

# PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN PUNJAB: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Neha Thakur**

Ph.D. Researcher,

Department of Library & Information Science, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India

Email-id: [nehmankaur@yahoo.com](mailto:nehmankaur@yahoo.com)

---

**Abstract:** This study provides a comprehensive analysis of public libraries across various districts in Punjab, focusing on infrastructure, collections, manpower, users and operational challenges. Data reveals significant variability in infrastructure, with some libraries boasting extensive facilities while others face limitations. Collections vary in size and growth, while user numbers highlight the popularity of libraries like Jalandhar and Patiala. Gender and age group distributions show a higher proportion of male users, predominantly aged 18-30. Profession distribution reflects diverse user interests. Challenges include prolonged closures due to construction, staff crunch, and limited resources. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts to prioritize resource allocation, staffing, and infrastructure development. The study concludes with recommendations for enhancing library services, including streamlined membership processes, extended operating hours, and improved amenities. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of public libraries as vital community resources and highlight the need for continuous improvement to meet evolving user needs.

**Keywords:** Public libraries, Community centres, Public library system.

---

## 1.0 Introduction

Public libraries stand as bastions of knowledge, serving as vital conduits to literacy, imagination, and personal growth. They not only inform and empower citizens but also foster a sense of cultural heritage and support education across all levels of society. The association between public libraries and literacy levels has been extensively studied, showcasing their pivotal role in enhancing economic productivity of a nation (Prasad, 2016).

The role of public libraries in the socio-economic development of a society is well-established, with libraries serving as repositories of knowledge and information, catering to the diverse needs of their users. However, the advent of the digital age and the proliferation of the internet have raised some questions about the relevance and utility of public libraries in the modern context (Jatinder Kumar et al., 2015; Brinxmat, 2014; Kumar & Singh, 2009; Zainab, 2001; Kumar, D., et al., 2010).

Public libraries serve as essential resources for communities, providing access to information, resources, and services that support literacy, education, and community development. In India, public libraries play a crucial role in promoting access to information and knowledge, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

The Punjab region is home to a diverse network of public libraries, including district libraries, a state central library, and local libraries. There are 15 public libraries in Punjab, including one central library.

## 2.0 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the adequacy and distribution of infrastructure resources, including total area, number of rooms, floors, reading halls, and seating capacity, to understand the capacity and potential utilization of each library;
2. To analyse the trends in the total collection of books over the years to evaluate the growth and diversity of resources available to library users;

3. To examine the enrolment figures to gauge the level of community engagement and interest in library services across different districts of Punjab.
4. To evaluate the staffing levels and daily visitor counts to determine the operational capacity and demand for library services;
5. To investigate the gender-wise distribution of users to identify any disparities or preferences in library usage among different demographic groups;
6. To identify areas for improvement in the public library systems based on feedback from library personnel and users.

### **3.0 Literature review**

The library system plays a crucial role in educational institutions by acting as a central hub for knowledge dissemination. Over time, it has evolved to adapt to changing user needs and the availability of digital resources. Various research papers discussed here shed light on the challenges and opportunities in library system development and management.

**Herzog (2004)** discussed challenges confronting academic librarians in the 21st century, especially in collection development due to digital advancements. She advocates for user-centered approaches and the adaptation of libraries to meet evolving user needs.

**Kaur & Rani (2008)** explored the attitudes of library professionals towards marketing information services in university libraries in Punjab and Chandigarh, India. They stress the importance of marketing skills and strategies for promoting library resources and services to meet user needs.

**Borin & Yi (2011)** proposed a multi-dimensional model for assessing academic library collections, stressing the importance of comprehensive evaluation frameworks considering user expectations.

**Kiran (2012)** proposed a model for public libraries' involvement in literacy campaigns in Punjab, India, underlining the role of libraries in promoting literacy and education through partnerships with schools and community organizations.

**Tabacaru & Pickett (2013)** addressed off-site storage management challenges for academic library collections, advocating for effective assessment and management strategies to balance cost savings with access and preservation needs.

**Kumar, Sumi, Narang & Singh (2015)** surveyed the awareness and use of library resources among students at Panjab University Extension Library Ludhiana, emphasizing the need for libraries to enhance awareness and user-centred service delivery.

**Verma (2022)** assessed the public library systems across these three regions, emphasizing their development, infrastructure, and service delivery. The study offered a comparative analysis, and suggested improvements based on observed best practices and identified gaps in current systems.

**Mukherjee & Patra (2022)** examined digital library initiatives in the Northeast region of India, highlighting the lack of truly accessible digital libraries and issues such as inadequate maintenance. Using secondary data to review 15 digital library projects across eight North Eastern states, the authors stress the need for a national policy initiative involving various stakeholders to improve the situation. The study offers observations and policy suggestions to aid scholars, librarians, and decision-makers.

**Popović, Vilar & Javrh (2025)** explore the intersection of adult reading literacy and the role of public libraries in enhancing reading competencies. Through content analysis of 333 publications, it identifies a theoretical link between public libraries and adult literacy development, although recent journal articles lack direct focus on this relationship. The findings highlight the need for proactive library engagement in adult literacy, especially for those lacking adequate reading skills. The research underscores the potential of public libraries as facilitators of adult learning, despite limitations related to the availability of updated national and international data.

