

A Critical Study of Emerging Reading Trends and Library Usage Patterns at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar

Zakir Khan

zakirkhanmlis@gmail.com

Mphil scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Safia Khatoon

Safiakhatoonkkt@gmail.com

Mphil Scholar, Department of Library & Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Hussain

mhustb@gmail.com

Lecturer Department of Library and Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Dr. Saeed Ullah Jan

dr.saeedullah@kkkuk.edu.pk

Chairman, Department of Library and Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Muhammad Shahab

muhammadshahb@kkkuk.edu.pk

PhD Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Shumaila Noureen

shumailanoureen123@gmail.com

Mphil Scholar Department of Library and Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Shafi Ur Rehman

shafirehman021@gmail.com

Mphil Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: * Zakir Khan zakirkhanmlis@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This abstract presents an analysis of the reading trends observed at the Directorate of Archives and libraries Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Peshawar. The study aims to investigate the patterns and preferences of readers utilizing the rich historical and cultural resources housed in the archives, shedding light on the significance of these records in contemporary research and education. The research methodology employed a mono-methods approach, quantitative data collection through surveys library visitors, regular library users/readers, permanent library members and researchers. Data was gathered over a period of two years, capturing a representative sample of the diverse users frequenting the KPK Archives. The results indicate a growing interest in Literature, politics, governance, and novel studies. Moreover, the archives' digitalization efforts have garnered significant attention, attracting researchers from distant locations, who previously faced access constraints. Furthermore, the study highlights the critical role played by the Directorate of KPK Archives in preserving and promoting the region's heritage. The archives have become an essential hub for scholars, academicians, and students seeking authentic and reliable primary sources for their research endeavors. However, challenges such as limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and the need for continuous staff training were also identified. These issues pose obstacles to further improving the quality of services and expanding accessibility to a wider audience.

Keywords: *Digitalization, Archives, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

INTRODUCTION

Various social as well as political and economic forces create complex effects on the operation of archives and libraries (Hegarty, 2022). Several key factors affecting their development consist of fast digital technology evolution along with globalization and economic unpredictability and industrial consolidation and growing corporate university record ownership and shifting copyright patterns (Ahlstrom et al., 2020). The changes in publication and scholarship and methods for accessing contemporary and historical material have received influence from library and archival practices. During recent years the roles of both librarians and archivists became increasingly aware of their sanctioned institutional power and position (Thorpe, 2019). Their mission involves augmenting access to unused resources and teaching users about socioeconomic barriers for information access alongside promoting awareness of information tool bias and delivering resources to vulnerable populations and dismantling established beliefs regarding library and archival neutrality and objectivity (Manoff, 2021).

In recent years, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's conflict has deprived libraries of their patrons. The general populace is becoming more cautious in public areas. In academic settings, pupils are limited to their textbooks (Khan, 2014). In recent years, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa applicants have scored badly in competitive examinations, a tendency that bothers Fasihuddin, a police officer who founded a private research library in Peshawar to encourage a culture of research and inquiry. Fasihuddin, who has recently been administering the library activities remotely from duty posts in Khuzdar and Quetta, claims that the violence in the area has weakened the culture of seeking information and education. There isn't much mental tranquility. Book prices might be high. Leading bookstores like Saeed Book Bank, which began in Peshawar, have shut their doors here. Additionally, there are libraries like those of the American Centre and the British Council (Khan, 2022).

When it comes to gathering, storing, and accessing information, new technologies are reorganizing bibliographic systems, which is changing how librarians and archivists conduct their work. The amount of content that libraries and archives make available to their communities has greatly increased as a result of digitization. It has made it possible to develop tools to annotate, alter, map, and mine a wide range of textual and visual resources as well as tools to read or understand content that was previously assumed to be irreparably damaged. By increasing options for cooperation and changing the scope of prospective study, digitization has improved scholarship. Researchers are able to run computer studies on vast amounts of texts and pictures. The monetization of information will increase, the problem in academic communication will intensify, and platforms with concealed bias, fake news, plagiarism, surveillance, harassment, and security flaws will be created as a result of new technologies. Additionally, the creation of systems for organizing and conserving information is made more difficult by the digital record's lower level of stability compared to the printed record. By developing new technological skills, engaging in a variety of social and materialist criticisms, and fostering new information literacy that allow users to critically consider the political and social settings of information creation, archivists and librarians are tackling these concerns (Safdar et al., 2023).

Traditional procedures for managing analogue materials coexist in the majority of 21st-century archives and libraries with newly emerging techniques for collecting and conserving a variety of digital forms and genres. Through their digital collection libraries enable users to access audio-books along with streaming audio and video files and databases plus data sets with printed books as well as journals magazines e-books and e-journals. Unique and rare items which include both physical and digital collections are preserved in archives and in special collections departments. Online documents kept in archives serve lasting purposes

because they include significant material from organizations which future users can benefit from (Manoff, 2019).

