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Current Status of Government and Aided College Libraries in Gorakhpur Division: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: College libraries form the backbone of higher education by supporting teaching, learning, and research. This comparative study examines the current status of government and aided college libraries in the Gorakhpur Division of Uttar Pradesh, covering the districts of Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar, and Maharajganj. Drawing on survey-based evidence from approximately 33 colleges and related regional assessments, the analysis focuses on six key dimensions: collection strength and currency, physical and digital infrastructure, staffing patterns, range of services, budgetary provisions, and overall library facilities. Findings reveal significant disparities. While basic services such as book borrowing and internet access are relatively widespread (available in over 90% of surveyed libraries), major gaps persist in separate library buildings (absent in about 45.5% of institutions), professional staffing, automation, updated collections, and adequate funding. Government colleges often face greater resource constraints than some aided institutions, yet both categories lag in digital integration and trained personnel. User satisfaction remains moderately high (around 89%), but operational challenges including resource shortages, power issues, and limited IT skills hinder effectiveness. The study recommends targeted investments in infrastructure, full automation, professional development, enhanced digital resources (including N-LIST and similar consortia), and equitable budget allocation to transform these libraries into modern knowledge centres.

Keywords:Government and Aided College Libraries, digital infrastructure,staffing patterns, information.

Introduction: Libraries in colleges play a pivotal role in the academic ecosystem. They provide access to print and electronic resources, facilitate information literacy, support curriculum delivery, and foster research culture among undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as faculty. In India, the University Grants Commission (UGC) and state higher education departments have long emphasised minimum standards for college libraries covering space, collection size, staffing norms, and services. Despite these guidelines, disparities persist across regions, particularly in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Gorakhpur Division comprises four districts-Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar, and Maharajganj-and falls under the affiliation network of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University (DDUGU) and related institutions. The division hosts a mix of government degree colleges and aided (grant-in-aid) colleges that serve a large student population from rural and semi-urban backgrounds. Higher education expansion in the region has increased enrolment, yet corresponding development of library systems has been uneven.

Previous regional studies, including surveys of college libraries affiliated to DDUGU and a comprehensive PhD-level examination of government and aided college libraries in the division, highlight persistent issues of inadequate infrastructure, outdated collections, limited automation, and staffing shortages. A 2024 study of 33 colleges in the division documented that only 54.5% possessed separate library buildings, while internet connectivity was present in nearly all institutions but automation and digital resource utilisation remained low. A related assessment of degree college libraries in Gorakhpur found automation rates below 10%, with primary barriers being insufficient funds, lack of trained staff, and inadequate infrastructure.

This article presents a comparative analysis of the current status of these libraries, structured around collection, infrastructure, staff, services, budget, and facilities. It synthesises available empirical evidence to identify strengths, weaknesses, and inter-category differences between government and aided colleges, and offers evidence-based recommendations. The objective is to provide a clear picture for policymakers, college administrators, and library professionals aiming to strengthen academic support systems in the region.

Methodology and Scope- The analysis draws primarily on published survey data covering government and aided colleges in Gorakhpur Division, particularly a detailed examination of 33 institutions that assessed infrastructure, staffing, facilities, user satisfaction, and operational problems. Complementary insights come from studies on library automation status among selected degree colleges affiliated to DDUGU, university-level library reports, and broader higher-education statistics for the region. Comparative elements focus on differences between purely government-run colleges and aided colleges, while also noting common patterns across both.

Key parameters examined include:

1. Collection size, currency, and balance between print and electronic resources.
2. Physical infrastructure (building, seating, furniture) and ICT infrastructure.

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3. Staffing structure, professional qualifications, and training.
4. Range and quality of traditional and modern services.
5. Budget allocation and utilisation.
6. Overall facilities and user perception.

Data limitations include the absence of fully updated, publicly available institution-by-institution statistics for every parameter in 2025–2026; therefore, findings reflect the most recent systematic surveys and observed trends. Qualitative observations on challenges such as power supply interruptions and process delays are incorporated where reported by users.

Collection- Library collections form the core resource base. Ideal college library standards recommend a minimum number of volumes relative to student strength (often cited around 50 books per student for basic coverage), along with regular additions of current textbooks, reference works, periodicals, and increasingly e-resources.

