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Challenges and Constraints in the Management of Government and Aided College Libraries: Evidence from Gorakhpur Division

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Abstract: College libraries are essential components of higher education because they provide access to textbooks, reference materials, scholarly literature, digital information and learning spaces for students and teachers. In government and aided colleges, libraries have an additional social responsibility because they serve large and diverse groups of learners, many of whom depend on institutional resources due to limited access to private academic resources. However, the effective management of these libraries is affected by financial, technical, administrative and human resource constraints. The present article examines these challenges with particular reference to government and aided college libraries in Gorakhpur Division of Uttar Pradesh. Gorakhpur Division comprises four districts-Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar and Maharajganj-and represents an important educational region of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The analysis is based mainly on secondary evidence and findings reported in a 2024 study covering 33 college libraries in the division, together with relevant national policy and higher-education data. The evidence indicates that infrastructure, resource availability, digital transformation, staffing and management practices remain uneven. Of the 33 surveyed colleges, only 18 (54.5%) had separate library buildings, while 15 (45.5%) did not. Only six libraries were headed by designated librarians, whereas 27 were managed by library in-charges. Although internet access was reported in 97.0% of the libraries and Wi-Fi in 93.9%, only 45.5% were reported as automated. Among user-reported problems, shortage of resources accounted for 17.20%, slow internet speed 16.31%, limited computer terminals 14.83%, shortage of power supply 11.64% and lack of IT skills 10.82%. These findings reveal that the presence of connectivity does not necessarily mean effective digital library services. The article argues that sustainable improvement requires predictable library funding, infrastructure development, complete automation, recruitment of qualified library professionals, continuous skill development, resource sharing and stronger administrative planning. The study concludes that government and aided college libraries in Gorakhpur Division can become effective learning and research centres only when library development is integrated into institutional planning rather than treated as a secondary administrative activity.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Government Colleges, Library Automation, ICT, Gorakhpur Division.

1. Introduction- The academic library is one of the most important support systems of higher education. A college may have qualified teachers and well-designed curricula, but the quality of learning is substantially affected by students' access to appropriate information resources. Libraries provide textbooks, reference books, periodicals, newspapers, research materials, electronic resources, internet facilities and spaces for individual study. In the contemporary higher-education environment, the role of the college library has expanded beyond the traditional functions of acquiring, organizing and lending printed documents. Modern libraries are expected to provide online catalogues, institutional repositories, e-journals, e-books, databases, remote access, digital literacy programmes, current-awareness services and technology-assisted learning.

This transformation has created new management responsibilities. Library administrators must simultaneously manage physical collections, digital resources, information technology, financial allocations, buildings, equipment, staff and user expectations. Consequently, inadequate funding, obsolete infrastructure, shortage of qualified personnel and weak administrative planning can seriously affect library performance. The problem is particularly significant in government and aided colleges. Such institutions often cater to students from rural and economically diverse backgrounds. For many students, the college library may be one of the most affordable sources of academic information. The quality and accessibility of the library therefore have direct implications for educational equity.

Gorakhpur Division provides an appropriate regional context for examining these issues. According to the district administration, the division consists of four districts: Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar and Maharajganj. The division contains government institutions as well as aided and other affiliated colleges, serving a large student population across

urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The geographical distribution of institutions also creates differences in infrastructure, connectivity and access to professional services.

Recent evidence from Gorakhpur Division is particularly useful. A 2024 study by Ganesh Dutt Shukla and Shesh Mishra examined college libraries in the division, covering 33 institutions and focusing on infrastructure, digital resources, automation, user satisfaction and operational problems. The study found that although several basic digital facilities have become widespread, important weaknesses remain in infrastructure, automation, collection development and professional staffing. The present article uses these findings as the principal regional evidence and interprets them through four interconnected dimensions: financial, technical, administrative and human resource challenges. At the national level, the importance of technology-oriented library management is also reflected in the University Grants Commission (UGC) framework. UGC regulations prescribe qualifications for college librarians and explicitly recognize knowledge of library computerization as part of professional competence. Similarly, the National Informatics Centre's e-Granthalaya initiative demonstrates the importance of automation, networking and resource sharing for government libraries.

Thus, the central question is not simply whether college libraries exist, but whether they possess adequate financial resources, technological infrastructure, administrative support and professional human resources to meet the changing information needs of higher education.

2. Objectives of the Study- The article has the following objectives:

- To examine the major challenges affecting the management of government and aided college libraries in Gorakhpur Division.
- To analyse financial constraints affecting collection development, infrastructure and modernization.
- To examine technical and technological problems associated with automation, internet access, computers and digital resources.
- To analyse administrative constraints related to library buildings, planning, management and service delivery.
- To assess human resource challenges, particularly the availability and professional role of qualified librarians.
- To interpret available regional data and suggest practical measures for improving library management.

3. Methodology and Scope- The article follows a descriptive and analytical approach based mainly on secondary data. The principal regional source is the study Current Status and Future Prospects of College Libraries in Gorakhpur Division: A Study, published in 2024. The study adopted a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires, interviews and on-site observations and covered 33 college libraries in Gorakhpur Division. Data were analysed through frequency and percentage techniques.

