history of a
particular family along with his legacy. The ‘Vamsavali’ for an Ahom family of position became necessary to study his family history for the matrimonial purpose (Sharma, 1997).

3.6.2 Modern Period

Pre-independent period

Departmental libraries were build up by the British rulers to accommodate them. The Satra libraries and family documents and collections of manuscripts in Namghars significantly contributed to the spiritual learning on the knowledge of different holly writings. The concept of library in modern period started in the year 1903 in Assam. The public library of Assam Government was established at Shillong during British Raj mainly for the service of government authorities.

Kumudeswar Borthakur the retired school teacher had extended good contribution for the development of public library services in Assam. He visited Boroda Territory to uplift a well established public library foundation in Assam with a noble mission. The then the Chief Minister of Assam Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi extended his favour to Borthakur in this enterprise. He made others social labour and political persons involved in his central goal. He organized public meetings for the growth and development of public libraries in Assam at Gauhati (Sharma, 1997).

This was the starting point of Assam Library Association (ALA). It was needless to say that this great Association could become successful and saw the light of the day for the great personality of Barthakur. The British ruler also became successful in the establishment of some important libraries at the district headquarters with different names such as Victoria Hall at Dhubri, Goalpara, Guwahati and Holiday home at
Nagaon etc. This idea of library slowly entered to the rural area. The student community of rural areas took up the initiative of setting up libraries in their own villages. There were many associations buildup with library mission exists in a proper way. Barthakur attended the All India Library Conference at Boroda frequently and the knowledge he gains helped him in the establishment an enhancement of libraries in Assam. His battle in this regard was unparallel and great. He was committed to the libraries development in Assam and his enthusiastic effort inspired the government for the setting up different libraries in Assam (Sharma, 1997).

Post Independence Period

Honestly speaking public library services started in Assam a midst of the First Five Year Plan (1951-1956). Under the guidance of the first prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru free ‘book service to all’ was launched. Expecting the impact within the National Government of India invested an average measure of money for the different library benefits in the country. The government of Assam regarded the arrangement within. Change of library services by the government of India in 1954 to build foremost State Central Library at Shillong the former Capital of Assam. By 1955 only 2 Government libraries were there. In 1956 there was an amalgamation of the old public library with the SCL. As such, the improvement of library took a turning point in Assam. For the extension library organization to rural zones book mobile vans were arranged to extent mobile services in remote territories (Bordoloi, 1997).

The Government of Assam in the year 1948 under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs made a different Directorate of Library. This help in the service for the development of libraries through out Assam. Presently the Office of Directorate of Library Services and
State Central Library are housed in the same building of District Library Guwahati. At present the number of District Library is 26, 16 are Sub divisional Libraries, 4 Branch Libraries and 199 Rural Libraries are working in Assam. Among them 22 District Library and 14 Sub divisional Libraries are controlled by the Directorate of Library Services Assam and 4 District Library and 2 Sub divisional Libraries come under the Control BTC of Assam.

The present positions of Public libraries Assam as under:

- **State Central Library:** 1
- **District Libraries:** 26
- **Sub-Divisional Libraries:** 16
- **Branch library:** 4
- **Rural Library:** 199

The organizational structure of the Directorate/ Department looking after the Public libraries in Assam