These papers collectively underscore the complexity of library system development, particularly in the digital era. They emphasize user-centric approaches, collaboration with stakeholders, and comprehensive assessment strategies for effective library management. Insights from these studies are invaluable for library administrators, practitioners, and researchers, contributing to ongoing discussions on the role and future of library systems.

#### 4.0 Methodology

##### 4.1 Data Collection

Since the present study was analytical in nature, primary as well as secondary data was collected to gather necessary information. The primary data was collected by using a self-administered survey instrument. A structured questionnaire was designed to satisfy the objectives of the study and it was distributed among the library professionals as well as users' in selected 14 public libraries and one central state library. Specifically, a well-structured questionnaire was designed and administered to the users of the Panjab University Extension Library to elicit required information. The questionnaires were personally distributed to the users of the library, and a total of 341 questionnaires were administered, with a good response rate of 100 filled in questionnaires received from the users. Also, an attempt was made to personally contact and meet all library professionals in their respective libraries to have first-hand information and to understand the existing infrastructure. The 15 selected public libraries of Punjab State are, Amritsar, Bathinda, Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Ferozpur, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Mansa, Mohali, Nabha, Patiala, Ropar, Sangrur.

##### 4.2 Sampling

Random sampling techniques were employed to ensure representation from different regions and types of public libraries.

##### 4.3 Recordation

Responses were recorded anonymously to maintain confidentiality and ensure data accuracy.

**Statistical Analysis:** Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyse the data collected from the questionnaires. The demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, and occupation, were analyzed to provide a profile of the library users. The frequency of library visits, the purpose of visits, and the salient features that attract users to the library were also analyzed.

##### 4.4 Data analysis and discussion

The collected data was analyzed, organized, tabulated, and interpreted by using simple statistical methods.

**Table 1: Infrastructure**

S. No	Public Library	Total Area	No of Rooms	No of Floors	No of Reading Hall	Seating Capacity
1	Amritsar	23190 Sq. Ft.	15	2	3	Up to 50
2	Bathinda	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
3	Faridkot	4726 Sq.Ft.	4	1	1	Up to 150
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	15000 Sq. Ft.	5	1	1	Up to 50
5	Ferozpur	2500 Sq. Ft.	02 Big Rooms /Halls Only	2	02 Big Rooms /Halls Only	Upto 100
6	Gurdaspur	4192 Sq.Ft.	5	1	1	Up to 50
7	Hoshiarpur	2700 Sq. Ft.	4	1	1	Up to 50
8	Jalandhar	More Than 1 Acre	6	2	4	Up to 100

9	Kapurthala	4250 Sq. Ft.	7	1	2	Up to 350
10	Mansa	1150 Sq. Ft.	1 Single Hall Room	1	0	Up to 50
11	Mohali	1560 Sq. Ft.	3	1	1	Up to 50
12	Nabha	3880 Sq. Ft. (3 Bighe 5 Biswa)	4	1	2	Up to 50
13	Patiala	21 Bighe 6 Biswa	10	2	1	Up to 200
14	Ropar	3 Kanal	5	2	1	Up to 100
15	Sangrur	3.4 Acres	5	2	2	Upto 150

N.A.: Information is not available

Table 1 provides an overview of the infrastructure of public libraries across various districts of Punjab. The library in Amritsar spans 23,190 sq ft with 15 rooms over 2 floors and 3 reading halls accommodating 50 individuals. However, Bathinda's library details are were not accessible. Faridkot's library covers 4,726 sq ft with 4 rooms and a reading hall seating 150. Fatehgarh Sahib's library extends over 15,000 sq ft with 5 rooms and a reading hall seating 50. Ferozpur's library encompasses 2,500 sq ft with 2 large rooms seating 100. Gurdaspur's library occupies 4,192 sq ft with 5 rooms and a reading hall seating 50. Hoshiarpur's library covers 2,700 sq ft with 4 rooms and a reading hall seating 50. Jalandhar's library spans over 1 acre with 6 rooms on 2 floors, featuring 4 reading halls seating 100. Kapurthala's library extends over 4,250 sq ft with 7 rooms on one floor, accommodating 350 over 2 floors. Mansa's library covers 1,150 sq ft with a single hall room seating 50. Mohali's library occupies 1,560 sq ft with 3 rooms and a reading hall seating 50. Nabha's library encompasses 3,880 sq ft with 4 rooms and 2 reading halls seating 50. Patiala's library is expansive, spanning 21 Bighe 6 Biswa with 10 rooms on 2 floors seating 200. Ropar's library is on 3 Kanal land with 5 rooms on 2 floors and a reading hall seating 100. Sangrur's library extends over 3.4 acres with 5 rooms on 2 floors and 2 reading halls seating 150.