Purpose & Aim of the study

The research titled "Reading Trends at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Peshawar" analyzes carefully the behavioral patterns of visitors who use the reading materials available at this institution within Peshawar and the KP region. In order to inform and improve the library's services, collection development, and overall user experience, the research intends to investigate different elements of reading habits, trends, and engagement within this particular library context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background of Knowledge and Literacy in the Subcontinent

The roots of knowledge preservation and literacy in the subcontinent can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization around 2500 BCE. Despite its advancements, the region did not develop a centralized government (Warrach, Ameen, & Safdar, 2018). Over centuries, religious movements such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism influenced the cultural and educational landscape for over 1,500 years. Islam arrived in India through Arab traders in the 8th century and later through military campaigns. Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in 712 AD marked a pivotal moment (Tajedini, 2019). The establishment of mosques and madrasas led to the growth of learning centers where both religious and community matters were addressed, much like the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mosque in Medina, which served as a place of worship, learning, and community governance.

Evolution and Role of Public Libraries

Modern public libraries serve as inclusive spaces that promote knowledge sharing among all community members regardless of social or economic status. In the digital era, libraries are essential for bridging the information gap and ensuring equitable access to resources (Rafi, Khan, & Qutab, 2021). As community knowledge hubs, they play a vital role in fostering cultural diversity, social cohesion, and equal opportunity in education and information access.

Stakeholders in Promoting Reading Culture

Reading habits are promoted through a collaborative effort involving librarians, educators, readers, publishers, and community leaders. Librarians, due to their expertise and direct access to resources, are key stakeholders. Collaborative strategies among educators, researchers, and librarians can improve outreach and the effectiveness of reading programs. Building global and local networks enhances knowledge exchange and promotes shared learning environments.

Changing Roles of Librarians in the Digital Era

Librarians today must fulfill roles that go beyond traditional tasks. They are expected to contribute to academic research, facilitate digital access, and teach information literacy. Continuous training is crucial for adapting to these dynamic demands. Institutional support in the form of professional development and recognition is essential to help librarians manage their growing responsibilities (Mizruchi, 2021).

Libraries as Cultural and Educational Pillars

Libraries have historically preserved human knowledge, evolving from clay tablets and papyrus to printed books and digital resources. In ancient times, temples and royal courts functioned as libraries and learning

centers. Today, libraries continue to play a key role in promoting literacy and serving as centers for community development and intellectual growth.

Establishment of the Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

In 1985 the Directorate of Archives and Libraries found its initial home within the Benevolent Fund Building until 1992 when former Director Mr. Tariq Mansoor Jalali obtained new premises for this archive institution. As a major Peshawar landmark the Directorate currently serves under the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Department of Higher Education, Archives & Libraries at its central location.

Growth of Public Libraries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Between 1994 and the present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had only three operational public libraries across its cities. The Directorate succeeded in extending its service areas to four additional districts namely Bannu, Swat, Charsadda, and Kohat after its inception in 1994. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Directorate aims to introduce library services into the newly merged regions Bajaur and Mohmand and Waziristan which will enhance reading resources availability throughout the province.

Shuhada-e-APS Public Library: A Provincial Landmark

Shuhada-e-APS Public Library operates as the biggest provincial library containing in its collection over 140,000 books. The Directorate reflects its commitment to reading culture promotion through providing daily weekend access. The foundational development of public libraries as a province-wide network continues to be the highest priority of the organization.

Summary

The study analyzes South Asian reading culture development while focusing particularly on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The libraries operated by the Directorate serve as essential instruments to develop literacy skills and defend heritage traditions and distribute knowledge fairly to everyone. Developing a robust reading culture in the region demands sustained expenditure and enlargement of library facilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research made use of quantitative methods to study numerical reading patterns and analyze reading trends. The research examined how staff members in the Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Peshawar utilized their resources while tracking their reading patterns. The researchers adopted a quantitative research method for measuring data collection and using statistical analysis to produce objective results.

Population of the Study

The whole group of library borrowers from the Directorate had utilized the library's services in the past two years. The reading population of the library included two segments: regular patrons and those with borrowing records as well as permanent members. Library staff at the Directorate joined the study not only for operational knowledge but also delivered administrative details to researchers.

Sampling Technique

Census sampling methods were used because all members of the defined population were accessible. Every person who borrowed books during the specific two-year period served as both the research population and

the researched individuals. Such data collection method accurately captured all applicable users in the dataset which enhanced the research outcome reliability.

Data Collection Methods

The author obtained data by conducting personal site visits together with informal interviews supported by document assessment. The researchers used direct meetings with staff at the library to understand better how operations worked and to acquire first-hand information. The researchers examined borrowing records and user logs in order to obtain information about book issue frequency and volume.

Data Collection Instruments

The researchers used official sources including membership registers along with circulation logs and issue-return records as their main instruments. Official documents served as factual evidence to examine user activity and reading statistics. Statistical data received additional context through direct conversations with librarians at the location.

Data Analysis

The gathered data went through systematic entry into Microsoft Excel software for detailed analytical purposes. The analysis used descriptive statistics through frequencies and percentages to process and understand the gathered information. Bar graphs and pie charts served as visual presentation tools to display results successfully for readers to understand better.

