

# Impact of literary activities on user's involvement in the public libraries: A participatory case study in Bilasipara Sub-Divisional Public Library (Assam)

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**Abstract:** Literary activities like meetings on various social issues, observation of various social functions, publications of wall magazines, journals, books etc. involve more numbers of users in a public library. As a centre of literary source and intellectual activity, a public library can organize such activities. The impact of such activities in the enhancement of readership in a public library is studied in Bilasipara Sub-Divisional Public Library as a participant. The study reflects that, due to literary activities readership increased 4-5 times.

**Introduction:** According to Karlyle, the public libraries are the real open universities where the readers of any age, any academic Qualification or any profession can search knowledge. A library is not just a repository of books and librarian is also not just a store-keeper. A library is a centre of searching and sharing knowledge and librarian is a leader of knowledge society or knowledge-manager. At present, due to enormous growth of audio-visual media, the use of public libraries has been reduced and reader's scarcity in the public libraries is resulted. So, it is a big challenge for libraries to make the libraries alive with big numbers of readers. As a measure to increase the user of a public library, literary activities were experimented in the Bilasipara Sub-Divisional Public Library as a participant.

**The Study:** The Bilasipara Sub-Division (under Dhubri District) was declared in the year of 1983 by then Chief Minister of Assam. But till the year of 2007, there was not a Sub-Divisional Library at Bilasipara. In 2006 a group of people submitted memorandum to the SDO Civil of Bilasipara to start a Sub-Divisional Library. But according to government rule, for establishment of Sub-Divisional Library state government cabinet should give the decision. So, ultimately it is a political matter. Still, the SDO Civil of Bilasipara Mr. Hemen Das, ACS started a library as a NGO at the Bilasipara Town Committee's Community Hall. He supplied an Almirah and about 200 books for the library. A committee was formed to run the library where SDO Civil was the president and this participant was employed as honorary librarian cum secretary of the library. In 2nd January of 2007, the library was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner of Dhubri District where the intellectuals Community of the town were attended. A good number of people of Bilasipara donated books, journals, newspapers etc. for the library. For the first period, it was all right. But as the time passed, and SDO Civil Mr. Hemen Das transferred, the library scenario became darkened. A big challenge came in front of this participant as the librarian. There were many negative remarks from the point of many people regarding public library at Bilasipara. It was because, all the public libraries started at Bilasipara could not run till the date. Ex-Chief Mr. Sarat Ch. Sinha, who represented from east constituency of Bilasipara started a library at the time of freedom movement where mostly freedom fighters were involved. But after independence, it was not continued. Another library started by one chairman of Town Committee during 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> decade also ultimately ruined. One another library, started by Bilasipara Branch of "Asom Lekhika Samiti" also could not run. Of course, the books were preserved and these books were ultimately deposited in this Sub-Divisional Public Library itself. Due to these instances,

people were not hopeful for another one library. Some of the people said “why should we run after Sub-Divisional library, it is the government’s duty to set up Sub-Divisional Library as because, Bilasipara is a Sub-Division.” They were logically true. So, it was a big challenge for this participant as an honorary librarian of this library to run its life. A memorandum was submitted to Government through SDO-Civil to provide the permanent set up of Bilasipara Sub-Divisional library under the directorate of library services but at the same time the library committee also emphasized to continue the library by people’s effort. So, it was the duty of this participant to continue the library until and unless it is undertaken by the Government’s library service directorate. To continue the library peoples’ participation is must. Only books, journal, newspapers, T.V., and computer cannot be a library. There must have users. To create users or to attract users, we the few people who were responsible to run the library started a wall-magazine named as “Chitralkha”. The young group who were interested in literature came forward and carried the activity regularly. After success of this step we thought to publish the magazine as a printed journal. This venture was also successful. It is a matter of great pleasure that after publishing of sixth issue of this Journal, the Journal received ISSN. The scholars of undivided Goalpara District came forward and started to contribute their papers. Thus the people’s involvement increased and they started to organize the functions like Librarians’ day. Teachers’ day, Independence day, Gosh Bihu, Tithi of Madhavdeva, Damodardeva, Shilpi Divas, Vishnu Rabha Divas, Library Foundation Day, Saraswati Puja etc. After the increment of readers, it was possible to organize Book Fair at Bilasipara Rashmela with kind co-operation of SDO-Civil Mr. Dhruvajyoti Das and the local NGO “Uttaran”. The Book Fair was willingly patronized by Bilasipara Rahsmela committee. As the socio literary activity increased, the numbers of users also have

increased and the library became a centre for literary, social and academic activities. Apart from the Journal Chitralkha, the library has released another two books. The book on Sarat Chandra Goswami, the first secretary of Asom Sahitya Sabha was also released in last teachers' day (2011) where central representative from Asom Sahitya Sabha attended. The library also felicitated distinguished teachers, artists, writers in the librarians' day. Special guests were also invited to deliver lectures on various social topics. Sometimes, the readers themselves organize discussions on the topics like price hike, readership crisis in the library and so on. The best reader award was also declared in every year from the readers of the library at the library foundation day.