**Table 2: Total Collection in Public Libraries of Punjab**

S. No.	Public Library	Total No. Collection	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
1	Amritsar	>52000	48076	50063	50984	51361	51404
2	Bathinda	>26000	26000	26000	26000	26000	26000
3	Faridkot	>36000	36000	36000	36000	36000	36300
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	>24000	24303	24303	24303	24303	24303
5	Ferozpur	>42500	42511	42511	42511	42511	42511
6	Gurdaspur	>60000	54783	56832	58032	58032	58648
7	Hoshiarpur	>48000	48331	48331	48331	48331	48387
8	Jalandhar	>130000	122151	123389	126178	128830	130000
9	Kapurthala	>50000	50000	50000	50000	50000	50000
10	Mansa	>20500	20001	20001	20001	20001	20510
11	Mohali	>37000	34000	35000	36000	36000	37000
12	Nabha	>66000	65930	65930	65930	65930	65996
13	Patiala	>150000	136000	140000	145000	147000	15000
14	Ropar	>45000	45025	45025	45025	45075	46120
15	Sangrur	>65000	64000	64500	64600	64700	65000

Table 2 presents the total collection of books in public libraries across various districts of Punjab, along with the collection figures for the years 2017-18 to 2021-22 - Amritsar: The library in Amritsar boasts a collection of over 52,000 books. The collection has seen a steady increase over the years, reaching 51,404 books in 2021-22, Bathinda: Bathinda's library has a collection of over 26,000 books, which has remained consistent from 2017-18 to 2021-22, Faridkot: Faridkot's library maintains a collection of over 36,000 books, which has slightly increased to 36,300 books in 2021-22, Fatehgarh Sahib: With a collection of over 24,000 books, Fatehgarh Sahib's library has maintained a stable collection size over the years, Ferozpur: Ferozpur's library houses over 42,500 books, maintaining the same collection size from 2017-18 to 2021-22, Gurdaspur: Gurdaspur's library boasts a collection of over 60,000 books, which has seen a gradual increase, reaching 58,648 books in 2021-22, Hoshiarpur: Hoshiarpur's library has a collection of over 48,000 books, with a slight increase observed over the years, reaching 48,387 books in 2021-22, Jalandhar: The library in Jalandhar has an extensive collection of over 130,000 books, with a continuous increase observed over the years, reaching 130,000 books in 2021-22, Kapurthala: Kapurthala's library maintains a collection of over 50,000 books, which has remained consistent from 2017-18 to 2021-22, Mansa: Mansa's library has a collection of over 20,500 books, with a slight increase observed to 20,510 books in 2021-22, Mohali: Mohali's library houses over 37,000 books, which has seen a gradual increase over the years, reaching 37,000 books in 2021-22, Nabha: Nabha's library boasts a collection of over 66,000 books, with a slight increase observed over the years, reaching 65,996 books in 2021-22, Patiala: Patiala's library has an extensive collection of over 150,000 books, which has seen continuous growth over the years, reaching 150,000 books in 2021-22, Ropar: Ropar's library maintains a collection of over 45,000 books, with a slight increase observed over the years, reaching 46,120 books in 2021-22, Sangrur: One library, not explicitly named, possesses a collection of over 65,000 books, which has remained consistent from 2017-18 to 2021-22.

Table 3 provides information on the total number of enrolments in public libraries across different districts of Punjab - Amritsar: The library in Amritsar has a total of 1,670 enrolments, whereas Bathinda's library has 700 enrolments, Faridkot: The library in Faridkot has a significant number of enrolments, total 4,040, Fatehgarh Sahib: There are 1,789 enrolments in the Fatehgarh Sahib library, Ferozpur: Ferozpur's library boasts 4,200 enrolments, Gurdaspur: Gurdaspur's library has a total of 3,310 enrolments, Hoshiarpur: Hoshiarpur's library has 3,207 enrolments, Jalandhar: The library in Jalandhar has the highest number of enrolments among all the libraries listed, with a total of 16,950, Kapurthala: Kapurthala's library has 3,140 enrolments, Mansa: There are 1,862 enrolments in Mansa's library, Mohali: Mohali's library has 2,430 enrolments, Nabha: Nabha's library has 2,202 enrolments, Patiala: Patiala's library boasts a high number of enrolments, total 21,540, Ropar: Ropar's library has 3,476 enrolments, Sangrur: Sangrur's library has a total of 6,073 enrolments.

**Table 3: Number of staff and total number of daily visitors in Public Libraries of Punjab**

S. No.	Public Library	Established In Year	Total No Enrolments	Total No of Staff	Daily Visitors No
1	Amritsar	1982	1670	2	1-50
2	Bathinda	1980	700	1	N.A.
3	Faridkot	1986	4040	2	1-50
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	1995	1789	1	1-50
5	Ferozpur	1980	4200	1	1-50
6	Gurdaspur	1966	3310	2	1-50
7	Hoshiarpur	1974	3207	1	1-50
8	Jalandhar	1957	16950	2	50-100
9	Kapurthala	1971	3140	3	50-100
10	Mansa	1995	1862	2	1-50
11	Mohali	1989	2430	4	50-100
12	Nabha	1946-47	2202	Nil (Restore and Librarian on Deputation)	1-50
13	Patiala	1956	21540	11	>200

