# Executive Summary

Public libraries, no doubt, play an important and vital role in the dissemination of information and knowledge from the source of that knowledge to the intended beneficiaries of that piece of knowledge – the common man.

A public library is a library that is freely accessible by the general public and is usually funded from public sources, such as taxes (local or/and national) and operated by civil servants. The main objective of this research project is to make public libraries in cities more functional, accessible and efficient for the common citizens.

The purpose of this study is to revive and reform the public library sector in the country, and hence, to bring about a paradigm shift in the way a public library functions, thus ensuring it pivots to the current needs of the library users and readers. The essential goal is to broaden the scope of library services and its functionality, focus on community outreach programs and enhance human welfare & development.

The mandate that was given to the author/writer was to learn about the public library system in India, its history, the evolution, its strengths and weaknesses, the present scenario, and to conduct a survey asking stakeholders and library users about their experience and what they expect more in current libraries.

The tasks involved performing a detailed research on the suggestions made by the National Knowledge Commission (NKC), compare the Indian libraries with that of countries having best public library institutions, identify the areas where there is scope for improvement, propose additions and recommendations to the current system, and also explore the possible sources of funding (public & private) for the library.

This research project report deals with these clear goals and investigates into the practical and realistically possible solutions to rejuvenate and infuse a fresh wave of institutional reform into this stagnant and often-neglected sector of library and information sciences.

The accomplishments of this pilot study on the state of affairs of the Indian public libraries, include presentation of a grassroots level picture into the experiences, opinions, challenges faced and requirements of both, the library management as well as the library users. The survey questionnaires have quantified user satisfaction on significant parameters, resulting in possible impact on decision-making at the highest levels.

The innumerable discussions, interactions, brainstorming and interviewing of all possible stakeholders of a public library system, including Head Librarians, Directors, Joint Secretaries at the Ministry level, and ultimately, the library user community at large, have sprung up crucial thought-provoking suggestions, tweaks and recommendations to the operating system based on the merit of the issues at hand.

**Key Findings:**

* Libraries come under the Concurrent List of the Constitution, i.e., it is both a union as well as a state subject.
* The public libraries at the Union level are governed by the Delivery of Books & Newspapers (Public Libraries) Amendment Act, 1956.
* Until 2009, for which the data is available, there are 19 states / union territories in India which have enacted a legislation (Act) on public libraries.
* From conservative sources and estimates, there are around more than 40,000 public libraries in India.
* The Autonomous bodies of libraries and foundations that come under the ambit of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India are Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna; Delhi Public Library, Delhi; Rampur Raza Library, Rampur; and Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library, Thanjavur.
* The National Library of India, Kolkata is a subordinate office under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
* The Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi is an attached office under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
* The National Mission on Libraries was set up in 2012, in pursuance of the 10 major recommendations on libraries by the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in its Report to the Nation (2006-2009).

**Major Recommendations:**

The chief recommendations of this research study include making the National Mission on Libraries (NML) a permanent autonomous body/organization under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India; setting up of various bodies under the NML, viz. central level fund agencies (and state level under respective state governments), National Council on Library Research and Training (NCLRT) and National Library Development Corporation (NLDC); and constituting of a Indian Library Services (ILS) cadre by the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission).

Other key suggestions are modernization & upgradation of public libraries with the help of technical assistance and partnership with the National Informatics Centre (NIC); reforms in the Library & Information Sciences education sector; establishing of an Indian Institute of Library and Information Science (IILIS); among others to encourage community activities and participation.