



## Unveiling Users Perspective: A Study of Public Libraries Collection and Services in Haryana State, India

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**Received:** 18 April 2024, **Revised:** 2 May 2024, **Accepted:** 12 May 2024, **Published:** 19 May 2024

**ABSTRACT:** The public library is an abode of information and knowledge, committed to education, culture, and Library advocacy. Though public libraries are called “people’s University” and cater to varied categories of users and their infinite information needs without any discrimination but still in India many such libraries are still not providing effective services to the user community.

In India, out of 28 states, 19 states have already enacted library legislation with the latest entrant being Telangana State (2015) and though Haryana State enacted the Act in the year 1989 but still very few comprehensive studies conducted either by any public library or the users’(RRRLF). Well, the present study attempts to check out the ground reality of the State Central Library along with 2 District Libraries of the State of Haryana in terms of library collection, services, facilities, and user satisfaction.

A descriptive survey research design was employed, and 500 library users across three public libraries were surveyed using a structured questionnaire, out of which 396 responses(n=396) were found eligible for the analysis. The study found an improvement in the use of public libraries in the region but identified some inadequate facilities like lack of enhanced library services along with updated collection, and poor internet/ICT services as major factors affecting user satisfaction. The findings suggest that the Haryana government should increase funding to public libraries to acquire adequate information resources and ICT facilities, thereby increasing the utilization of public libraries and meeting the information needs of the users.

**KEYWORDS:** Public Library, Collection, and Services, User Satisfaction, Library Infrastructure, Staff – User Relationship, District Public Libraries in Haryana, India



## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to UNESCO's Information for All program, (2022) "The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. It underpins healthy knowledge societies by providing access to and enabling the creation and sharing of knowledge of all sorts, including scientific and local knowledge without commercial, technological or legal barriers".

Public libraries serve as important community institutions, offering access to information and resources for all members of society. With their collections of books, magazines, newspapers, and other materials, public libraries promote literacy (Zapata, 1994), lifelong learning (Petruzzi & Burns, 2006), and personal growth (Scott, 2011). In addition to traditional resources, many modern libraries also offer technology services, such as access to computers and the Internet, as well as educational and cultural programs (Goulding, 2016). By providing equitable access to information and opportunities, public libraries play a critical role in advancing social justice and democracy (Dadlani, 2016; Garner et al., 2021). Despite challenges posed by budget cuts

(Velasquez, 2015) and changing technology (Goulding, 2016), public libraries continue to evolve and remain relevant in the 21st century, serving as vital resources for their communities.

In India, the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) plays a vital role in supporting and promoting the Public Library system. It is a centrally funded autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture. RRRLF works with state and Union territory governments in establishing the administration through National Library Policy Making machinery called the "State Library Planning Committee" (RRRLF, 2022).

Haryana has public libraries at the State, district, sub-divisional, and municipal levels. The Director General of Higher Education of Haryana administers the public libraries in Haryana intending to promote cultural and educational habits (The Haryana Public Library Act, 1989). For the benefit of the community and promotion of reading habits, public libraries provide a collection of Newspapers, magazines, books, etc. According to the Public Library Act for the Public Interest, state, and district libraries receive special grants from Central and state governments on a routine and special requirements basis (The Haryana Public Library Act, 1989).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To investigate the present scenario of selected public libraries, the descriptive survey research design was adopted. All three libraries are selected based on their collection. The data was collected from users through structured questionnaires, personal interviews, and observation methods. A sample size of 500 questionnaires in print format was distributed from November 2022 to January 2023 in selected public Libraries (Ambala Cantt, Gurugram, and Hisar). Out of 500 copies of the questionnaire administered, 396 filled questionnaires were retrieved and found useful for analysis. To increase the return rate, the entire data collection process was carefully overseen and personally collected. The gathered data were analyzed and interpreted in MS Excel and MS Word Respectively.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. Analyze the frequency of library use by the users.
- ii. To find out the purpose of the library visit.
- iii. To find out the services used by public library users.
- iv. To know user satisfaction with public library resources and services.