The 33 institutions represented the four districts of the division. Respondents included students, faculty and teachers. In total, the reported respondent distribution consisted of 425 students (59.19%), 162 faculty members (22.56%), 128 teachers (17.83%) and three respondents in another category (0.42%). The article also uses official information from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), UGC regulations and the National Informatics Centre's e-Granthalaya initiative to provide a broader policy context. AISHE publishes national and state-level higher-education data, including institutional and enrolment information. The latest AISHE document repository includes reports for 2022–23 and 2023–24.

An important limitation should be noted. The available regional study does not provide a uniform rupee-wise comparison of annual library budgets for all 33 institutions. Therefore, the financial dimension in this article is analysed through reported resource shortages, infrastructure deficiencies and the relationship between funding and modernization rather than through invented budget figures. This approach avoids presenting assumptions as primary financial data.

4. Higher Education and the Library Context of Gorakhpur Division- Gorakhpur Division is composed of Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar and Maharajganj. The region contains institutions with different histories, sizes, programmes and levels of infrastructure. Some colleges have postgraduate programmes and research-oriented activities, while others primarily provide undergraduate education. Such institutional diversity creates different demands on libraries. A postgraduate college requires a stronger reference collection, research journals, electronic databases and advanced information services than an institution offering only a limited range of undergraduate programmes. At the same time, rural and semi-urban colleges may face greater challenges in obtaining high-speed connectivity, technical support and specialized library services. The regional evidence demonstrates this unevenness. The 2024 study reported that some libraries had comparatively well-developed services, while others continued to face shortages of books, inadequate seating, limited computer terminals and insufficient digital resources.

This situation should be understood against the wider transformation of Indian higher education. The expansion of digital learning, online courses, electronic publications and research databases means that the conventional model of a library based mainly on printed books is no longer sufficient. A modern college library requires a combination of print and electronic resources, trained professionals and reliable information technology.

5. Financial Challenges in Library Management- Financial limitation is one of the most fundamental constraints affecting government and aided college libraries. Library development requires continuous expenditure rather than a one-time investment. Funds are required for books, journals, newspapers, e-resources, computers, networking, furniture, electricity, software, maintenance, subscriptions, preservation and professional training. The regional study identifies financial constraints as an important reason for inadequate infrastructure, limited acquisition of new materials and

slow adoption of modern digital technologies. The shortage of resources was the most frequently reported category of user problems, accounting for 232 responses or 17.20%.

The resource problem has several dimensions. First, inadequate acquisition budgets may result in insufficient numbers of current textbooks. Second, inflation in the prices of academic books and journals makes it difficult for smaller institutions to maintain comprehensive collections. Third, electronic databases and scholarly e-journals can involve recurring subscription costs. Fourth, computers and networking equipment require replacement and maintenance. A library that purchases computers but lacks an annual maintenance budget may quickly experience equipment failure and service disruption.

Financial constraints also affect physical infrastructure. The study found that only 18 of the 33 surveyed colleges, or 54.5%, had separate library buildings. Fifteen institutions, representing 45.5%, did not have a separate building. Lack of dedicated space can affect seating, shelving, reading areas, circulation services and future expansion.

Another financial issue is the imbalance between recurring and developmental expenditure. Institutions may be able to purchase basic books but struggle to finance automation, digitization and network upgrades. Modern library management therefore requires a planned budget divided into collection development, ICT infrastructure, maintenance, staff development and user services.

A further challenge is the purchasing power of individual institutions. Instead of every college independently subscribing to expensive electronic resources, consortia and resource-sharing arrangements can reduce costs. Collective procurement can improve access to databases and e-journals while avoiding duplication.

The financial problem, therefore, is not merely "less money"; it is also the absence of a long-term financial strategy for library development. A predictable multi-year library development plan would enable institutions to prioritize urgent requirements and gradually modernize their services.

6. Technical and Technological Challenges- Technical transformation is one of the most visible changes in college libraries. The Gorakhpur evidence shows an interesting contradiction: connectivity is relatively widespread, but complete technological modernization remains limited. Among the 33 surveyed colleges, internet access was reported in 97.0%, Wi-Fi in 93.9%, email facilities in 93.9%, individual email login IDs in 90.9% and mobile-based facilities in 90.9%. These figures indicate considerable progress in basic ICT connectivity.

However, the same study reported that only 45.5% of the libraries were automated. This means that approximately half of the surveyed libraries still depended substantially on traditional procedures. Automation is important because it affects cataloguing, circulation, acquisition, serial control, searching and reporting. The difference between internet availability and automation is particularly significant. A library may have Wi-Fi but still require students to search manually through shelves or registers. Similarly, the presence of computers does not guarantee access to digital scholarly resources. Effective digital library services require appropriate software, trained personnel, adequate terminals, databases and reliable connectivity.

