

Public Library Services in Meghalaya

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Gives background about the state. Mentions developments leading to present state of public libraries. Describes the existing resources and services rendered by the State Central Library. Gives data regarding collection, budget, expenditure on books, staff, building and services of district libraries. Enumerates suggestions for evolving an integrated library services in the state.

0 INTRODUCTION

The State of Meghalaya was created on 21st January, 1972. Shillong is its capital. The word 'Meghalaya' is neither Garo nor Khasi in origin. It was coined by Prof S P Chatterjee of Calcutta. It means the 'Abode of the clouds'.

The state is interspersed with many high and low hills. Cloudiness is generally common over the hills. The people of the state are Austric, Tibeto-Burmen and of Aryan origin. The society is matrilineal which means that the family line is traced through the woman.

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The major tribes of the Khasis are War, Bhoi and Lyngngam. The War tribe is concentrated on the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills and the Bhoi tribe on the northern portion. Lyngngam are found on the western part of the Khasi Hills bordering Garo Hills.

In Jaintia Hills, the chief tribe is Synteng or Pnar. Next to the Pnar are Hadem or Biete who are found to concentrate in the eastern part of Jaintia Hills.

In Garo Hills, the Garos and Koches are the major tribes. The hill Garos

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are known as Paharis and the Plain Garos are called Lamdanis. The chief clans are called Machong and smaller ones Chalchis.

The total population of Meghalaya as per the Census of 1991 is 17,60,626. Literary rate is 39.16%.

The state of Meghalaya has been divided into five districts, eight subdivisions and two administrative units.

The five districts and their headquarters are:

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
Jaintia Hills	Jowai
East Khasi Hills	Shillong
West Khasi Hills	Nongstoin
East Garo Hills	Williamnagar
West Garo Hills	Tura

1 DEVELOPMENT IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The development of Public Library in the state of Meghalaya can be traced back to 1903, when the then Government of Assam started a Government Public Library in the capital – Shillong in a rented building. However, the services were confined to government servants only.

The Public Library in the sense of the term was started only in 1954, when the Government of Assam established the State Central Library at Shillong. The then Government Public Library was amalgamated with the State Central Library and services were extended to the public. The assets of this Library were divided between Assam and Meghalaya after the creation of Meghalaya state in 1972.

After taking over in 1974, the Meghalaya government had to start from scratch to make this Library worthy of its name, right from appointment of staff to acquisition of books, furniture etc.

Within a very short time the State Central Library has become a full fledged state library. It has now a book stock of about 1,60,000 volumes, including 5,000 volumes received as free gifts from the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation. Besides books, there are a number of magazines and newspapers. There are different sections to suit different class of readers.

Besides, the State Central Library at Shillong, there are four district Libraries in the state located at Jowai, Nongstoin, Williamnagar and Tura.

2 STATE CENTRAL LIBRARY, SHILLONG

The State Central Library located at Shillong, is housed in a three storeyed

building built for the purposes. The administrative work of the State Central Library is managed by the Librarian assisted by an Advising Committee constituted by the Governor of the state. The total number of books and periodicals possessed by the State Central Library till March 1989 were as follows:

Total number of books	1,15,615
Number of periodicals subscribed	106

The expenditure of the State Central Library during the year 1989-90 was Rs 12,21,000.00, out of which only Rs 80,000 were spent on the purchase of books and periodicals. There are about 28 people working in the State Central Library with the Librarian as the head.

The State Central Library, provides lending services to the people of the state without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and religion. Its services to children, school students, college and and post-graduate students are in great demand. The children section of the library is one of its best attractions.

3 DISTRICT LIBRARIES

The State Central Library also acts as the district library for the district of East Khasi Hills. The information about other district libraries is given in *Table 1*.

Table 1

Districtwise Data

Name of the Library & Year of Establishment	Collection (upto March 1989)	Total in Budget 1989-90	Expenditure on books	Staff	Building	Services
District Library Jowai (1968)		4,43,000	1,80,000	11	Rented	Lending & consultation within the Library
District Library, Tura (1968)	20,000	1,65,509	14,201		Rented	-do-
District Library, Nongstoin (1982)		2,74,782	93,000	6	Rented	-do-
District Library, Williamnagar (1982)		1,43,000	4,000	5	Rented	-do-

4 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Thus, as far as the data is concerned all the district libraries present the same pattern. However, their services are more or less confined to the district headquarters. As such a sizable percentage of the population of the state remains outside the library services. Mobile library service is not available in the three district libraries. It is available only in the District Library, Jowai.

Similarly, the State Central Library does not function as the State Central Library in the real sense. Bibliographical and documentation services expected from the State Central Library have not yet been started. Bibliographical control of the documents available in the library is also not complete.

As such, some suggestions follow to evolve integrated library services in the state.

- 1 There should be a separate directorate of libraries headed by the State Librarian;
- 2 Library services should go beyond district level to block level and village level;
- 3 There should be deposit centres in villages;
- 4 Mobile library services should be provided to cover every corner in the districts;
- 5 Six percent of the education budget should go for the development of library services;
- 6 More facilities should be provided to the staff for study leave;
- 7 In villages, library should be attached with a school centre;
- 8 Centralized purchasing and processing of documents should be adopted and implemented at the State Central Library level;
- 9 A reprography unit should be provided in the State Central Library;
- 10 In the State Central Library, there should be a bibliographical bureau which brings out bibliography of books published in Meghalaya regularly;
- 11 The State government should take keen interest in the development of library services in the state and enact a library legislation for the purpose.