## 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Public libraries play a vital role in providing information and services to communities, serving as centers for education, culture, and social activities (Wojciechowska, 2021). Skansen & Tamaro, (2023) found that investing in library infrastructure, including technology, facilities like reading rooms, and staff training, is essential to ensure they can fulfill their roles effectively. This investment has numerous benefits, including improving literacy rates (Nichols, 2022), promoting continuing education, and enhancing cultural understanding and social cohesion (Subramaniam et al., 2021). Therefore, according to Audunson et al., (2019) governments, community leaders, and stakeholders must recognize the significance of supporting public libraries in their communities.

Public library collections are essential and have been studied extensively. Collection development involves selecting materials for libraries, with careful consideration of

community needs and interests (Ansari & Munshi, 2018). Collection assessment can help libraries identify gaps in their collections and ensure they meet user needs. Libraries have a responsibility to provide diverse collections, seek out diverse materials, and balance print and digital resources. Preservation strategies are necessary for rare or

fragile materials. Interlibrary loans can be an effective way to expand collections. These factors ensure collections remain valuable resources for communities.

Public libraries have been extensively studied, and research has shown their positive impact on communities, particularly in education, economic development, and social cohesion (Noh & Chang, 2020). Digital services, such as access to e-books and computer/internet access, are also critical. Librarians play a key role in delivering high-quality services, but funding and resource challenges can hinder equitable access (Mihelj et al., 2019; Ragnedda, 2020). To meet evolving needs, public libraries must innovate and adapt their services, incorporating new technologies and partnerships to provide new resources and programs.

The relationship between public library staff and users is critical and has been studied extensively. Good staff-user relationships improve satisfaction, promote community, and increase the usage of resources. Effective

communication and interpersonal skills are essential, but challenges may arise due to language, culture, or negative experiences (Udo & Philip, 2020). Training in customer service, communication, and cultural competence is vital. User feedback can also improve relationships, and technology can facilitate positive interactions.

Public library staff-user relationships highlight the important role that staff members play in creating positive user experiences and promoting the use of library resources and services. It also underscores the importance of effective communication, training, and user feedback in building strong staff-user relationships.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A total of 396 valid user responses are considered for the analysis and interpretation. 152 users' responses have been collected from Ambala Cantt Library followed by Gurugram having 146 responses and 98 user responses from Hisar Public Library.

**Table 1: Establishment of District Public Libraries**

Sr. No.	Library Name	Establishment Year
1	State Central Library, Ambala Cantt	March 1967
2	District Public Library, Gurugram	August 1973
3	Padma Shri Vishnu Prabhakar District Library, Hisar	August 1967

**Table 2: Gender Wise Distribution**

Library	Male	Female	Others	Total
Ambala Cantt	92	59	1	(38.38%) 152
Gurugram	80	64	2	(36.87%) 146
Hisar	53	45	0	(24.75%) 98
<b>Total</b>	<b>(56.8%) 225</b>	<b>(42.4%) 168</b>	<b>(0.08%) 3</b>	<b>(100%) 396</b>

The data in Table 2 show the gender-wise distribution of users in all the selected public libraries in Haryana. There are

a total of 396 users which include 56.8% males, 42.4% females, and 0.08% other gender users. Overall 38.38% of users are from Ambala Cantt, 36% from Gurugram followed by Hisar having around 25% of users.

**Table 3: Age Group Wise User Distribution**

Library	0-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	31-40 Years	41-50 Years	Above 51
Ambala Cantt	0	20	102	12	3	15
Gurugram	0	17	98	9	2	20
Hisar	0	5	78	5	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(10.6%) 42</b>	<b>(70.2%) 278</b>	<b>(6.56%) 26</b>	<b>(2%) 8</b>	<b>(10.64%) 42</b>

The data in Table 3 elaborates on the age group-wise distribution of users. It is observed that the maximum users (278) are from the age group of 21-30 years, followed by 11-20 years and above 52 age group having 42 users each.

