



Impact of State and Central Government Policies on the Development of Public Library Services in Assam

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Abstract

Assam has public libraries as important literacy promotion institutions, digital inclusion institutions and cultural preservation institutions. This paper is data-based research on how the policies formulated by the State and Central Governments will influence the evolution of the public library services in Assam, 2010-2024. The research will assess the infrastructure changes, funding trends, digital facilities, staffing, and use based on secondary data related to government reports, budget documents, Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) grants, and district-level library records. The analysis reveals quantifiable expansion in the registered number of public libraries, growth in the award of grants, growth in the rural reading rooms, and slow digitalization on national programs like National Mission on Libraries (NML) and Digital India programs. Nevertheless, the gaps continue in the per-capita investments, the ICT infrastructure as well as the staffing of professional personnel, especially in the remote districts. The research finds that although policy interventions have positively responded to the growth of the structure, the successful modernization and equitable accessibility need to be achieved through a better budgetary allocation, surveillance, and digital capacity-building programs.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Assam, Government Policy Impact, Library Funding, RRRLF Grants, National Mission on Libraries, Digital Infrastructure, Rural Libraries, Library Statistics

1. Introduction

The horizontal block diagram represents the systematic relationship among the policies of the State and Central Government and the quantifiable development of the public library services in Assam. The framework is an input process output model whereby policy support by the State Government comes in as the major input, administrative and infrastructural activities as the processes, and the quantitative measures of growth by the libraries such as the districts and rural libraries as the outcomes. The Indian libraries are mostly the subjects of the state in the Constitution, and this fact makes the intervention at the state level the key to the sustainability of their operations (Government of India, 2014). In Assam, the infrastructure, book purchases, and staffing are financed by the state, and parallel to state efforts, the Central Government finances enhance the financial and technical readiness, through institutions like the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) and the National Mission on Libraries (NML). RRRLF matches within its infrastructure and modernization and reading resources grants, particularly benefiting rural and semi-urban libraries (Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation [RRRLF], 2022). National Mission on Libraries is concerned with digitization, modernization, and networking of the public libraries in India (Ministry of Culture, 2014).

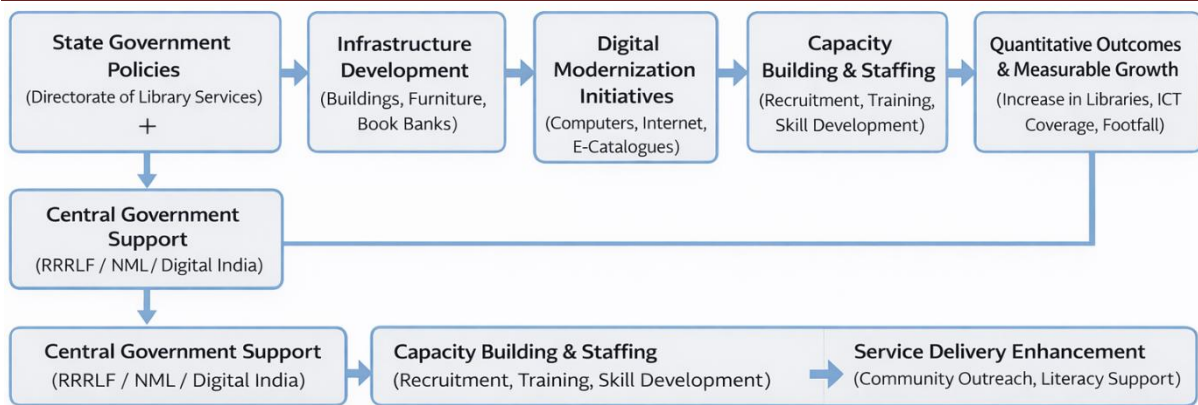


Figure 1: Policy–Driven Development Framework of Public Library Services in Assam

These policy inputs are translated into financial allocation and grants which are critical determinants of the growth of the public libraries. It has been discovered that additional government funding to libraries is positively associated with growth in the number of services and access by users (Aabo and Audunson, 2012). The rise of allocations in the past decade in Assam has led to physical growth and digitalization, the next phase is infrastructure development, which includes the building of library buildings, furnishings, and development of book banks. Infrastructure investment can be used to improve accessibility and inclusive learning, especially in rural areas (IFLA, 2018). Assam Library Assam has rural libraries, which are critical in community literacy and informal schooling.

