

Functional utilities of library learning space: A study with reference to the selected universities of Assam

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Abstract

The evolution of university libraries into dynamic learning spaces plays an important role in fostering holistic education. The study is a humble attempt to examine the functional utilities of library learning spaces in the selected university libraries in Assam. The study focuses on the capacity of the libraries to accommodate diverse academic activities and integration of technology resources. Based on a survey method, the responses were analyzed using a five-point Likert scale. The chi-squared tests have been performed on JASP Software to evaluate the statistical significance. The findings of the study reveal that most libraries provide moderately functional spaces. There are disparities in their ability to fully meet user needs while accommodating technology resources. 50 % of the libraries sufficiently accommodate technological resources, although challenges exist in optimizing spaces for collaborative and individual learning.

Keywords: Library Space; Functional utility; Technology Resources; Holistic learning

1. Introduction

Library spaces today embody a range of implications shaped by diverse perspectives in the 21st century. In this digital era, libraries can no longer be viewed solely as functional spaces for storing and disseminating information resources. Instead, they have evolved into multifaceted hubs for learning and innovation. The library space enriched with socio-cultural, research and educational significance for both individuals and the broader academic community. University libraries, in particular, hold a pivotal role in this transformation as they serve as vital centers for education, scholarship and other academic pursuits. To foster the holistic development of learners, university libraries must effectively manage learning spaces to provide students with access to technology, information and co-curricular opportunities. These resources complement formal classroom learning and experiences, contributing to students' comprehensive education. Ultimately, the focus is on holistic learning that extends beyond the classroom, equipping students to lead enriched lives after completing their university studies. Designing a library to meet the demands of the 21st century requires careful consideration of factors such as space, services and user needs. Creating a new library also necessitates thorough background research to define a clear vision, which serves as the foundation for a compelling and feasible plan.

1.1. Rationale of the Study

Learning is a lifelong and continuous process, significantly influenced by the environment in which it occurs. A comfortable learning environment positively impacts the cognitive development of learners. The German concept of *Bildung* (education/formation) emphasizes that learning shapes individuals by cultivating their humanity and intellectual abilities. Learning is inherently holistic, and exposure to well-designed learning spaces can greatly enhance a learner's ability to optimize their skills, highlighting the notion that the environment serves as the "third teacher." Key factors contributing to successful learning include personal disposition, information literacy, professional support,

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appropriate infrastructure, and diverse spaces (Walton & Mathews, 2013). The interaction between individuals and their environment, a concept rooted in Kurt Lewin's field theory and life space, underscores the importance of context in learning. The idea of a learning or innovation space in libraries reflects a dynamic perspective, blending physical and digital elements to create technology-enhanced environments. These spaces offer equal opportunities for learners to engage with peers, subject experts, or educators in their specific areas of study. The evolution of libraries as learning spaces is informed by theoretical frameworks and practical applications that have developed over time. The perception of libraries as learning spaces varies across socio-cultural and regional contexts. Some view them as informal hubs for learning and information sharing, while others, particularly in higher education institutions, envision them as collaborative spaces that foster learning and support consortia-based approaches for information dissemination (Watson, 2013).

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the functional utilities of library learning space in the selected university libraries of Assam.
- To study the accommodation of library space for technology resources.

1.2. Coverage of the study

The study covers the libraries of Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU), Assam Women's University (AWU), Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Viswavidyalaya(BSSV), Bodoland University(BU), Cotton University(CU), Dibrugarh University(DU), Gauhati University(GU), Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva Vishwavidyalaya(MSSV), Majuli University of Culture(MUC), The Assam Down Town University(ADTU), The Assam Kaziranga University(KU) and The Assam Royal Global University(RGU).

2. Methodology

The study employs the survey method, with a structured questionnaire administered as the primary instrument for data collection. The response options on the close ended questions are based on a five-point Likert scale, designed to measure the librarians' perspectives on the functional utilities of library spaces.