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The data analysis for the years 2023 and 2024 at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Peshawar, provides valuable insights into the borrowing habits and reading trends of library users. By examining the data across various categories of books, this chapter seeks to explore the patterns, variations, and trends in book issuance, as well as the use of information technology (IT) resources in facilitating these activities.

General Overview of Library Attendance and Book Issuance Trends (2023-2024)

According to the study data there will be reductions in daily attendance figures and regular library membership and service usage throughout 2023 and 2024. Library patronage diminishes moderately through time while potentially due to behavioral changes of users or worldwide situation shifts or adaptations of library service options. Periods at the beginning and conclusion of the statistic show steady user patterns but mid-period data implies possible problems with user commitment and resource accessibility and reduced service relevance among library patrons. A test must be performed to explain the reasons behind these changes of user activity.

Analysis of Books Issued in 2023

The library issued books belonging to several categories throughout 2023 which revealed these outcomes:

- Literature books made up 24% of the total book issues throughout the year and therefore served as the leading book category. The user base demonstrates considerable interest in reading literature based on the issued book data.
- Political science and governance books made up 12% of the total, a significant share when compared to other genres. This suggests an interest in contemporary political issues, governance structures, and political theories.

- Novels represented 16% of the total books issued, indicating a steady demand for fictional works.
- Educational books were issued at 10%, which reflects the continued demand for academic and instructional texts.
- Islamic and religious books accounted for 9%, which aligns with the cultural context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where religious texts are of significant importance.
- Poetry made up 8%, suggesting a moderate interest in poetic works.

The distribution of books issued in 2023, as shown in Figure 1, reflects a balanced interest in both academic and recreational reading materials. However, the dominance of literature and political science books highlights the intellectual engagement of library users with both creative and socio-political themes.

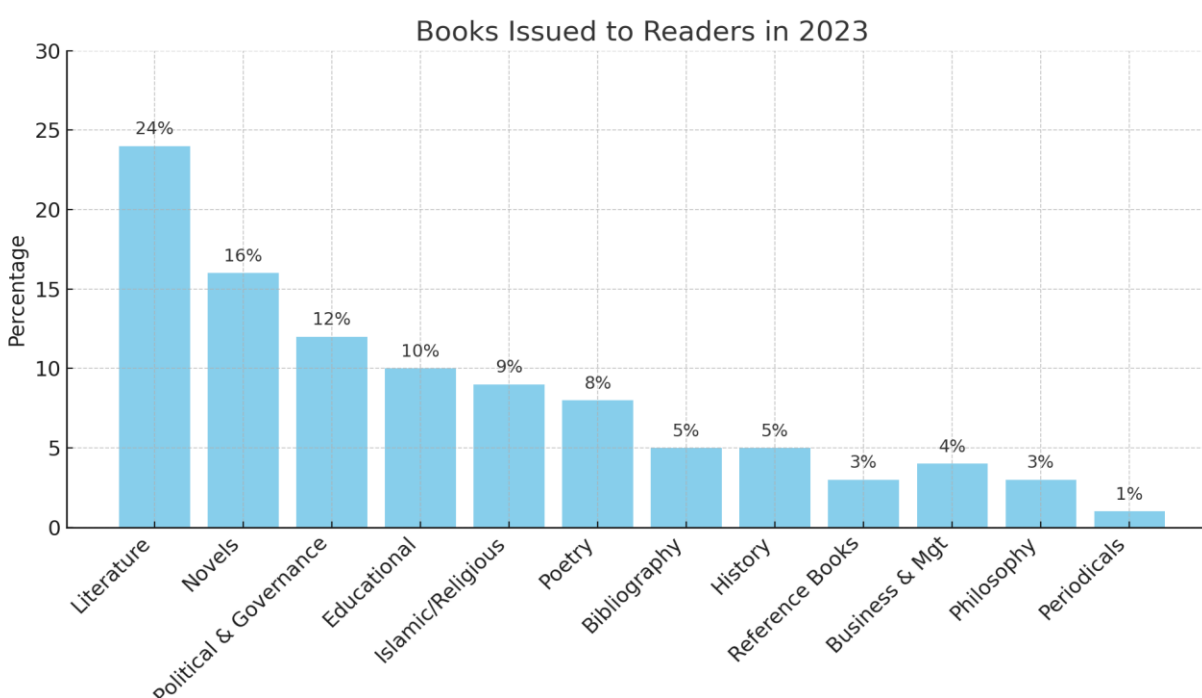


Figure No 1: Books issued to the readers in 2023.

Analysis of Books Issued in 2024

In comparison, the data for 2024 presents some similarities and differences:

- The issuance of literature books remained stable at 24%, indicating a continued interest in literary works among users.
- Political science and governance books saw a slight decline to 12%, indicating a reduced interest in this category compared to 2023.
- Novels and Islamic and religious books continued to be popular, representing 16% and 9%, respectively, reflecting consistent reader interest.
- Educational books remained at 10%, indicating steady demand for academic resources.
- Poetry showed the same proportion as 2023 at 8%, signifying a steady interest in the genre.

The year-on-year comparisons in Figure 2 show the stability in reading preferences for certain categories. However, the decline in the issuance of political science and governance books suggests a shift in user interests. This shift may reflect changing socio-political dynamics or evolving intellectual trends.