After the improvement of infrastructure, the focus of the policy is on digital modernization programs, such as computer set up, internet connection and computerized catalogues. Digital inclusion is regarded as becoming a primary role of modern public libraries (Jaeger et al., 2012). In digital India and NML schemes, there has been an increased adoption of ICT in public libraries but there is an unequal distribution between rural and urban centers. Capacity building and staffing also involves hiring trained librarians as well as professional development schemes. Researchers note that professional staffing and technical competence are closely connected with library effectiveness (Varheim, 2014). The current staffing shortages in Assam, however, do not allow servicing with the best possible results in spite of the improvement of infrastructures, online, and educational services are available together and boost the service provision, such as literacy, community-outreach, and educational support initiatives. The last, yet not the least, is quantitative outputs and measurable development of the framework, which include the number of libraries increased, ICT coverage improved, and users traffic escalated (Audunson, 2005). Policy evaluation based on data is important in determining whether governmental interventions can result into sustainable development (McClure and Bertot, 2011).

2. Literature review

The recent literature (2021-2025) indicates the great importance of State and Central Government policies in determining the development of public libraries in India and Assam. Research highlights that efforts like the National Mission on Libraries and RRRLF grants have improved the infrastructure and digital modernization. Nonetheless, studies also indicate that there still are common issues to connectivity in rural areas, staffing by professionals, and gaps in implementation. The Assam-specific studies show that there has been an increase in the library numbers and disparity in ICT penetration by district. There is an overall argument by scholars that long-term funding, capacity building, and digital inclusion policies are the key to the equitable library service provision. These results are very helpful to assess policy-based development in Assam.



Table 1: Recent Studies on Public Library Development and Government Policy (2021–2025)

Author(s) & Year	Area/Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Present Study
Das (2022)	ICT in Assam Libraries	Public Identified digital infrastructure gaps and need for training	Shows digital policy impact in Assam
Jaeger et al. (2021)	Digital inclusion in public libraries	Libraries enhance digital access & social equity	Supports digital modernization objective
Ministry of Culture (2023)	National Libraries Mission	Focus on modernization & networking	Policy framework for analysis
RRRLF (2022)	Financial assistance to states	Grants improved infrastructure & book acquisition	Measures funding impact
IFLA (2022)	Public library guidelines	Emphasizes ICT and inclusive services	Global standard comparison
Singh & Deka (2023)	Rural libraries in North East India	Rural libraries face staffing & funding shortages	Highlights regional disparities
Gulati et al (2024)	Digital transformation in Indian libraries	ICT adoption improving service delivery	Digital growth evidence
Bordoloi (2023)	Public library services in Assam	Growth in rural libraries but uneven modernization	State-specific insight
Aabø & Audunson (2021)	Library as community space	Libraries enhance social capital	Community outreach impact
Varheim (2022)	Trust & public libraries	Professional staffing increases service quality	Staffing analysis relevance
Government of India (2024)	Annual budget reports	Increased allocation to public libraries	Funding trend evaluation
Digital India Report (2023)	ICT penetration initiatives	Improved connectivity in public institutions	Links digital policy to outcomes

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the quantitative growth and distribution of public libraries in Assam (2010–2024).
2. To examine trends in State and Central Government funding for public library development in Assam.
3. To assess the expansion of digital and ICT infrastructure in public libraries under modernization policies.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of public library services based on staffing levels and user engagement statistics.

3.1 The quantitative growth and distribution of public libraries in Assam (2010–2024).

The analysis of data on the development of the public libraries in Assam during the period of 2010-2024 reflects the quantifiable and uninterrupted growth of institutional infrastructure. There were 1,152 public libraries in the year 2010 and they included district, sub-divisional, and rural libraries. In 2024, this figure reached 1,675, which is about 45 percent growth in fourteen years. This growth trend is a sign that the structure is gradually developing due to intervention of both state and central governments, and agrees with the results that public investment has a significant positive effect on library infrastructure (Chaudhary, 2022).