In Gorakhpur Division colleges, collections vary widely. Larger and older aided colleges (for example, institutions such as St. Andrew's College, Digvijai Nath PG College, and certain postgraduate colleges in Gorakhpur and Deoria) tend to maintain relatively stronger print collections built over decades. Government degree colleges, many of which are younger or located in more remote areas, frequently report smaller and less frequently updated holdings. Across surveyed institutions, the most commonly cited user problem was shortage of resources, accounting for a substantial share of complaints.

Currency of collection remains a critical weakness. Many libraries continue to rely heavily on older editions of textbooks while struggling to acquire recent publications in science, technology, commerce, and emerging interdisciplinary subjects. Periodical subscriptions are often limited, and binding or preservation of existing stock receives low priority due to financial constraints.

Digital collections show partial progress. Access to national consortia such as N-LIST (National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content) has improved availability of e-journals and e-books for many colleges, yet utilisation remains uneven. Barriers include limited awareness among students and faculty, inadequate computers or bandwidth for simultaneous access, and absence of systematic user orientation programmes. University-level libraries in the region (notably the central library of DDUGU with holdings exceeding four lakh volumes) provide a stronger model, but college libraries have not fully leveraged inter-library loan or remote-access facilities at scale.

Comparatively, aided colleges with longer histories and slightly better internal resource mobilisation sometimes maintain more balanced collections than purely government institutions dependent almost exclusively on state grants. Overall, however, both categories fall short of recommended norms for collection development and weeding of obsolete material.

Infrastructure- Physical infrastructure is foundational. Separate library buildings allow dedicated reading spaces, proper shelving, security, and expansion. Survey data indicate that only 54.5% of the 33 colleges examined possessed independent library buildings; the remaining 45.5% housed libraries in shared or makeshift spaces within academic blocks. Colleges such as Mahatma Gandhi Post Graduate College, National Post Graduate College, and Sant Vinoba PG College were noted for having dedicated structures, reflecting greater institutional priority.

Seating capacity frequently proves inadequate relative to student enrolment, especially during examination periods. Furniture quality, lighting, ventilation, and basic amenities (toilets, drinking water) vary. Power supply interruptions were reported as a recurring operational problem affecting both traditional reading and digital services.

ICT infrastructure presents a mixed picture. Internet connectivity exists in approximately 97% of surveyed libraries and Wi-Fi in about 93.9%. Yet the number of functional computers, printers, scanners, and barcode systems remains limited in many institutions. Full library automation is rare; a focused study of degree colleges in the Gorakhpur area found automation rates around 8–9%, with SOUL and EasyLib among the software packages in use where automation existed. Barriers cited include inadequate staff, lack of infrastructure, insufficient funds, and absence of training.

Government colleges often lag further behind in ICT readiness compared with some better-resourced aided colleges, although exceptions exist. Across both categories, the gap between basic connectivity and meaningful digital infrastructure (integrated library management systems, digital repositories, reliable bandwidth) is pronounced.

Staff- Professional staffing is a decisive factor in library effectiveness. UGC and state norms prescribe the appointment of qualified librarians (with MLISc or equivalent) supported by semi-professional and support staff according to student strength and collection size.

In the surveyed colleges, only a minority (approximately six institutions) employed dedicated librarians. The majority operated under Library In-Charge arrangements, typically faculty members given additional responsibility. Institutions with trained librarians-examples include Mahant Avaidyanath Government Degree College, National Post Graduate College, Digvijai Nath PG College, Mahatma Gandhi PG College, and a few others-demonstrated more structured management.

Shortage of IT- skilled personnel was explicitly noted (around 18% of related problem instances in some analyses). Training opportunities for existing staff remain limited, reducing capacity to manage automation, guide users in

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digital resources, or conduct information literacy sessions. Aided colleges sometimes show slightly better continuity of staff appointments due to historical grant structures, while government colleges face recruitment delays and vacancies.

The overall pattern is one of under-staffing and under-professionalisation, which directly constrains service quality, collection development, and technological adoption.

Services- Core services in college libraries include circulation (issue and return), reference assistance, reading-room facilities, and, increasingly, digital access and user education.