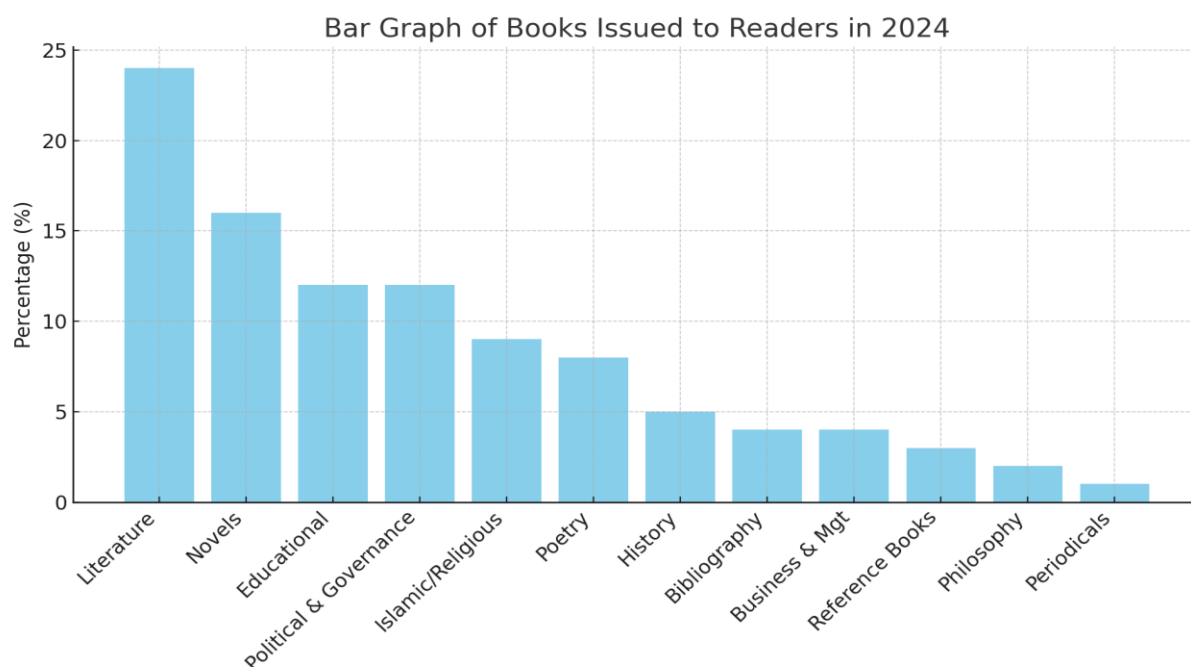


Figure No 2: Books issued to the readers in 2024.

Overall Reading Trends at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries (KPK) Peshawar

Figure 3, which illustrates the total number of books issued between 2023 and 2024, presents a clear picture of the fluctuations in the reading trends. Initially, the graph shows a normal trend with steady increases in book issuance, but a noticeable decline began after several months. This decline appears to be gradual, and by March 2024, there was a sharp increase in book issuance, possibly indicating a temporary surge in library visits or events. The reading pattern declined after August 2024 until the year ended. The detected pattern might result from external changes that include seasonal fluctuations of library activity or cultural events which influence user participation.

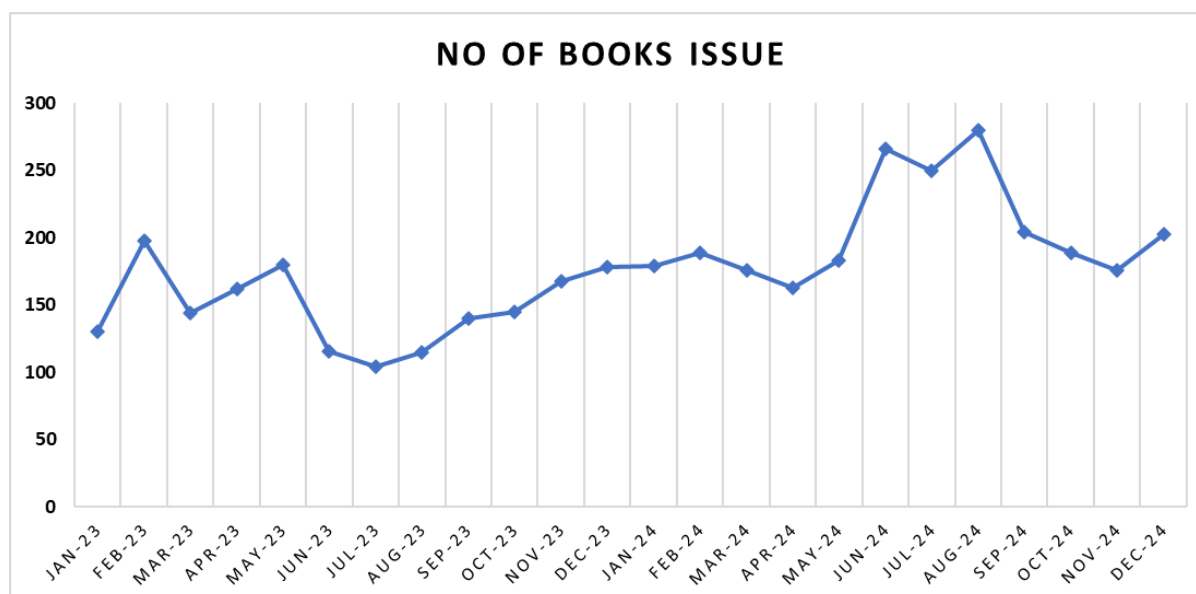


Figure No. 3: Total number of books issued in 2023-2024

Comparing Reading Trends: 2023 vs 2024

The reading user behaviors of library patrons show notable differences between 2023 and 2024 according to data presented in Figure No. 4.