2.1. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 Availability of library space for diverse academic activities

N=12	Responses on the scale			Total
	2	4	5	
GU	0	0	1	1
DU	1	0	0	1
ADBU	0	1	0	1
BU	0	1	0	1
ADTU	0	1	0	1
AKU	0	1	0	1
ARGU	0	1	0	1
AWU	0	1	0	1
MSSV	0	1	0	1
CU	1	0	0	1
MUC	1	0	0	1
BSSV	0	1	0	1
Total	3	8	1	12

(Likert scale range: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 2 Chi-Squared Tests

	Value	df	P
X ²	24.000	22	0.347
N	12		

Table 3 Utilization of sufficient library space for user needs

N=12	Responses on the scale		Total
	2	4	
GU	0	1	1
DU	1	0	1
ADBU	0	1	1
BU	0	1	1
ADTU	1	0	1
AKU	0	1	1
ARGU	0	1	1
AWU	1	0	1
MSSV	0	1	1
CU	1	0	1
MUC	1	0	1
BSSV	1	0	1
Total	6	6	12

(Likert scale range: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 4 Chi-Squared Tests

	Value	df	p
X ²	12.000	11	0.364
N	12		

Table 5 Library space for technology resources

N=12	Responses on the scale			Total
	2	3	4	
GU	0	0	1	1
DU	1	0	0	1
ADBU	0	0	1	1
BU	0	1	0	1

ADTU	1	0	0	1
AKU	0	0	1	1
ARGU	0	0	1	1
AWU	1	0	0	1
MSSV	0	0	1	1
CU	1	0	0	1
MUC	1	0	0	1
BSSV	0	0	1	1
Total	5	1	6	12

(Likert scale range: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 6 Chi-Squared Tests

	Value	df	p
X ²	24.000	22	0.347
N	12		

Table 7 Library space for the requirements of users

N=12	Responses on the scale			Total
	2	3	4	
GU	0	0	1	1
DU	1	0	0	1
ADBU	0	1	0	1
BU	0	0	1	1
ADTU	0	0	1	1
AKU	0	0	1	1
ARGU	1	0	0	1
AWU	1	0	0	1
MSSV	0	0	1	1
CU	1	0	0	1
MUC	0	0	1	1
BSSV	1	0	0	1
Total	5	1	6	12

(Likert scale range: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 8 Chi-Squared Tests

	Value	df	p
X ²	24.000	22	0.347
N	12		

Objective 1: To study the functional utilities of library learning space in the selected university libraries of Assam.

The analysis of library spaces for diverse academic activities in the Table 1 shows a mixed response. It shows that the majority of libraries (8 out of 12) indicate a moderate functionality in reading, group study and research. In addition to that, 1 library rated itself highly functional. While 3 libraries reported requirement for improvements in their existing space. The chi-squared test ($X^2 = 24.000$, $p = 0.347$) suggests no statistically significant difference among the libraries in terms of functionality for diverse academic activities. From the Table 3 it is found that the responses are evenly split in terms of the utilization of sufficient library space for user needs. 6 libraries agreeing that their space is sufficient and 6 disagreeing. The chi-squared test ($X^2 = 12.000$, $p = 0.364$) again indicates no significant disparity across institutions.

Objective 2: To study the accommodation of library space for technology resources

The analysis from Table 5 reveals that 6 out of 12 libraries reported satisfactory accommodation of technology resources in the library space. Whereas 5 libraries are found their spaces inadequate for accommodation of technology resources. 1 library rated its accommodation as neutral. The chi-squared test ($X^2 = 24.000$, $p = 0.347$) shows no significant variance across libraries in accommodating technology resources. The analysis of Table 7 on the library spaces configured for user requirements shows that half of the libraries adequately meet user needs (6 out of 12), while 5 reported insufficiencies. The chi-squared test indicates no statistically significant differences.

3. Conclusion

The findings of the study highlights that while some university libraries have moderately functional spaces; there is a notable proportion where improvements are needed to fully meet user requirements. Functional utilities, such as study zones and collaborative spaces, require further enhancement to align with modern academic demands. The results of the study reveals that many university libraries in Assam have made efforts to integrate technology into their spaces but still face challenges in achieving optimal accommodation.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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