**Table 4: Educational Qualification of Library Users**

Library	Illiterate	10th	12th	Graduation	Post - Graduation	PhD	Post - Doc
AmbalaCantt	0	5	15	108	21	3	0
Gurugram	0	3	13	112	16	1	1
Hisar	0	2	11	68	14	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2.5%) 10</b>	<b>(9.9%) 39</b>	<b>(72.8%) 288</b>	<b>(12.85%) 51</b>	<b>(1.7%)7</b>	<b>(0.25%) 1</b>

Table 4 shows the educational qualifications of the users. it is observed that only 1 user has PostDoc, 7 users have PhD, 288 users are Graduate, and 51 users are Post Graduate. From the figure, it is evident that the maximum number of users 288 belongs to the bachelor’s program.

**Table 5: Employment Status of Library Users**

Library	Student	Govt.	Private	Retired	Own Business	Unemployed
AmbalaCantt	62	3	25	12	0	73
Gurugram	58	5	14	17	2	50
Hisar	36	3	8	5	0	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>(39.39%) 156</b>	<b>(2.76%) 11</b>	<b>(11.8%) 47</b>	<b>(1.01%) 4</b>	<b>(0.5%) 2</b>	<b>(44.44%) 176</b>

Table 5 shows that the maximum number of users of public libraries are unemployed accounting for 45 % followed by students accounting for 39 %.

**Table 6: Users Residence**

Library	Village	Town	City
Ambala Cantt	61	12	79
Gurugram	29	4	113
Hisar	48	5	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>(34.86%) 138</b>	<b>(5.30%) 21</b>	<b>(59.84%) 237</b>

Table 6 shows that the majority of the users of selected public libraries come from the city accounting for around 60% followed by users from villages accounting for approximately 35%and the least from town.

**Table 7: Public Library Membership Statistics**

Library	0-6 Month	6 Month - 1Year	1-2 Years	2-3 Years	More than 3Years
Ambala Cantt	19	31	67	20	15
Gurugram	35	39	56	7	9
Hisar	20	35	32	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>(18.68%) 74</b>	<b>(26.52%) 105</b>	<b>(39.14%) 155</b>	<b>(8.33%) 33</b>	<b>(7.33%) 29</b>



Table 7 shows the period from which users have been using their respective public libraries. The maximum number of users approximately 39% have been using the library for 1-2 years, followed by 26% of users who have

been using the library for a period of 6 months to 1 year. Approximately 7 % of users using that library for more than 3 years.

**Table 8: Frequency of using the library**

Library	Everyday	3-4 times/Week	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly
Ambala Cantt	60	26	46	13	7
Gurugram	78	34	21	8	5
Hisar	44	23	22	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>(45.96%) 182</b>	<b>(20.96%) 83</b>	<b>(22.47%) 89</b>	<b>(7.07%) 28</b>	<b>(3.54%) 14</b>

The data in Table 8 shows the frequency of users visiting the public libraries. It is observed that the maximum number approximately 46% of users visit the public library daily, while 21% of users visit the libraries 3 to 4 times

during a week, 22% of users visit the public library weekly, 7% of users visit libraries fortnightly and around 3% of users visit public libraries once a month.

**Table 9: Number of hours spent per Day**

Library	< 1hr	1-2 hrs	2-3 hrs	> 3 hrs
Ambala Cantt	6	36	48	62
Gurugram	2	12	55	77
Hisar	8	16	26	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>(4.04%) 16</b>	<b>(16.16%) 64</b>	<b>(32.58%) 129</b>	<b>(47.22%) 187</b>

The data of Table 9 highlights that the maximum number of users 47%, spent more than three hours in the library while 33% of users spent 2-3 hours, 16% of users spent 1- 2

hours and 4% of users spent less than one hour in the public libraries.

**Table 10: User's Purpose of Library Visit**

Purpose of User Visit	Ambala Cantt	Gurugram	Hisar	Total
Reading Newspapers & Magazines	136	102	92	<b>330</b>
To borrow and return books	50	20	22	<b>92</b>
Using reading room	140	132	89	<b>361</b>
To seek information related to my area of study	10	12	5	<b>27</b>
To spend Leisure time	10	6	3	<b>19</b>
To Use e-resources	12	0	0	<b>12</b>
To attend cultural programs	23	20	7	<b>50</b>
To get IT training	5	0	0	<b>5</b>
To access the Internet facility	13	0	0	<b>13</b>
Others (like Special Programs, Dedicated training/ workshop sessions)	8	3	2	<b>13</b>

The data in Table 10 shows the user's purpose for visiting the library. The data revealed that the maximum number of users visiting the public library to use the reading room facility was 361, followed by users who came to the library to read newspapers and magazines 330. Few users visit public

libraries to attend cultural programs and to get information related to Information technology. There are only 5 users who use the library to get the IT training from the Public libraries.