So, in comparison to the year of 2007-2008, when no literary activities were organized, the users of the library as well as peoples involvement have increased 4-5 times more in the year of 2011. This increment was the impact of literary activities.

### **Various literary activities of Bilasipara Sub-Divisional Library**

#### **2007**

Nil

#### **2008**

- Foundation Day
- Saraswati Puja
- Bishnu Rabha Divas
- Group Discussion
- Green Letter Release Ceremony
- Librarians' Day
- Sivananda Sarma Memorial Function

#### **2009**

- Foundation Day
- Shilpi Divas
- Bishnu Rabha Divas
- Librarians' Day
- Shankardeva Tithi
- Publication of Chitralkha

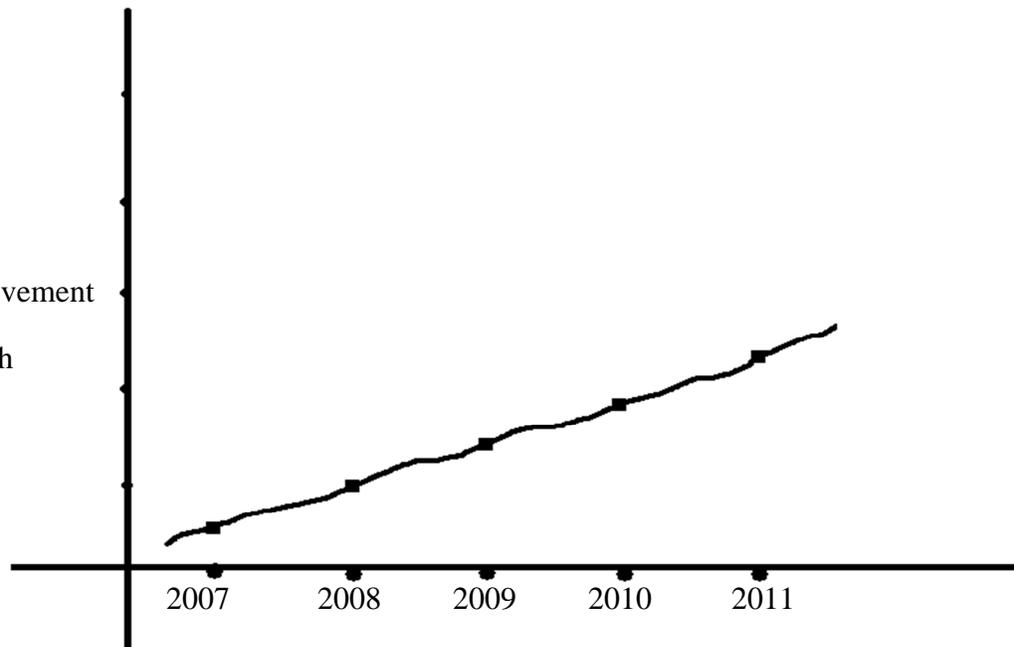
**2010**

- Foundation Day
- Shilpi Divas
- Republic Day
- Publication of Chitralkha (Bihu Issue)
- Bishnu Rabha Divas
- Librarians' Day
- Guest Lecture (Manoj Barpuripari, 17<sup>th</sup> Aug.)
- Publication of Chtralkha (Puja Issue, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct.)
- Kati Bihu (14<sup>th</sup> Oct.)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. Book Fair
- Publication of Green Letters.

**2011**

- Foundation Day
- Shilpi Divas
- Republic Day
- Gosh Bihu
- Chitralkha
- Tithi of Madhavdeva
- Tithi of Damodardeva
- Bishnu Rabha Divas
- Librarians' Day
- Teachers' Day
- Release of Book on Sarat Ch. Goswami
- Chitralkha
- Book-Fair (Nov.)

Readership involvement  
in the library with  
library activities



**Conclusion:** Due to the effect of audio-visual media, the people are now not so interested to visit the Public Libraries. To give life to the public libraries literary activities may help a lot. It is proved in the study that, readership involvement in the libraries can be enhanced 4-5 times more by these activities. Book Fair helps to aware the people regarding new books. A public library should conduct book-fair at least once in a year. A public library should take the responsibility of publication of books and Journals also. There should be a publication branch at public library. The librarian should take the leadership of this activities and he should organize the readers.

**References:**

1. Proceedings of Bilasipara Sub-Divisional Public Library.
2. Account Book of Bilasipara Sub-Divisional Public Library.
3. “Chitralekha”, Journal, 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> issue.