Data from the beginning of each measurement period followed very parallel reading patterns yet readers exhibited distinct behavior patterns during the central months.

Reading trends initiated their upward tendency post-May 2023 before reaching their annual summit in the mid-year period and decreasing slightly until the end of 2023 with an advancing pattern.

Between May and the rest of 2024 the reading trend took a downward turn contrary to the upward direction from 2023. The data reveals that during the middle months of 2024 a larger number of users showed decreased library engagement possibly because external events and changes in library programming took place.

The contrast proves that library usage behavior evolves constantly and requires research into library-produced factors along with outside events when studying user participation patterns.

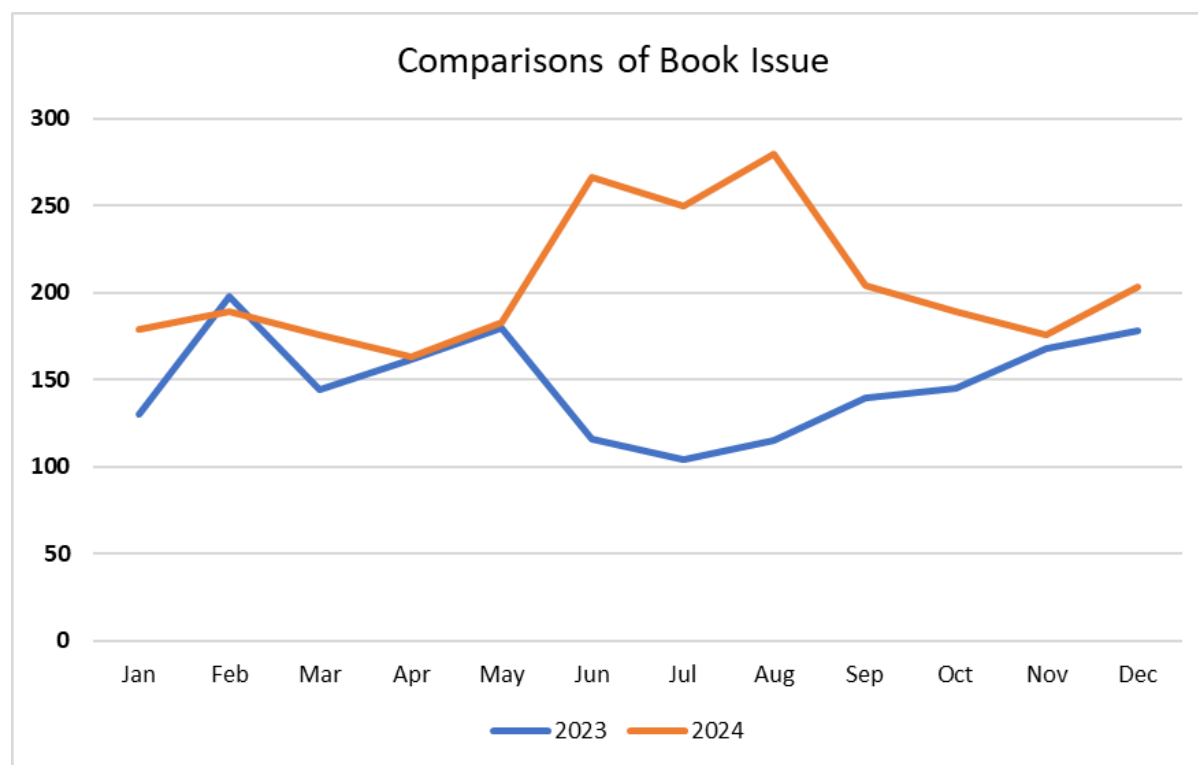


Figure No. 4: Comparison of reading trends in 2023 and 2024

Discipline-wise Reading Trends (2023-2024)