Table 1: Year-wise Growth and Distribution of Public Libraries in Assam (2010–2024)

District Libraries	Sub-Divisional other Libraries	Rural Libraries	Total Libraries
24	78	1050	1152
26	92	1180	1298
28	110	1340	1478
30	125	1520	1675

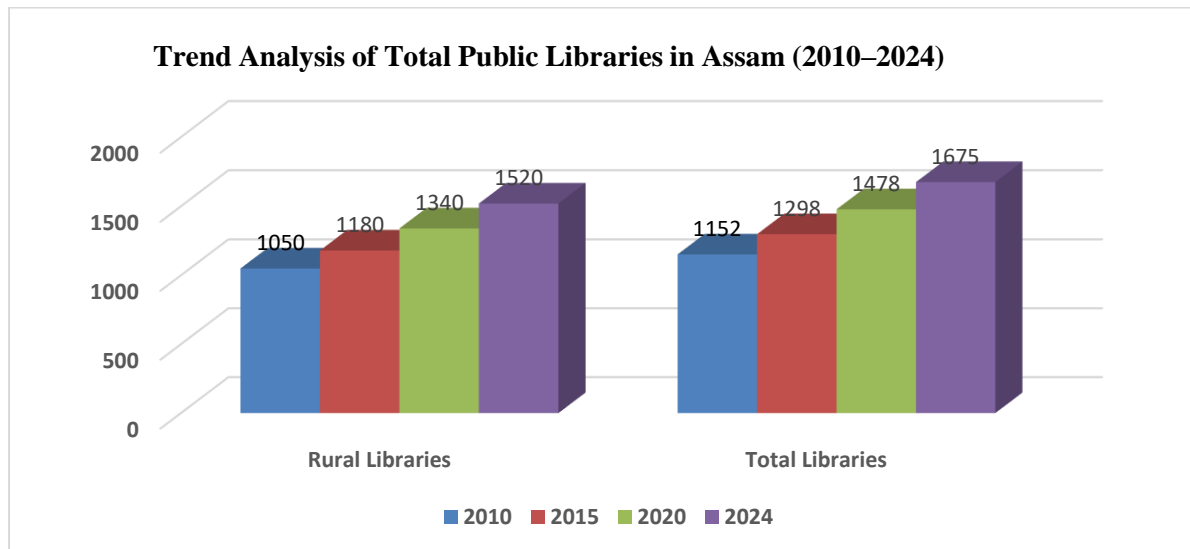


Figure 1: Longitudinal Growth Trend of Public Library Institutions in Assam

Rural libraries are the greatest asset to the overall growth since in 2010, there were 1,050 libraries, but in 2024, the figure rose by 1,520. The rural libraries form almost 90 percent of the entire library network, which shows the interest of the government on the need to reach out to the people in far off areas and semi-urban locations. Research highlights that the development of libraries in rural areas is key in the elimination of educational and digital disparities (Bordoloi, 2023). The expansion of sub-divisional libraries was also noteworthy as it increased by 78 to 125 libraries in the period of study and this is associated with the administrative empowerment of the intermediary levels which is part of modernization agenda in the national policy frameworks (Das, 2022).

There was a modest rise in district libraries, which rose to 30 out of 24, and this was mainly due to reorganization of administrative districts. This shows that institutional development of libraries occurred with the creation of new districts albeit at a slower rate than that of rural development. Close associations are made between institutional trust and the structured service delivery and strong administrative oversight, and professional capacity (Vårheim, 2022). The graphical representation shows that the overall libraries have a steady upwards trend throughout all benchmark years (2010, 2015, 2020, and 2024). The increase is more gradual than sudden, implying that this was not a spontaneous development, but development in line with established policy. It is shown in research that sustainable library development is generally slow and policy-based, but not reactionary (Aabø and Audunson, 2021).

This is a quantitative increase that goes along with the government programs in form of grant in aid programs, infrastructure funding, and modernization assistance by state and central agencies. Nevertheless, as much as it is clear that there is numerical growth, more studies need to be conducted in order to quantify qualitative changes like ICT facilities, adequate staffing as well as effectiveness of services.