14	Ropar	1971	3476	5	50-100
15	Sangrur	1912	6073	2	50-100

**N.A.:** Information is not available

Table 3 also presents information regarding the establishment year, total number of staff, and the range of daily visitors in public libraries across various districts of Punjab - Amritsar: Established in 1982, the library has 2 staff members and receives between 1 to 50 daily visitors, Bathinda: Established in 1980, Bathinda's library has 1 staff member and reportedly has no daily visitors, Faridkot: The library in Faridkot was established in 1986 and has 2 staff members, with a daily visitor range of 1 to 50, Fatehgarh Sahib: Established in 1995, this library has 1 staff member and attracts 1 to 50 daily visitors, Ferozpur: Ferozpur's library, established in 1980, has 1 staff member and receives between 1 to 50 daily visitors, Gurdaspur: Established in 1966, Gurdaspur's library has 2 staff members and receives 1 to 50 daily visitors, Hoshiarpur: The library in Hoshiarpur was established in 1974 and has 1 staff member, with a daily visitor range of 1 to 50, Jalandhar: Jalandhar's library, established in 1957, has 2 staff members and attracts between 50 to 100 daily visitors, Kapurthala: Established in 1971, Kapurthala's library has 3 staff members and receives between 50 to 100 daily visitors, Mansa: Mansa's library, established in 1995, has 2 staff members, with a daily visitor range of 1 to 50, Mohali: The library in Mohali was established in 1989 and has 4 staff members. It attracts between 50 to 100 daily visitors, Nabha: Nabha's library, established in 1946-47, has no specified number of staff, with restoration ongoing and a librarian on deputation. The daily visitor range is 1 to 50, Patiala: Patiala's library, established in 1956, has a substantial staff count of 11 members and attracts more than 200 daily visitors, Ropar: Established in 1971, Ropar's library has 5 staff members and receives between 50 to 100 daily visitors, Sangrur: Sangrur's library, established in 1912, has 2 staff members and attracts between 50 to 100 daily visitors.

**Table 4: Gender wise distribution of the users**

S. No.	Public Library	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1	Amritsar	11	47.83	12	52.17	23
2	Bathinda	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
3	Faridkot	11	45.83	13	54.17	24
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	7	46.67	8	53.33	15
5	Ferozpur	11	57.89	8	42.11	19
6	Gurdaspur	11	55.00	9	45.00	20
7	Hoshiarpur	9	45.00	11	55.00	20
8	Jalandhar	15	53.57	13	46.43	28
9	Kapurthala	15	57.69	11	42.31	26
10	Mansa	16	69.57	7	30.43	23
11	Mohali	16	59.26	11	40.74	27
12	Nabha	9	42.86	12	57.14	21
13	Patiala	26	52.00	24	48.00	50
14	Ropar	14	56.00	11	44.00	25
15	Sangrur	9	45.00	11	55.00	20
<b>Total</b>		180		151		

**N.A.:** Information is not available

Table 4 illustrates the gender-wise distribution of users across different public libraries in Punjab - Amritsar: Out of a total of 23 users, 11 are male (constituting 47.83% of the total) and 12 are female (52.17%), Bathinda: There are no recorded users in Bathinda's library according to this data, Faridkot: Among 24 users, 11 are male (45.83%) and 13 are female (54.17%), Fatehgarh Sahib: Out of 15 users, 7 are male (46.67%) and 8 are female (53.33%), Ferozpur: Among 19 users, 11 are male (57.89%) and 8 are female (42.11%), Gurdaspur: 20 users are



recorded, with 11 being male (55.00%) and 9 being female (45.00%), Hoshiarpur: Out of 20 users, 9 are male (45.00%) and 11 are female (55.00%), Jalandhar: Among 28 users, 15 are male (53.57%) and 13 are female (46.43%), Kapurthala: There are a total of 26 users, with 15 being male (57.69%) and 11 being female (42.31%), Mansa: 23 users are recorded, with 16 being male (69.57%) and 7 being female (30.43%), Mohali: Among 27 users, 16 are male (59.26%) and 11 are female (40.74%), Nabha: Out of 21 users, 9 are male (42.86%) and 12 are female (57.14%), Patiala: Among 50 users, 26 are male (52.00%) and 24 are female (48.00%), Ropar: Among 25 users, 14 are male (56.00%) and 11 are female (44.00%), Sangrur: Out of 20 users, 9 are male (45.00%) and 11 are female (55.00%).

**Table 5: Age Group wise distribution of the users in Percentage**

S. No.	Public Library	Under 18 %	18-30 %	31-45 %	46-60 %	More Than 60 %
1	Amritsar	0.00	78.26	13.04	4.35	4.35
2	Bathinda	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
3	Faridkot	0.00	83.33	12.50	4.17	0.00
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5	Ferozpur	0.00	94.74	0.00	0.00	5.26
6	Gurdaspur	5.00	95.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
7	Hoshiarpur	5.00	70.00	15.00	0.00	10.00
8	Jalandhar	3.45	86.21	3.45	3.45	3.45
9	Kapurthala	0.00	96.15	3.85	0.00	0.00
10	Mansa	0.00	86.96	13.04	0.00	0.00
11	Mohali	3.70	70.37	18.52	3.70	3.70
12	Nabha	9.52	85.71	4.76	0.00	0.00
13	Patiala	2.00	86.00	8.00	2.00	2.00
14	Ropar	4.00	72.00	16.00	4.00	4.00
15	Sangrur	0.00	80.00	15.00	5.00	0.00