**Overall User Satisfaction Level of the User**

The study is divided into 5 Parts having some questions along with 7 satisfaction level entries.

5 Parts and their no. of key questions:

- 1) Infrastructure and 5 Questions
  - 2) Collection and 7 Questions
  - 3) Services and 10 Questions
  - 4) User satisfaction level with basic facilities and 3 Questions
  - 5) Staff User relationship and 5 Questions
- 7 Satisfaction level (Likert Scale) Entries:
- 1) LDP (Library Don't Provide this Service)
  - 2) IDK (I don't know about this service)
  - 3) ED (Extremely Dissatisfied)
  - 4) D (Dissatisfied)
  - 5) N (Neutral)
  - 6) S (Satisfied)
  - 7) ES (Extremely Satisfied)

**Overall total response** = (No. of questions in part) \* (Total response in each question) **Percentage Total** = (Sum of all the responses in each entry \* 100) / (Overall total response) Total Response about Infrastructure in Ambala Cantt = {(No. of Questions in Infrastructure (5)

\* total responses in each question (152)}

= 5\*152

= 760 Response

Overall Percentage of each entry in individual Part = {(Sum of all the responses in each entry

\*100) / (overall total responses)} Example:

Overall percentage of Neutral in Infrastructure of Ambala = 27.23%

In a similar pattern, researchers calculated the overall satisfaction level of users with their respective parts and prepared a consolidated satisfaction level of the individual library (Table 11).

Note: All the row data used for data analysis can be found in the appendix section of this paper.

**Library Infrastructure**

**Table 11: Overall satisfaction level of users concerning Library Infrastructure**

	Library	LDP	IDK	ED	D	N	S	ES
Infrastructure	Ambala	0	0	(4.35%) 33	(10.92%) 83	(30 %) 228	(27.50%) 209	(27.23%) 207
	Gurugram	0	0	(4.63%) 34	(11.91%) 87	(31.50%) 230	(22.87%) 167	(29.00%) 212
	Hisar	0	0	(5.90%) 29	(9.60%) 47	(20.20%) 99	(26.93%) 132	(37.34%) 183
	Overall %	0%	0%	(4.97%) 96	(10.83%) 217	(27.23%) 617	(25.76%) 508	(31.21%) 602

From Table 11, it is evident that 31% of public library users are Extremely Satisfied with Infrastructure. In this study Library infrastructure includes the location of the library, Parking facilities, Furniture, and Basic electricity facilities like Light, Fans, sockets, and AC/ Blower. 27% of

library users gave a Neutral satisfaction level followed by 26% of library who are satisfied with the public library infrastructure. Only 5 % of users are extremely dissatisfied and 11% are Dissatisfied.

**Basic Facilities of Libraries**

Table 12: Overall satisfaction level of users concerning basic facilities

	Library	LDP	IDK	ED	D	N	S	ES
Basic Facilities	Ambala	0	0	(3.28%) 15	(10.30%) 47	(43.64%) 199	(27.85%) 127	(14.91%) 68
	Gurugram	0	0	(4.33%) 19	(14.61%) 64	(40.41%) 177	(28.08%) 123	(12.55%) 55
	Hisar	0	0	(3.74%) 11	(11.90%) 35	(35.37%) 104	(29.59%) 87	(19.38%) 57
	Overall %	0%	0%	(3.79%) 45	(12.28%) 146	(39.81%) 480	(28.51%) 337	(15.61%) 180

From the data of Table 12, it can be seen that 40% of public library users are Neutral regarding basic facilities of libraries like library opening hours, cleanliness, and

common facilities like drinking water and toilets. 28% of Library users are satisfied and only 4% of users are extremely dissatisfied.