Slow internet was the second most frequently reported problem in the regional study, accounting for 220 responses or 16.31%. Limited computer terminals represented 200 responses or 14.83%. Frequent system hanging accounted for 42 responses or 3.11%. These figures demonstrate that the digital divide within libraries is increasingly shifting from simple connectivity to the quality and reliability of technological infrastructure.

Power supply is another technical constraint. Shortage of power was reported in 157 instances, representing 11.64% of reported problems. Digital services cannot function reliably without stable electricity and appropriate backup systems. The solution requires a complete technology plan rather than isolated purchases. Libraries need integrated library management systems, barcode or RFID-based circulation where feasible, online public access catalogues, institutional repositories, adequate computers, backup power, high-speed internet and cybersecurity arrangements. The NIC's e-Granthalaya project provides a useful national example. It is designed for automation and networking of government libraries and supports catalogue hosting and resource sharing. Similar approaches to shared cataloguing and resource discovery could reduce duplication and improve access among colleges in the division.

7. Administrative Challenges- Administrative management determines how effectively financial, physical and human resources are converted into library services. One major administrative problem in the surveyed colleges is the uneven institutional status of libraries. The study reported that only six of the 33 libraries had designated librarians, while 27 were managed by personnel identified as "Library In-Charge." In percentage terms, this means approximately 18.2% had librarians and 81.8% relied on library-in-charge arrangements.

A library in-charge may perform essential functions, but the absence of a designated professional librarian can create problems in collection development, classification, preservation, user education, digital services and strategic planning. It may also make it difficult to establish clear professional accountability. Administrative planning is also connected with infrastructure. The absence of separate library buildings in 45.5% of surveyed institutions suggests that library development has not always received adequate priority in institutional planning.

Another administrative challenge is the absence of uniformity in service delivery. Some colleges provide current-awareness services, selective dissemination of information, Wi-Fi, email and mobile facilities, whereas a small number lack even some basic services. The reported availability of borrowing services was 90.9%, while Current Awareness Service

was 93.9% and Selective Dissemination of Information 90.9%. Administrative policy also affects user convenience. The regional study found that 79% of respondents wanted faster Wi-Fi and 74% supported increased seating capacity. Sixty-five percent supported facilities for using electronic devices and copying digital resources, while 60% supported more flexible policies regarding personal books and laptops. These findings show that library administration must respond to changing user behaviour. Students increasingly expect libraries to support laptops, mobile devices and digital information. Rules designed exclusively around traditional book lending may discourage effective use of the library. UGC regulations also emphasize library automation and organizational skills in the professional assessment of librarians. Consequently, library administration should be treated as an academic management function rather than merely a clerical activity.

8. Human Resource Challenges- Human resources are central to every library service. Buildings, books and computers cannot by themselves create an effective academic library. Professional staff are needed to select resources, organize collections, manage databases, train users, troubleshoot technology and provide research assistance.

The staffing evidence from Gorakhpur Division is a major concern. As noted above, only six of the 33 surveyed institutions had designated librarians, while 27 had library in-charges. This staffing pattern raises questions about professional specialization and workload. The problem becomes more serious with digital transformation. The study reported lack of IT skills in 146 instances, representing 10.82% of reported problems. The study's findings also specifically identify the shortage of IT-skilled personnel and inadequate training as barriers to effective digital library management.

Professional competence must now include both traditional library science and digital skills. A contemporary college librarian should be capable of managing automated library systems, metadata, electronic resources, institutional repositories, online information searching, plagiarism-awareness services, digital preservation and user training. The UGC framework establishes professional qualifications for college librarians, including a master's degree in Library Science, Information Science or Documentation Science and knowledge of library computerization.

Conclusion- The management of government and aided college libraries in Gorakhpur Division faces several challenges that affect their ability to provide effective academic and research support. Although these libraries play an important role in higher education, their development is often constrained by inadequate financial resources, shortage of trained library professionals, limited infrastructure, and insufficient access to modern information and communication technologies.

One of the major constraints is the limited and irregular availability of funds for purchasing books, journals, e-resources, computers, networking equipment, and other essential facilities. Many libraries also face difficulties in maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure. The shortage of qualified and adequately trained staff further affects library automation, digital resource management, user education, and research support services. The increasing demand for digital resources has created additional challenges. Libraries need reliable internet connectivity, updated software, digital databases, institutional repositories, and proper technical support. However, differences in technological facilities among colleges can create unequal access to information. In addition, limited awareness and digital literacy among some users may reduce the effective utilization of available electronic resources.

Administrative procedures, delays in recruitment and procurement, inadequate professional development opportunities, and lack of long-term planning can further restrict library growth. To overcome these challenges, colleges and government authorities should ensure adequate and timely funding, recruit sufficient professional staff, provide continuous training, improve ICT infrastructure, and encourage resource sharing and library networking.

In conclusion, strengthening government and aided college libraries in Gorakhpur Division requires coordinated efforts from college administrations, librarians, governing authorities, and policymakers. Strategic planning, technological modernization, adequate financial support, and user-oriented services can help transform these libraries into efficient centres of learning, teaching, and research.

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