**N.A.:** Information is not available

Table 5 presents the age group wise distribution of users in various public libraries across Punjab, expressed in percentages - Amritsar: None of the users fall under the age group of under 18, while the majority fall within the 18-30 age range (78.26%). A smaller proportion is in the 31-45 age range (13.04%), followed by 46-60 (4.35%), and more than 60 (4.35%), Bathinda: There are no users recorded in Bathinda's library across any age group according to this data, Faridkot: Similarly, there are no users under 18, and the highest proportion falls within the 18-30 age range (83.33%), followed by 31-45 (12.50%) and 46-60 (4.17%), Fatehgarh Sahib: All users in Fatehgarh Sahib's library are in the 18-30 age range, Ferozpur: None of the users are under 18. Most fall within the 18-30 age range (94.74%), with a small proportion in the more than 60 category (5.26%), Gurdaspur: 5% of users are under 18, while the majority fall within the 18-30 age range (95%), Hoshiarpur: 5% of users are under 18, with the highest proportion falling within the 18-30 age range (70%). The distribution gradually decreases across the older age groups, Jalandhar: A small proportion of users are under 18 (3.45%), with the majority falling within the 18-30 age range (86.21%), Kapurthala: None of the users are under 18, with the majority falling within the 18-30 age range (96.15%), Mansa: No users are recorded under 18, with the majority in the 18-30 age range (86.96%), Mohali: A small percentage of users are under 18 (3.70%), with the majority in the 18-30 age range (70.37%), Nabha: 9.52% of users are under 18, with the majority in the 18-30 age range (85.71%), Patiala: 2% of users are under 18, with the highest proportion in the 18-30 age range (86%), Ropar: 4% of users are under 18, with the majority in the 18-30 age range (72%), Sangrur: None of the users are under 18, with the majority in the 18-30 age range (80%). There are smaller proportions in the older age groups.

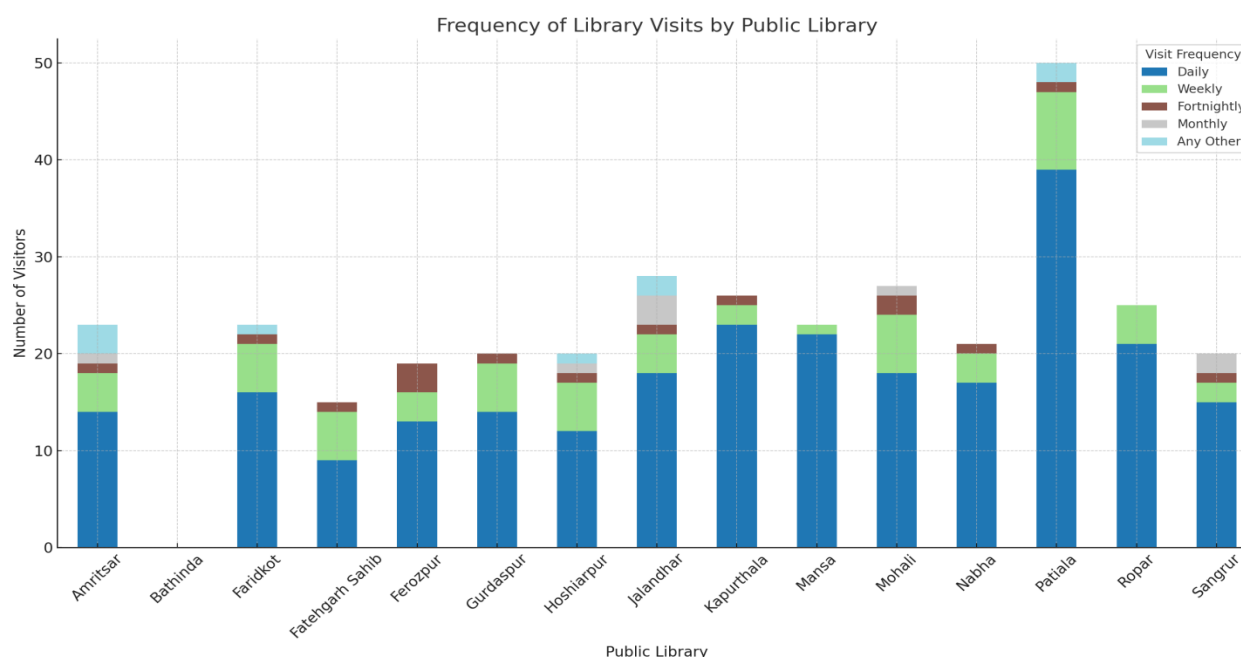
**Table 6: Profession wise distribution of the users in percentage**