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Ministry of Culture, Government of Assam
  ↓
Cultural Affairs Department (CAD)
  ↓
Directorate of Library Services (DLS), Assam
  ↓
State Central Library (SCL)
  ↓
  ↓
District Library (DL)
  ↓
  ↓
Sub-Divisional Library (SDL)
  ↓
  ↓
Branch Library (BL)
  ↓
  ↓
Rural Library (RL)
```

**Figure 3.2: Organizational Structure of Library Services in Assam**

(Source: https://publiclibraryservices.assam.gov.in/about-us/history-3)
3.7 Public Library Legislation in Assam

In spite of best efforts being made by different library associations, it is unfortunate Assam has not yet got its library legislation.

In October 1964, S.R. Ranganathan, the father of library and Information science in India was invited to be the Chief Guest of the eight Assam Library Association conference. On that occasion, he presented to the conference and to the Government, a draft library bill based on Mysore library bill. While inaugurating the conference, Debakanta Barooah the then Minister for Education, gave the assurance that the draft library bill prepared by Ranganathan and disused at the conference would be enacted as Law, so that Assam could develop a network of libraries on a planned basis. Later, on one of the days of the conference, BP Chaliha, the Chief Minister, Kamal Kumari Barua, the Deputy Minister for Education, and Ranganathan discussed the implications of the clauses of the bill. But till now, the bill has not been introduced into the legislature (Borgohain & Das, 2014).

Again, another Draft Public Library Bill was produced to Government under the title ‘The Assam Public Library Bill- 1989’ by Assam library Service Association. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that though Assam Library Service Association got assurance from the then Education Minister Sri Brindaban Goswami, the then Education Commissioner Sri Ashok Saikia, the then Chief Minister for necessary help as far as possible for passing the bill, but all resulted in a sour fruit.

Again, Guwahati Library Association stressed its best to the Government for enacting the bill since 1955; it is lamentable that it is yet to enact a bill for Public Library
Services in the state. In fact, no attempt has yet been made by the State Government to enact a library law for Assam (Buragohain 2017).

The government of Assam had constituted a committee for drafting a Library Bill upon examination of a draft model of Assam Public Libraries Act submitted by the Central Government. It was formed at the initiative of the then Director of Library Services, Government of Assam, Sri Bimal Kumar Hajarika, an ACS officer on deputation. The then Head of the Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University Dr. Narendra Lahkar was made the Chairman of the Committee and the Director himself being the Member-Convenor. The other two members were Sri Ram Goswami, Retd. Chief Librarian, State Central Library, Government of Assam and Prof. (Retd.) Alaka Buragohain, former Head of the Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University. At the demise of late Ram Goswami in 2003. Sri Abhay Charan Borkotaky, former first Director of Library Services, Government of Assam was submitted. The drafting of the bill took time and could be submitted in 2006. The bill was discussed on November 8, 2007, by the Committee of the Cultural Affairs Department, Government of Assam. The incorporating view points of the said Committee of the Government financial memorandum was prepared and the bill was submitted in 2008 (Buragohain 2017).

The following is the Assam Public Libraries and Information Service draft bill 2008.

Table of content

Chapter 1: Preliminaries.

Chapter 2: Terminology.

Chapter 3: Establishment of State Public Library and Information Service.

Chapter 4: State Library Authority.
Chapter 5: State Library Council

Chapter 6: Library Service under the Department of Culture

Chapter 7: Directorate of Library Service.

Chapter 8: District Rural Library Council

Chapter 9: Voluntary Libraries.

Chapter 10: State Library and Information Service Cadres.

Chapter 11: Finance and Accounts, State Public Library Fund

Chapter 12: Coordination and Integration/ Consolidation.

Chapter 13: Reports, Returns, and Inspection

Chapter 14: Penalties and procedure

Chapter 15: Appeals

Chapter 16: The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867

Chapter 17: Miscellaneous

3.8 RRRLF and Public Libraries in Assam

There is a good provision of financial help to be had from RRRLF for the establishment and development of library services in the state. The state of Assam has actively participated in the assistance programme of RRRLF, Calcutta. The book assistance programme rendered by the Foundation has greatly helped the library services in Assam. The District, Sub- Divisional Libraries, especially the rural libraries are benefited tremendously from the various schemes of the foundation.

Since 2005, RRRLF revised Matching Fund share to 10:90 for North East States and State Government reduced its contributions accordingly. State Library Committee utilizes the share of RRRLF under the matching scheme to give the best result for the
promotion and development of libraries in the State. All the recognized libraries have an equal share and received assistance by kind from RRRLF (Hazarika, 2017).

The state also received a certain amount of assistance through RRRLF non-matching schemes. This scheme is not received annually but on the basis of the foundation’s resources. Most of the assistance received through this scheme includes books, bookracks, furniture, and assistance towards seminar.

In the year 1998/99-1999-00 seven (7) rural libraries that are run by voluntary organization received a total of Rs. 5,05,042/- from the foundation and in the year 2002/03 the foundation sanctioned a special grant of Rs. 123.05 lakh for N.E. States out of which Assam received a total of Rs. 19,14,807/- (for training 2,27,290/- for book Rs. 9,98,820/- and for storage Rs. 6,88,697/-). Out of the total fund 11 NYK (Nehru Yuvak Kendra was established for the welfare of nonstudent youth between 15-35 years of age under the Youth service programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development. These are centrally sponsored libraries) received a total of Rs. 12,500/-, the rest amount are distributed among the one State Central Library, 22 District and Sub-divisional libraries. By this way, a total of 34 libraries were benefited by the RRRLF during 2002-03 (Sharma, 2014).

In the year 2003-05 the Kanakpur Progatishil Club (Hafazur Rahman Memorial Library), Kanakpur, Karimganj received a total of Rs. 1,20,000/- for building under the scheme of assistance to a voluntary organization providing public library service, 15 libraries received a total of Rs. 1,50,000/- under the scheme of financial assistance to children libraries of children section of general public libraries, while 9 centrally
sponsor libraries to receive a total of Rs. 22,474/- that means only a total of 33 libraries were benefited by RRRLF during 2003-04 (Sharma, 2014).

In the year 2015 Automation project of Public Libraries in Assam has been funded by RRRLF, Kolkata under matching assistance programme. “Koha” Library Software has been installed in twenty (20) District Libraries. District Library, Guwahati and Reference Section of DLS have completed its work of retro conversion for library automation (http://rrrlf.gov.in/).

In 2016 For the development of library services in Assam RRRLF provides total Assistance (Matching + Non-Matching) grants Rs. 479.94 (lakhs) http://rrrlf.gov.in/).

A two days’ programme for the celebration of Librarians’ Day was organized by the Directorate of Library Services, Assam in collaboration with RRRLF on 10 and 12 August in 2016. A seminar on the theme “Digitization of Rare Books” was also organized (http://rrrlf.gov.in/).

In this year RRRLF established Differently Abled Section in District Library Tinsukia, District Library Jorhat, District Library Barpeta, District Library Karimgunj and Dispur Branch Library with the financial assistance of RRRLF (http://rrrlf.gov.in/).

In 2017 A two days State-level seminar on Public Librarianship organized by the Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Library, Guwahati. with the assistance of Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata (http://rrrlf.gov.in/).

The extension of the library building of District Library, Nalbari and construction of a new library building of the Sub-Divisional library Sarupather at Dhansiri in Assam have been completed with the financial assistance of the RRRLF (http://rrrlf.gov.in/).
3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is found that India has a remarkable public library history. Assam is also not a lagging behind in the development of public library system. Though in ancient Assam there was the process of preservation of books under the royal patronage but these were only for the scholarly persons, not for the common people. The true modern library system in Assam started from the beginning of the 20th century. Every citizen should give sincere attention for further development of public library system from the grassroots level.