## Library Collection

**Table 13: Overall satisfaction level of users concerning Collection**

	Library	LDP	IDK	ED	D	N	S	ES
Collection	Ambala	(18.51%)197	(33.78%)359	(16.35%)174	(13.43%)143	(6.80%) 72	(6.01%) 65	(5.10%) 54
	Gurugram	(24.30%) 248	(29.64%) 303	(16.34%) 167	(12.62%) 129	(6.94%) 71	(5.70%) 58	(4.50%) 46
	Hisar	(31.20%) 214	(29.60%) 203	(12.24%) 84	(10.05%) 69	(6.12%) 42	(5.83%) 40	(4.95%) 34
	Overall %	(24.67%) 659	(31.00%) 865	(14.98%) 425	(12.03%) 341	(6.62%) 185	(5.85%) 163	(4.85%) 134

In Table 13, the satisfaction level of the user towards Collection is depicted. In the overall collection questions regarding Academic books, Competitive books, Novels, Maps, e-resources, and Braille material for visually impaired Persons are included. There is a total of 31% of users who don't know about this collection, this 31% majorly includes Braille material users who either don't

the Braille material or don't know what the library provides or not. 25% of users denied that the library does not provide these collections efficiently followed by 15% of users extremely dissatisfied. Only 5% users are Extremely satisfied and 6% of users are Neutral and satisfied with the library collection individually.

## Library Services

**Table 14: Overall satisfaction level of users concerning Services**

	Library	LDP	IDK	ED	D	N	S	ES
Services	Ambala	(21.05%) 320	(28.00%) 426	(7.9%) 117	(7.56%) 115	(18.81%) 286	(7.50%) 114	(9.34%)142
	Gurugram	(20.82%) 304	(26.98%) 394	(8.63%) 126	(7.05%) 103	(20.75%) 303	(6.91%) 101	(8.83%) 129
	Hisar	(28.26%) 277	(22.85%) 224	(7.34%) 72	(8.06%) 79	(15.81%) 155	(8.97%) 88	(8.67%) 85
	Overall %	(23.37%) 651	(25.94%) 1051	(7.95%) 308	(7.55%) 298	(18.46%) 744	(7.79%) 303	(8.94%) 356

Table 14 shows the satisfaction level of library users with the Services given by the public libraries to the user. In the case of library services questions related to newspapers, book issue/return facilities, weekly employment news, reading room facilities, Interlibrary loan, Photocopy service, dedicated services for especially abled persons, reference service, dedicated computer lab, and extension services. 26% of Library users don't know about the services

provided by the library. 23% of users responded that the library does not provide specific services like Interlibrary loans, a dedicated computer lab for e-resources consultation, or extension services like talks, and book fairs. 18% of users are Neutral towards the library services, and 8% of users are dissatisfied and extremely dissatisfied individually with the library services.

## Staff User Relationship

**Table 15: Overall satisfaction level of users concerning Staff User Relationship**

	Library	LDP	IDK	ED	D	N	S	ES
Staff User Relationship	Ambala	(16.31%) 124	(9.50%) 72	(11.31%) 86	(13.16%) 100	(31.71%) 241	(8.81%) 67	(9.21%) 70
	Gurugram	(16.43%) 120	(9.72%) 71	(10.68%) 78	(13.28%) 97	(27.53%) 201	(11.50%) 84	(10.82%) 79
	Hisar	(16.53%) 81	(15.51%) 76	(10.61%) 52	(13.10%) 64	(25.71%) 126	(9.20%) 45	(9.38%) 46
	Overall %	(16.42%) 325	(11.58%) 219	(10.86%) 216	(13.18%) 261	(28.32%) 568	(9.84%) 196	(9.80%) 195



From Table 15, the staff-user relationship includes User orientation, Library staff help in finding the required material for the user, User Query resolution with staff behavior with the users, and library staff skills to handle the library operations. so, from that perspective, 28% of users are neutral which highest percentage, followed by 16% of users who agree that the library does not provide services like user orientation, and query resolution 13% dissatisfied, 12% of users are don't know about some services like user orientation, library staff skills to handle the operation. 11% of users are extremely dissatisfied with the staff-user relationship, and the remaining 10% are satisfied and extremely satisfied.