S. No.	Public Library	Student	Housewife	Professional Businessman	Retired	Unemployed	Ex-Servicemen	Registered Members	
								Yes	No
1	Amritsar	34.78	0.00	4.35	4.35	56.52	0	12	11
2	Bathinda	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
3	Faridkot	45.83	0.00	8.33	0.00	45.83	0	14	10
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	53.33	6.67	6.67	0.00	33.33	0	10	5
5	Ferozpur	78.95	0.00	10.53	5.26	5.26	0	19	0
6	Gurdaspur	65.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	25.00	0	16	4
7	Hoshiarpur	31.58	5.26	0.00	10.53	52.63	0	14	6
8	Jalandhar	71.43	0.00	10.71	3.57	14.29	0	18	10
9	Kapurthala	61.54	0.00	15.38	0.00	23.08	0	20	6
10	Mansa	73.91	4.35	4.35	0.00	17.39	0	15	8
11	Mohali	46.15	3.85	7.69	3.85	38.46	0	12	15
12	Nabha	76.19	4.76	0.00	0.00	19.05	0	8	13
13	Patiala	60.00	2.00	8.00	2.00	28.00	0	43	7
14	Ropar	52.00	4.00	8.00	4.00	32.00	0	20	5
15	Sangrur	50.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	45.00	0	11	9

**N.A.:** Information is not available

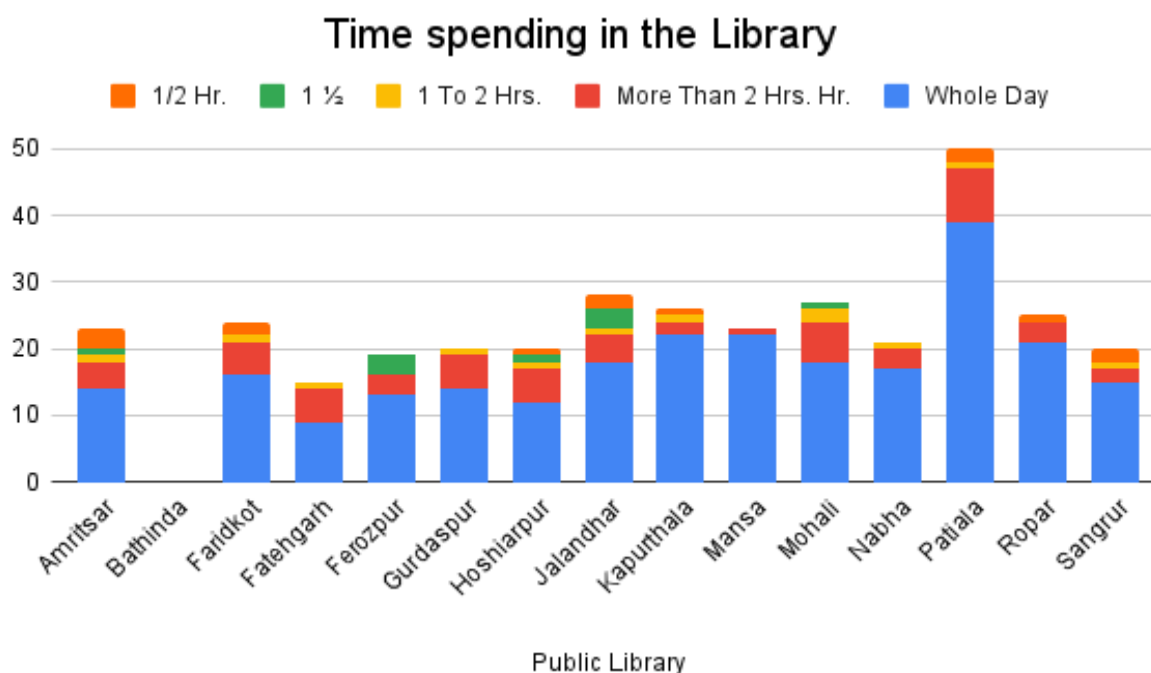
The data presented in table 6, on the profession-wise distribution of library users across public libraries in Punjab reveals several interesting trends and insights. Students are the dominant user group across most libraries, with libraries in Ferozpur, Mansa, Jalandhar, and Nabha showing particularly high percentages of student users, often exceeding 70%. However, some libraries, like Bathinda and Faridkot, report significantly lower student engagement, with Bathinda showing 0% student users. Housewife participation is more pronounced in certain libraries, notably Fatehgarh Sahib (6.67%) and Hoshiarpur (5.26%), but generally, housewives make up a small proportion of the user base, with several libraries, including Amritsar, Faridkot, and Ferozpur, reporting 0% housewife users. Professional users are also a minority in most libraries, with Kapurthala (15.38%) and Faridkot (8.33%) having the highest representation of professionals. Businessman users are similarly sparse, with some libraries like Bathinda and Ferozpur having no businessman users at all, while others like Hoshiarpur show a higher proportion at 10.53%. Retired individuals are more frequent in libraries like Hoshiarpur (52.63%) and Patiala (28%), suggesting a stronger engagement from this demographic in certain districts, while other libraries, such as Faridkot and Ferozpur, show minimal or no participation from retired users. There is almost no presence of unemployed individuals or ex-servicemen across the libraries, indicating that these groups are not significant contributors to library usage. In terms of registered membership, libraries with high student populations, such as Patiala (43 members), Ferozpur (19 members), and Amritsar (12 members), tend to show a higher number of registered users. In contrast, libraries like Nabha (8 members) and Sangrur (11 members) have lower membership rates. Overall, the data underscores the significant role that students play in public libraries, but also highlights the varying levels of engagement from different professional and demographic groups across the libraries in Punjab. There appears to be a need for targeted efforts to enhance user participation in libraries with lower engagement and to cater to the needs of diverse user groups in each district.