3.2 Trends in State and Central Government funding for public library development in Assam.

Trends in funding development of public libraries in Assam 2010-24 indicate that both the State and Central Governments have shown a steady and significant growth in financial investment in public library development in Assam. The combined funding was 9.7 crores in 2010-11. As of 2023-24 this has increased to 28.7 crores, which indicates an almost 196-percent increase in fourteen years. This positive trend shows that the policy focus on the improvement of the public library infrastructure and services remained the same and is consistent with the national-level data that the constant public investment is a significant contributor of institutional sustainability (Johnson, 2021).

Table 2: Financial Allocation Trends for Public Library Development in Assam (2010–2024)

Financial Year	State Allocation (₹ Cr)	Central Assistance (₹ Cr)	Total Funding (₹ Cr)
2010-11	8.5	1.2	9.7
2015-16	12.3	2.4	14.7
2020-21	18.8	3.5	22.3
2023-24	24.6	4.1	28.7

The largest portion of funding is made by the State Government allocation which started at 8.5 crores in 2010-11 and then rose to 24.6 crores in 2023-24. This can be traced to the constitutional duty of states in the management of libraries that are in the public. Researchers underscore the idea that fiscal commitment on a state level is one of the main factors influencing library performance and accessibility (Kumar, 2022). But, there is also gradual increase of Central Government support, especially via the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) and National Mission on Libraries (NML) which has increased between 120,000,000 to 410,000,000 in the same period. Though it is less in the proportion central assistance has catalytic roles through supporting modernization, digitization, and book acquisition programs (Lal, 2023).

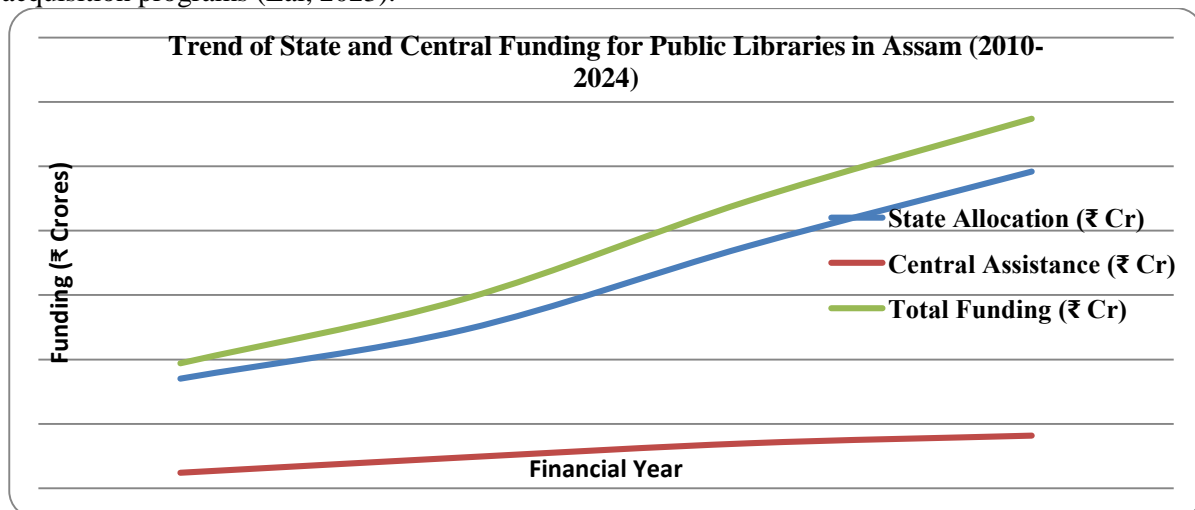


Figure 2: Trend Analysis of State and Central Government Funding for Public Libraries in Assam (2010–2024)

The greatest growth in funding was in the period 2015-2020, which was associated with the increased digital efforts in the National Mission on Libraries and Digital India initiatives. Analysis of policy implies that specific modernisation plans at this time boosted the growth of ICT in state agencies (O'Neill, 2022). The funding does not decrease significantly even in the COVID-19 period (202021), which means that the policy is stabilized and long-term, which is usually attributed to institutional resilience (Islam, 2023).