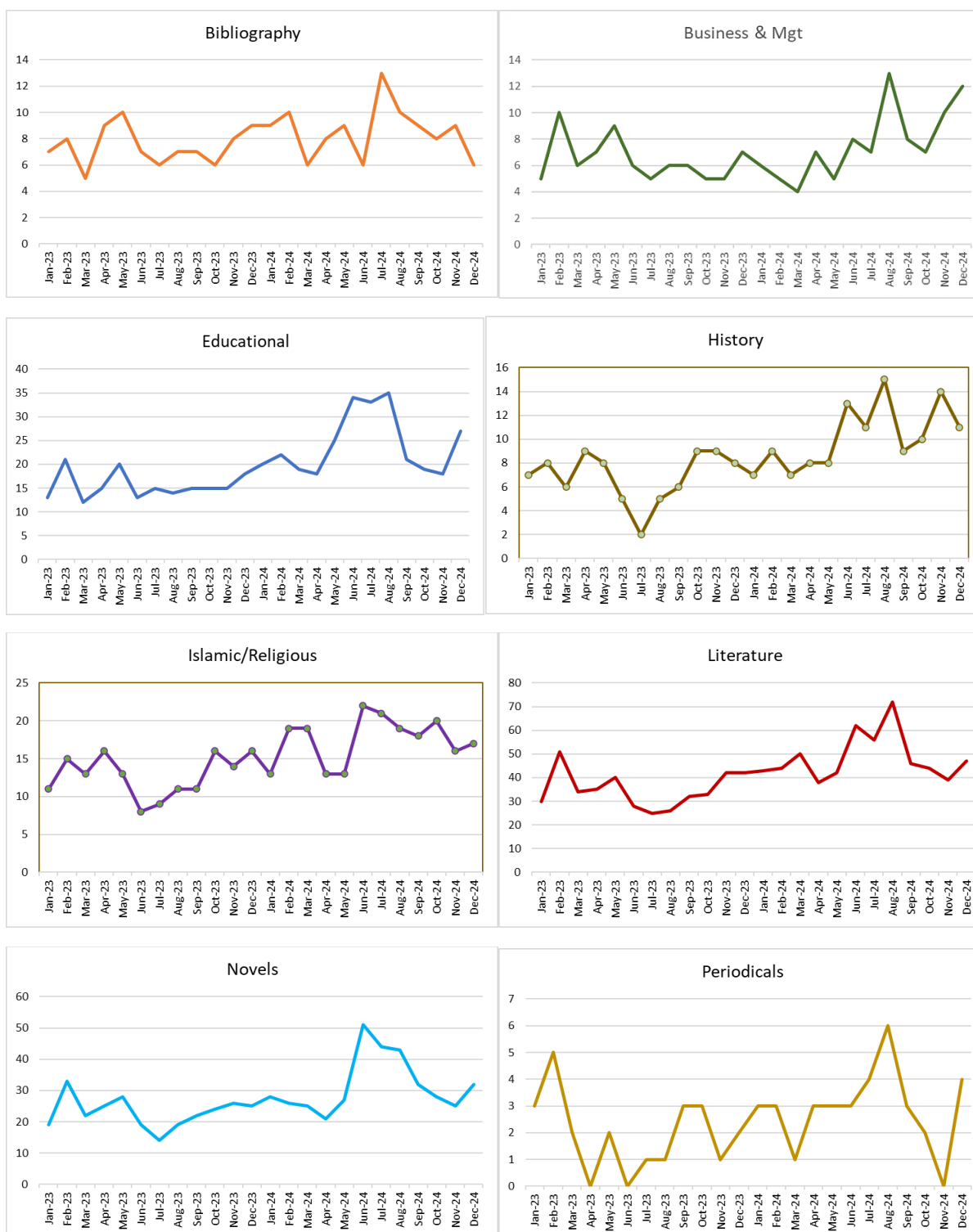
The analysis in charts 5-16 demonstrates how different academic fields show diverse reading behaviors because of these following results:

The number of people reading Political & Governance books increased throughout most months which shows their persistent interest in this field possibly because of evolving political events in the region and across the globe.

Reading patterns of novels together with literature and Islamic/religious literature continued to increase as a combination of cultural and literary interests among readers.

The reader interest in reference books philosophy and business & management books as well as journals and bibliographies either remained static or decreased. During this analysis period the categories seem to have lost their former significance among library users or their value diminished.

The assessment demonstrates that libraries must stay updated with their collection plans based on their user preferences evolution. The library should evaluate categories showing reduced popularity because they might warrant modification or alternate placement among their collections.