**Figure 1: Frequency of library visits**

The figure 1 illustrates the frequency of visits to public libraries across 15 districts in Punjab. The used stacked bar chart represents five categories: Daily, Weekly, Fortnightly, Monthly, and Any Other. Patiala shows the highest daily visits (39), followed by Kapurthala (23) and Mansa (22), indicating active usage. In contrast, Bathinda records no visits, suggesting inactivity or closure. Most libraries have minimal visits under the 'Monthly' and 'Any Other' categories. The chart highlights that daily visits dominate overall usage patterns, reflecting regular engagement in functional libraries. Variations across districts may indicate differences in accessibility, resources, or user awareness.



**Figure 2: Time spent in library**

The analysis of library usage patterns across various districts of Punjab, as illustrated in the chart, reveals significant variation in the duration of time users spend in public libraries. Patiala district recorded the highest engagement, with a substantial number of users spending the whole day in the library. Districts such as Bathinda, Kapurthala, and Ropar also demonstrated strong whole-day usage, indicating the central role these libraries play in their communities. In contrast, districts like Faridkot, Fazilka, and Ferozpur showed comparatively lower user engagement, with most visitors spending less than two hours. Overall, the data suggest that while several libraries attract long-term users, there remains scope for enhancing user engagement in underperforming regions.

## 5.0 Issues & Concerns

Based on the suggestions provided by the library staff, several concerning issues are evident across the public libraries in Punjab:

1. **Closure Due to Construction:** Several libraries have been closed for an extended period, some for as long as three years, due to ongoing construction of new buildings. This prolonged closure deprives the community of access to library services and resources.
2. **Lack of Book Acquisition:** There is a significant gap in book acquisition, with some libraries reporting no books received from RRRLF (Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation) for several years. This impacts the library's ability to update its collection and meet the evolving needs of its users.
3. **Staffing Shortages:** Many libraries operate with minimal staffing, often with only one sweeper cum chowkidar or peon. This staffing shortage can affect the library's operational efficiency, maintenance, and security.
4. **Membership Issues:** Some libraries have faced challenges in issuing memberships, ranging from a lack of official signing authority to limited staffing. This restricts community members from accessing library services and resources.
5. **Limited Magazine Subscriptions:** Libraries receive magazines sporadically, indicating inconsistent resource allocation for periodical subscriptions. This affects the variety and quality of reading materials available to patrons.
6. **Minimal Restoration Efforts:** Restoration efforts, such as book repairs, are limited, with only one restorer deputed for a short duration in some libraries. This neglects the preservation of library resources and hamper their longevity.

## 6.0 Suggestions for the improving the public library system

The suggestions provided by library users underscore several key areas for improvement in public libraries:

1. **Infrastructure Enhancement:** Users emphasize the need for more spacious libraries with increased seating capacity, additional reading halls, and improved infrastructure such as soundproof walls to minimize external noise disturbances. Renovation of old buildings and the construction of new ones are also highlighted to address critical structural issues and accommodate growing demands.
2. **Amenities and Facilities:** Clean and well-maintained facilities are deemed essential, including clean washrooms, drinking water coolers, and power backup systems like generators or inverters to mitigate electricity disruptions. Access to free internet, WIFI services, and the provision of electrical power ports for electronic devices are also suggested to enhance the user experience.
3. **Accessibility and Membership Process:** Users express the need for simplified processes to become library members, suggesting that attestation by gazetted officers for membership forms may not be necessary. They also advocate for the opening of more public libraries in districts with comprehensive facilities and infrastructure to ensure broader access to library services.
4. **Extended Operating Hours:** There is a consensus among users for extended library hours to accommodate diverse schedules and maximize accessibility for readers. Suggestions for 24x7 library operations are proposed to cater to the needs of students, professionals, and enthusiasts alike.
5. **Technology Integration:** Enhancing internet connectivity, WIFI facilities, and establishing computer labs are recommended to facilitate research, study, and access to digital resources. Additionally, users suggest providing competitive exam question banks, reference materials, and study aids to support educational pursuits.

6. Community Engagement: Users stress the importance of creating comfortable and welcoming environments conducive to reading and studying. They propose the installation of more furniture, tables, and chairs, as well as AC reading rooms, to enhance the overall experience for library patrons.