Borrowing facilities were available in 90.9% of the surveyed colleges; only a small number (including certain government degree colleges) lacked this basic service. Internet and Wi-Fi access, as noted, are nearly universal. Reprographic services, newspaper and magazine reading sections, and limited reference support are common where space and staff permit.

Advanced services- Systematic information literacy programmes, inter-library loan, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, and remote access to e-resources-are underdeveloped. Digital borrowing systems and institutional email-based login facilities for e-resources remain underutilised even where technical capacity exists.

User satisfaction surveys indicated that approximately 88.9% of students expressed overall satisfaction with available facilities, while 11.1% reported dissatisfaction. The high satisfaction rate may partly reflect modest expectations or limited awareness of modern library possibilities rather than optimal service levels. Common user complaints included resource shortages, time-consuming processes, and power interruptions.

Comparatively, better-staffed aided colleges tend to offer more consistent circulation and basic reference services. Government colleges in remote locations often struggle with limited opening hours and minimal staff presence.

Budget- Adequate and timely budget allocation underpins all other dimensions. College libraries typically receive funds under recurring and non-recurring heads for books, periodicals, furniture, equipment, and maintenance. In practice, allocations in the division are frequently described as insufficient relative to rising costs of books, journals, and technology, and to growing student numbers.

Financial constraints were identified as a major barrier preventing infrastructure upgrades, acquisition of new resources, and adoption of digital tools. Government colleges depend almost entirely on state budgetary provisions and occasional special grants, which can be delayed or inadequate. Aided colleges receive grant-in-aid support but may supplement through internal resources or management contributions; even so, library budgets rarely receive priority commensurate with academic needs.

Absence of dedicated annual library development plans and low utilisation efficiency further compound the problem. Without improved funding linked to measurable outcomes (collection growth, automation milestones, user training), progress will remain incremental at best.

Library Facilities– Overall Assessment and Comparative Insights- Synthesising the six dimensions reveals a landscape of partial progress amid structural constraints. Basic facilities-borrowing, internet connectivity, and some seating-are reasonably widespread. Separate buildings, professional staff, current collections, automation, and robust digital services are significantly less common.

Government colleges- Generally face tighter constraints on space, staff recruitment, and flexible funding. Many serve rural catchments where alternative information sources are scarce, making library weaknesses particularly consequential. ′Aided colleges′ display greater variation: older, urban, or historically better-supported institutions often maintain superior physical collections and somewhat more stable staffing, while newer or smaller aided colleges share many of the same limitations as government counterparts.

Common strengths across both categories include near-universal basic internet access and moderately high reported user satisfaction. Common weaknesses are outdated or insufficient collections, incomplete automation, shortage of trained librarians and IT personnel, inadequate seating and dedicated space in nearly half the institutions, and chronic budgetary pressure.

Regional context amplifies these issues. Rapid expansion of higher education seats and new colleges has not been matched by proportional investment in library systems. University libraries in the division (notably DDUGU central library) offer stronger models of automation, remote access, and inter-library connectivity (including recent DELNET linkages), but college-level transfer of these practices remains limited.

Conclusion- The current status of government and aided college libraries in Gorakhpur Division reflects a transitional phase. Foundational services exist in most institutions, yet critical gaps in infrastructure, professional staffing, collection currency, automation, and funding prevent libraries from fulfilling their full potential as academic support systems. Comparative analysis shows that while aided colleges sometimes outperform purely government institutions in collection depth and continuity of staff, both categories require substantial strengthening to meet contemporary higher-education demands.

Priority interventions should include:

1. Construction or allocation of dedicated library spaces where absent.
2. Filling of librarian posts with qualified professionals and provision of regular ICT training.

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3. Systematic collection development plans emphasising current textbooks, reference works, and e-resources, supported by weeding of obsolete stock.
4. Accelerated full automation using standard software and integration with national consortia.
5. Enhanced and ring-fenced budgetary allocations linked to performance indicators.
6. Mandatory user orientation and information literacy programmes.
7. Greater collaboration with the university library for inter-library loan, shared digital resources, and best-practice transfer.

Implementation of these measures would elevate college libraries from largely traditional repositories to dynamic, user-centred knowledge hubs capable of supporting quality education and research across Gorakhpur Division. Continuous monitoring through periodic surveys and benchmarking against UGC and national standards will be essential to track progress and ensure accountability.

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