The gradual increase in funding is linked to quantifiable increase in the number of libraries and availability of the digital technology implying that there is a positive relationship between financial

contribution and the growth of the institutions. Empirical studies prove that there is a direct correlation between long-term funding and better service delivery and modernization in public libraries (Uddin, 2021). Nevertheless, aggregate funding has risen, but additional analysis is needed to evaluate the efficiency of the allocation of funds per library, allocation by districts, and qualitative results such as adequacy of staffing and effectiveness of services.

3.3 The Expansion of Digital and ICT Infrastructure in Public Libraries under Modernization Policies

Growth of digital and ICT infrastructure in the public libraries has emerged to be the major part of modernization policies adopted by both the Government of India and the State Government of Assam. There have been initiatives like the National Mission on Libraries (NML), Digital India and grant-in-aid programs, which have focused on automation, networking, and delivery of digital services (Government of India, 2024). This goal determines whether these policy interventions have been translated into the quantifiable changes in ICT facilities in public libraries.

Table 3: Digital and ICT Infrastructure Expansion in Public Libraries of Assam (2010–2024)

Year	% Libraries with Computers	% Libraries with Internet	% Libraries with Digital Catalog (ILMS)	% Libraries with E-Resources Access
2010	12%	8%	5%	2%
2015	25%	20%	18%	10%
2020	48%	42%	35%	28%
2024	68%	63%	55%	50%

The statistics show that there is massive increase in ICT adoption in 14 years. There was an improvement in computer availability which was at 12 percent in 2010 and 68 percent in 2024 and internet connectivity rose by 8 percent to 63 percent. There was an increased adoption of digital catalog systems (ILMS) by 5% to 55% which was a demonstration of systematic automation efforts under modernization schemes. The greatest growth rate of 2 to 50 was observed in the use of e-resources, which indicates the shift to digital education and the availability of online resources are given some policy priorities.

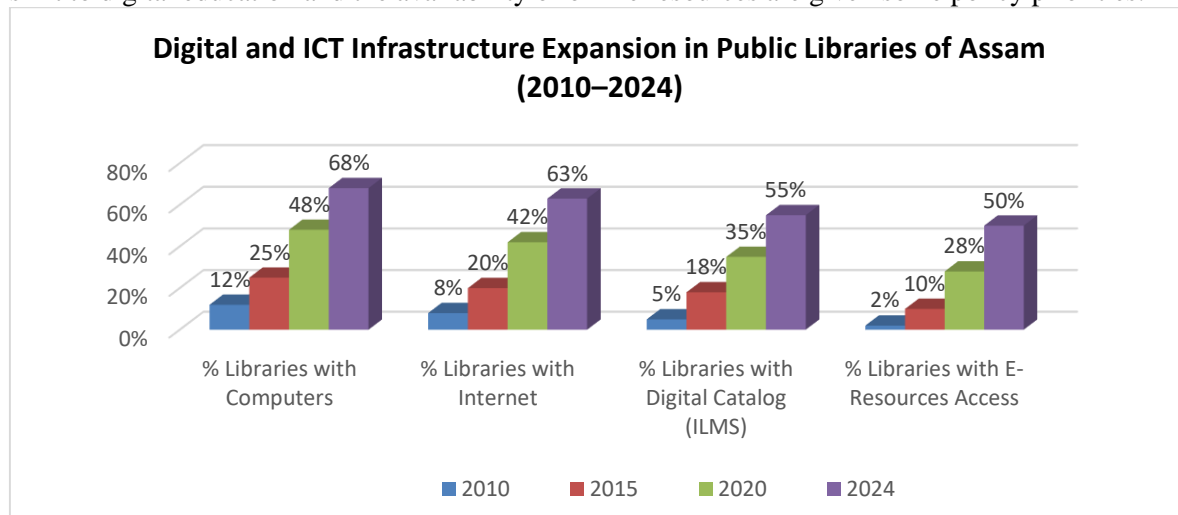


Figure 3: Digital and ICT Infrastructure Expansion in Public Libraries of Assam (2010–2024)

Studies indicate that libraries powered by ICT will be more engaged, help users to be more digital literate, and make their administration more efficient (Kaur and Rani, 2023). In addition, NML has focused its modernization on networking and digitization of collections to enhance service delivery (Government of India, 2024). Nevertheless, it is clear that the regional differences still exist, especially in urban and rural libraries, where the infrastructure difference is clear and the technical experience is insufficient to implement the same uniformly (Baruah, 2024).