## 7.0 Conclusions

Based on the data collected and analyzed from various tables detailing the infrastructure, total collection, enrolments, staff and daily visitors, gender-wise distribution, age group distribution, profession-wise distribution, registered members, and frequency of library visits across different public libraries in Punjab, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. Infrastructure Variability: The infrastructure of public libraries in Punjab varies significantly in terms of total area, number of rooms, floors, reading halls, and seating capacity. Libraries in Patiala and Jalandhar districts boast extensive facilities, while others like Bathinda have limited or no infrastructure data available.
2. Collection Size and Growth: The total collection of books in these libraries varies, with Patiala and Jalandhar leading with substantial collections exceeding 130,000 and 150,000 books, respectively. Some libraries have maintained consistent collection sizes over the years, while others have shown steady growth.
3. Enrolments and Visitors: Libraries like Jalandhar and Patiala attract a high number of enrollment and daily visitors, indicating their popularity and significance as educational and cultural hubs in their respective districts.
4. Gender and Age Group Distribution: The gender and age group distribution of users varies across libraries, with patterns reflecting societal and demographic factors. Generally, there is a higher proportion of male users, and the majority of users fall within the 18-30 age group, highlighting the importance of catering to younger demographics while ensuring inclusion across all age groups.
5. Profession-wise Distribution: The distribution of users across different professions shows diverse interests and needs among library visitors. While students dominate as the primary user group, there is also significant representation from professionals, businessmen, and retired individuals, emphasizing the libraries' role as resources for lifelong learning and personal development.
6. Registered Members and Visitation Frequency: The number of registered members varies across libraries, with some showing higher membership rates than others. Additionally, the frequency of library visits varies, with some visitors coming daily, weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, highlighting the libraries' role as spaces for regular engagement and learning.

In conclusion, the data underscores the importance of public libraries as vital community resources for education, information access, and cultural enrichment. It also emphasizes the need for continuous efforts to improve infrastructure, expand collections, enhance user engagement, and ensure inclusion to meet the diverse needs of the population across different districts of Punjab.

In conclusion, addressing these suggestions requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses infrastructure development, facility maintenance, technology integration, and streamlined processes to enhance user satisfaction and ensure that public libraries remain vital community resources for learning, research, and personal enrichment. The issues raised in this study collectively highlight the urgent need for attention and improvement in the management and functioning of public libraries in Punjab. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from authorities to prioritize resource allocation, staffing, infrastructure development, and acquisition of materials to ensure that libraries can effectively serve their communities as vibrant centers for education, culture, and information access. There is an immediate need for Public Library Act in Punjab.

## 8.0 References

- i. Borin, Jacqueline; & Yi, Hua. (2011). Assessing an academic library collection through capacity and usage indicators: Testing a multi-dimensional model. *Collection Building*, 30(3), 120-125.
- ii. Brinxmat. (2014). The Role of Libraries in the Digital Age. Retrieved from <https://brinxmat.com/the-role-of-libraries-in-the-digital-age/>.

- iii. Herzog, Susan. (2004). Collection development challenges for the 21st century academic librarian. *Acquisitions Librarian*, 16(31/32), 149-162.
- iv. Kaur, A. and Rani, S. (2008), "Marketing of information services and products in university libraries of Punjab and Chandigarh (India): An attitudinal assessment of library professionals", *Library Management*, Vol. 29 No. 6/7, pp. 515-537. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01435120810894536>.
- v. Kiran, K. (2012). Public Libraries in Literacy Campaign in Punjab: A Proposed Model. *International Journal of Information Dissemination and Technology*, 2(1), 38–42. <https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijidt&volume=2&issue=1&article=008>.
- vi. Kumar, D., & Singh, R. (2009). Use of Services by the Users of National Science Library (NSL), New Delhi, India. *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 3(1), 1–10. Available online: <http://www.jlis.org/index.php/jlis/article/view/181>.
- vii. Kumar, D., et al. (2010). Expectations of Faculty Members and Research Scholars towards Library Resources and Services at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India. *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 4(1), 1–12. Available online: <http://www.jlis.org/index.php/jlis/article/view/234>.
- viii. Kumar, J., Narang, A., Singh, G., & Sumi, S. (2015). Awareness and Use of Library Resources and Services: A Survey of Panjab University Extension Library Ludhiana. *Journal for Studies in Management and Planning*, 1(6), 225-235. <http://internationaljournalofresearch.org/index.php/JSMaP>.
- ix. Mukherjee, S., & Patra, S. K. (2022). Digital library initiatives in North East India: A survey. *Indian Journal of Information, Library & Society*, 35(3-4), 203-218. <http://hdl.handle.net/10760/44134>.
- x. Popović, Sabina Fras Vilar, Polona & Javrh, Petra (2025). Public libraries and encouragement of reading and reading competencies of adult citizens. *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* 68 (1), 137–166.
- xi. Prasad, N. (2016). Public Library System and Services in India. *International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(6), 70-77.
- xii. Tabacaru, Simona; & Pickett, Carmelita. (2013). Damned if you do, damned if you don't: Texas A&M University Libraries' collection assessment for off-site storage. *Collection Building*, 32(3), 111-115.
- xiii. Verma, S. (2022). Analyzing Public Library Systems Across Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh: A Comparative Study. *International Journal of Library Studies*, 55(1), 78-99. DOI: 10.1093/IJLS-12-2022-0035.
- xiv. Zainab. (2001). Library Resources and Services and Publication Productivity. *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 1(1), 1–10. Available online: <http://www.jlis.org/index.php/jlis/article/view/175>.