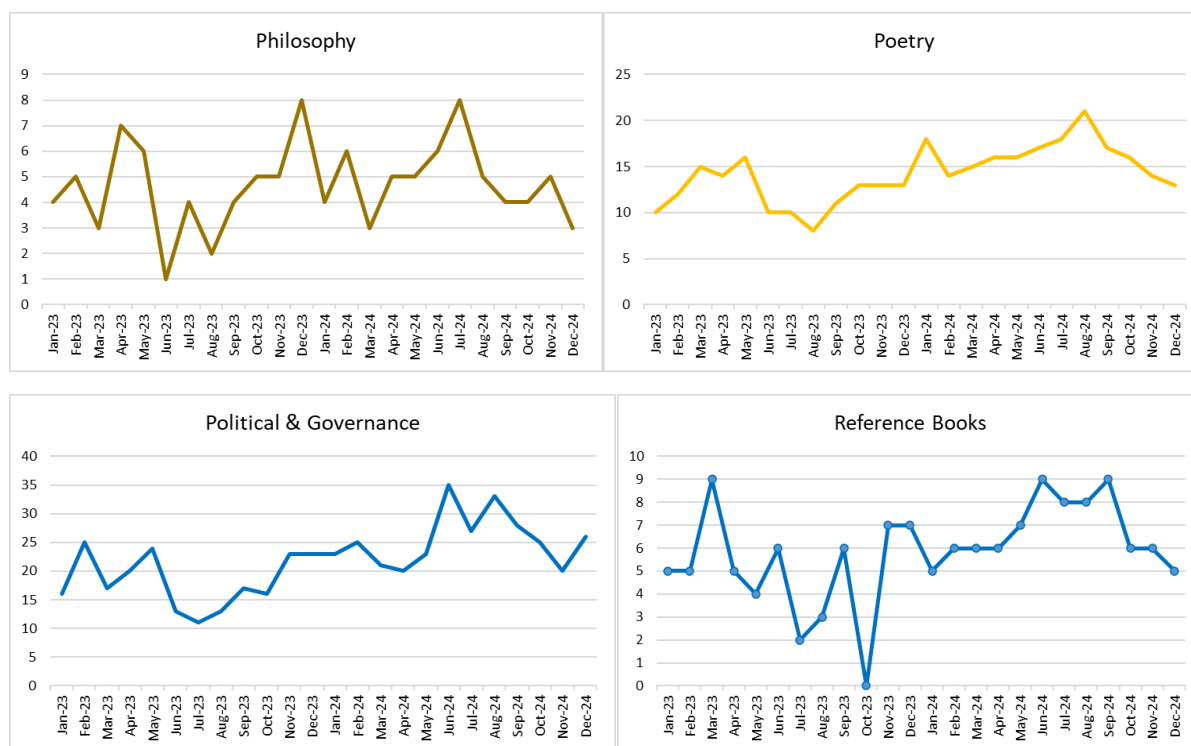


Figure No. 5-16 Discipline-wise reading trends

IT Resources Available at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries KPK Peshawar

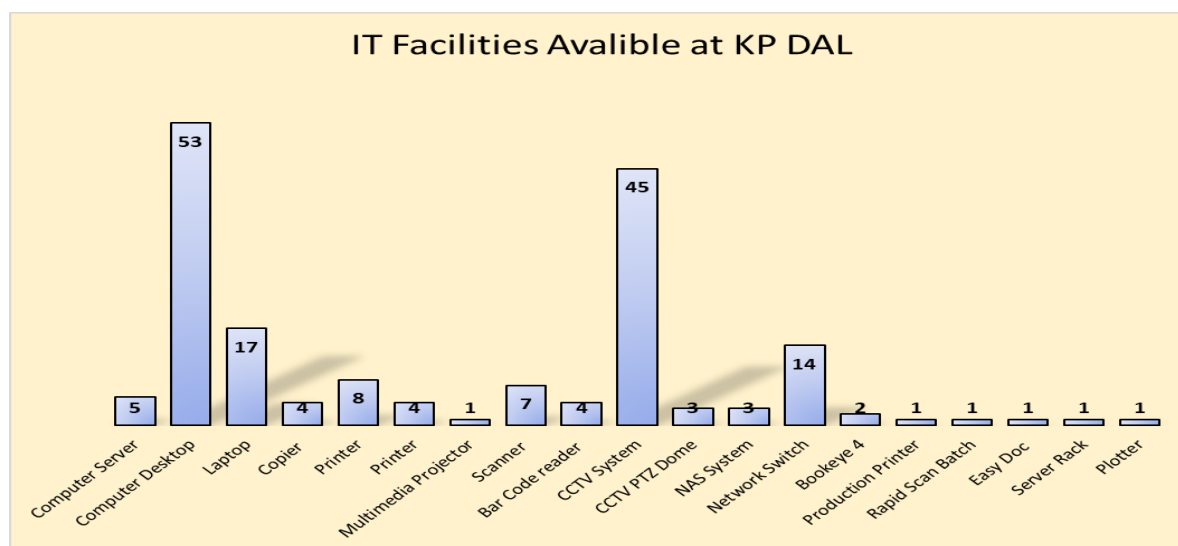


Chart No. 17 IT Resources at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries KPK Peshawar

IT Resources at the Directorate of Archives and Libraries (KP) Peshawar

Library operations heavily depend on the availability of IT resources to deliver three essential components: digitization capabilities, security measures and improved user experiences. A review of the IT resources maintained at the Directorate demonstrates the following points:

Computer Infrastructure: Numerous digital resources remain accessible to users through the management infrastructure consisting of 53 desktop computers 17 laptops 5 servers that facilitate online service delivery to library users at the Directorate.

Printing and Copying: Users benefit from the 8 printer machines and 4 copy machines to print physical copies of digital content and the operation of a production printer supports large-format document production.

Scanning and Digitization: The seven scanning devices placed in Directorate demonstrate the organization's dedication to material digitization efforts and the preservation of historical archives and improvement of digital resources accessibility.

Surveillance and Security: The Directorate secures its valuable collections and user data through 45 CCTV cameras combined with 3 PTZ CCTV domes.

Network and Storage Infrastructure: A robust network infrastructure exists at the Directorate because it contains 14 network switches and 3 NAS systems together with 1 server rack which supports both digital library operations and data storage requirements.