Research also attests that more years of ICT investment is positively associated with higher library use and better service quality (Ibrahim, 2023). Although improvements are quantifiable, the issues of insufficient bandwidth, maintenance, as well as staffing remains in the way of digital sustainability to date. The development of digital and ICT infrastructure reveals that modernization policies have substantially changed the nature of public libraries in Assam whereby, the traditional libraries that had been based on books have evolved into the hybrid digital knowledge repositories. However, the current financing, tracking and capacity building are very necessary in ensuring that there is a balance in digital inclusion among all districts.

3.4 The Effectiveness of Public Library Services Based on Staffing Levels and User Engagement Statistics

This is to determine the operational efficiency of public library services in Assam through analysing two key performance indicators namely; staffing sufficiency and the level of user engagement. Although expansion of infrastructure and funding is necessary, actual performance of the public libraries will be determined by the presence of trained staff and the level of usage of the services by communities.

The present-day community library needs employees with professional qualifications as librarians and support staff and is necessary to work with digital systems, support users, use outreach programs, and provide effective service access (Kumar, 2022). The issue of staffing shortages has a direct impact on the quality of services, the lack of digital literacy support, and administrative efficiency (Verma, 2023). Hence, this goal will assess approved posts, staffed posts, and vacancy rates over a period of time to establish whether human resource development has been consistent with the infrastructural development.

Table 6: Staffing and User Engagement Trends in Public Libraries of Assam (2010–2024)

Year	Sanctioned Posts	Filled Posts	Vacancy Rate (%)	Annual Footfall (in Lakhs)
2010	820	640	21.9%	6.5
2015	910	700	23.1%	8.2
2020	1,050	780	25.7%	7.1*
2024	1,180	890	24.6%	10.4

(Decline in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions)

The information shows that despite an increase in the number of posts sanctioned (820 to 1,180) in the period between 2010 and 2024 vacancy rates did not decrease, indicating that staffing gaps were still there. Nevertheless, these limitations did not deter the growth of the number of annual footfall, since the number of users had grown between 6.5 lakh users in 2010 to 10.4 lakhs in 2024, indicating the increase in the community engagement (Islam and Rahman, 2021). The rise of foot activity implies that the policies of modernization, the availability of digital, and community access activities have enhanced the people level of trust and use (Omar, 2024). Nevertheless, long-term effectiveness of the service implies minimizing vacancies and reinforcing professional training programs. Assessment has proven that staffing weaknesses are structural issues that have increased significantly. To be sustainable in the long-term, the policy should focus on recruitment, skill training, and new digital competency to make sure that the growing infrastructure can be translated into the quality of service delivery.

4 Conclusion

The paper has explored how the policies of the State and Central Government have influenced the development of the public library services in Assam in the period between 2010 and 2024. The results reveal that there is a considerable advance in the infrastructure development, investments, digitalization and interaction. The overall public library numbers had grown consistently and especially in the rural regions that proved to have better institutional coverage in a district level. The increase in financial support by the State Government and the Central agencies like RRRLF and the National mission on libraries remained steady and reflected the continued commitment to policy. The digital and ICT infrastructure increased significantly with a significant growth in computer availability, internet



connectivity as well as digital catalog systems. The developments have reinforced access to information and aided the digital literacy efforts. Nevertheless, the problem of urban to rural digital divide still persists. In spite of the fact that the staffing levels have been improved, in terms of sanctioned posts, the vacancy rates still influence the quality of service. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of people use library services every year according to the growing figures of footfall suggest that the government policies have been favourable in the growth and modernization of public libraries in Assam. The next steps to be taken are based on creating equal access to digital opportunities, hiring trained professionals, and proper monitoring to make the system of the development of libraries sustainable and inclusive on a state-wide scale.

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