## 6. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS

The study analyzed 396 valid user responses and found that most of the library users are male approximately 57%, and as per age group, most of the users are 70% and fall into the range of 21- 30 years. According to educational qualification, Graduate users are 72%, unemployed users are 44.4%, Users who reside in the city are 60%, 39% of users using the library for the last 1- 2 years, 46% visit the library daily, 47% users spending more than 3 hours per day in the library, and most of the users visits the library to use the reading room and for reading newspaper facility.

Overall Infrastructure of public libraries is good according to users' responses, public libraries in Hisar and Gurugram need computer facilities for the users to use the e-resources. Basic facilities like library opening hours, cleanliness, drinking water, and toilets are good.

Approximately a total of 17% of public library users are neutral regarding the library collection, satisfied, and extremely satisfied with the library collection. 31% of users don't know about the library collection that the library provides or not, which indicates that the library should focus on timely providing proper User Orientation to the users to maximize the usage of available material. The remaining 52% of users demand material related to dedicated subject-specific standard books as well as reference books and material related to the different competitive exams like UPSC, SSC, NET, CTET, etc. For the effective usage of e-resources, libraries should focus on user orientation because most of the users don't know about the e-resources (Centrally managed by the State central library) provided by the libraries.

This study found that 26% of users do not know the services provided by the library. 23% of users responded that libraries are providing Newspapers, Book Issue/Return Service, Weekly Employment Newspaper/Rojgar Samachar, and Reading Rooms facilities effectively only. The findings have revealed that no library has the provision

of any type of services for specially-abled persons.

A maximum of 28% of library users are neutral that they are neutral about staff's behavior and their library operation handling skills. 16% of users who focussed that library staff do not provide user orientation.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the user's response, the study suggests the following recommendations:

- i. **Increase funding:** Public libraries rely on funding from local government, and increasing funding can help libraries provide better resources and services to their users. Advocating for increased funding from local government officials and community leaders can help to ensure that libraries have the resources they need to provide high-quality services to all members of the community.
- ii. **Expand digital services:** With the increasing prevalence of digital technology, public libraries need to expand their digital services and resources. This may include providing access to e-books, e-audio, and other digital content, as well as offering computer and internet access for those who may not have these resources at home.
- iii. **Staff training and development:** Effective communication and interpersonal skills are essential for building good staff-user relationships. Providing regular training and development opportunities for library staff can help to ensure that they are equipped to establish positive relationships with users and provide high-quality services.
- iv. **Increase outreach efforts:** Public libraries should also make a concerted effort to reach out to underserved populations and provide services and resources that are tailored to their needs. This may involve partnering with community organizations or local schools to provide programming and resources to those who may not otherwise have access to them.
- v. **Incorporate user feedback:** Soliciting and incorporating user feedback can help libraries improve their services and resources. Regularly seeking feedback from users and using it to inform library policies and practices can help to ensure that the library is meeting the needs of the community.
- vi. **Embrace innovation:** Public libraries should also be open to new technologies and ideas that can help to improve their services and resources. This may involve experimenting with new programs or services or partnering with other organizations to provide innovative services and resources.



## 8. CONCLUSION

Public libraries play a crucial role in bridging the information divide, as they offer free access to resources to their communities. They have the potential to promote convergence technologies that can bridge the knowledge gap between different social groups, such as the rich and poor, educated and uneducated, rural and urban, men and women, etc. In India, public libraries can leverage new information and communication technologies to provide online facilities and services that can transform people's lives for the better.

The public library system, over the years, has exerted a lasting impact on the social set-up in India as well as Haryana State. The overall infrastructure of public libraries in Haryana State is improving mainly with the help of the Government and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). In today's era, libraries have to focus on the development of digital infrastructure like computer lab facilities, and library websites. For the holistic development of the community library collection should be developed based on minimum cost and maximum utilization. Braille material should also be considered. By prioritizing funding, expanding digital services, providing staff training, increasing outreach efforts, incorporating user feedback, and embracing innovation, public libraries can continue to provide high-quality services to their users and remain an important community resource.

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*How to cite this Article:*

Vikash, Kumar M. (2024), Unveiling Users Perspective: A Study of Public Libraries Collection and Services in Haryana State, India, VEETHIKA-An International Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 10(2), pp. 8-17.  
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