Specialized Equipment: The integrated system of the Book Eye 4 along with Rapid Scan Batch, Easy Doc and Plotter functions enables the Directorate to achieve advanced scanning methods and bulk digitization as well as large-format printing thereby expanding their archival material management capabilities. The detailed IT resource inventory reflects Directorate's dedication to updating library management practices along with providing users with efficient resource availability.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Reading trends combined with borrowing patterns at KPDAL have undergone changes due to various socio-cultural intellectual and external factors. The growing interest in Political & Governance books alongside literature and Islamic/religious sections indicates user intellectual interests, yet decreased demand for reference books and business & management genres demonstrates changing user preferences.

IT resources which are available throughout the institution act as important components to enable these observed trends. The Directorate's robust IT investments and digital transformation tools position them adequately to serve current digital resource needs of users in the evolving digital library environment. Additional research about user needs will help enhance library offerings.

Changing user demands underscore the vital role that library programming and community outreach methods along with adaptive resource management plays for adapting to new customer preferences. Knowledge of these patterns will serve as the foundation to develop library strategies because digital access and security now determine the effectiveness of library services.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Discussion

The analysis of the borrowing patterns for several categories of books by library users between the years 2023 and 2024 reveals interesting tendencies. Volatility rates at various levels are present during multiple months indicating multiple factors which influence reader choice behavior. An evaluation of the consumption data indicates a rising trend of readers borrowing works with specific themes including Political & Governance as well as novels and literature, history, education, and Islamic/religious literature. These genres have emerged as interesting selections for library users which indicates prevalent intellectual as well as social cultural priorities. The borrowing activity for reference books as well as philosophy

journals bibliographies and business & management texts exhibits contrasting results from reference books. The trends suggest reader interests have shifted or these topics lost relevance because of historical events in the specified time period. Reading preferences demonstrate significant change through this research which demonstrates the importance of examining numerous social factors together with intellectual factors when analyzing library borrowing patterns. Additional scholarly research with data analysis will reveal both the important causal factors behind these observations and their subsequent effects on library collection management and readership interaction methods.

Conclusion

A strategy plan must exist to guide reading and research promotion and literacy development while the library needs to work with current local and global initiatives in their implementation. The research type selection for both consultation and conduct originates from this strategy. It is crucial to include input from all parties, especially those who don't often utilize libraries. The data may then be analyzed by librarians to identify the root of the issue. Once more, relevant research may direct the study and help draw reliable results. After identifying the difference between the existing situation and the desired result, librarians might explore the research literature to learn how other libraries and related organizations handled the issue.

Librarians can develop and carry out an intervention that will enhance the promotion of reading and literacy based on the evaluation of the research literature and analysis of the local context. To maximize the impact of the process, librarians should track and evaluate their progress. It should be mentioned that, depending on the local conditions, research-based resources to promote literacy and reading promotion efforts may be generated, given, borrowed, recycled, bought, or obtained from the Internet. We advise people and organizations to speak with their local libraries about the selection of resources and recent research findings for their projects or publications since it is crucial to use current adult learning materials and research findings. Libraries should be considered as project partners when suitable. Additionally, librarians are frequently able to help with research presentation, design, and content.

The library needs to be updated. use of search engines should be used while using internet resources simple user-friendly access to online resources quickly from anywhere at any time. Additionally, it offers online textbooks, and online books, and supports digital databases and digital preservation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the reading culture and improve services at the Directorate of KPK Archives and Library, Peshawar:

Enhance Collection Development

The library should prioritize updating and diversifying its collection to include contemporary publications, digital resources, and materials in local languages. This will attract a broader range of readers and cater to the evolving needs of both researchers and casual readers.

Improve Reading Facilities

The current infrastructure can be enhanced by providing more comfortable reading spaces, sufficient lighting, internet access, and quiet zones to create a more engaging and user-friendly environment.

Promote Library Awareness Programs

Awareness campaigns, workshops, and reading promotion events should be organized regularly to encourage community engagement and make the public more aware of the library's offerings.

Strengthen Digital Services

With the increasing trend of digital reading, the library should invest in e-resources, digital archives, and online catalogues. This will not only facilitate remote access but also position the library as a modern knowledge hub.

Conduct Periodic Surveys

User feedback is essential for continuous improvement. Regular surveys and feedback mechanisms should be implemented to understand the changing preferences of readers and improve services accordingly.

Capacity Building for Staff

Training and professional development opportunities should be provided to library staff to enhance their skills in user engagement, information retrieval, and management of digital resources.

Establish Partnerships and Collaborations

The Directorate should explore collaboration with educational institutions, cultural organizations, and national libraries to expand its resource base and conduct joint programs aimed at promoting reading habits.

Special Programs for Youth and Students

Dedicated initiatives such as reading clubs, storytelling sessions, and student membership drives can be highly effective in nurturing reading habits among young people.

By implementing these recommendations, the Directorate of KP Archives and Library Peshawar can significantly contribute to the promotion of a vibrant reading culture and enhance its role as a key institution in the province's educational and cultural development.

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