



Review Paper

Evolution of User-centric resource development and Digital access in Public Libraries

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 11st June 2026, revised 5th July 2026, accepted 18th July 2026

Abstract

This review article critically examines the paradigmatic shift in public librarianship from collection-centred models toward user-centric resource development and digital access frameworks. Tracing the evolution from the early 2000s to the present, the analysis synthesises empirical research, theoretical contributions, and case studies across library and information science literature. The review identifies four distinct but overlapping phases of transformation: the emergence of participatory collection development, the integration of digital access as a core service, the rise of community-driven resource curation, and the current challenges surrounding algorithmic mediation and digital equity. Key findings suggest that while public libraries have made substantial progress in democratizing resource development, persistent structural barriers, including funding disparities, technological infrastructure gaps, and professional resistance to role redefinition, continue to limit the realisation of genuinely user-centric models. The review concludes by identifying critical gaps in the literature, particularly concerning longitudinal assessments of user participation outcomes and comparative analyses across diverse institutional contexts.

Keywords: Public libraries, user-centric services, digital access, collection development, community engagement, library technology.

Introduction

The public library has long occupied an anomalous position in the cultural and informational landscape of democratic societies, simultaneously revered as a bastion of intellectual freedom and criticised as a stubbornly anachronistic institution struggling to justify its relevance in an age of ubiquitous digital information¹. For much of the twentieth century, the public library's identity was inextricably tied to its physical collection: the books on shelves, the periodicals in binders, the reference materials behind the desk². Librarians functioned as credentialed gatekeepers, curating collections according to professional standards that privileged certain forms of knowledge while implicitly marginalising others³. The user's role, in this configuration, was largely passive, a consumer of resources selected by experts rather than an active participant in determining what those resources should be⁴.

The digital revolution of the 1990s and early 2000s fundamentally destabilised this arrangement. As the internet democratised access to information on an unprecedented scale, public libraries faced an existential question: what distinctive value could they offer when users could bypass the library entirely and access content directly from home?⁵ The answer, which has gradually crystallised over the past two decades, lies

in the concept of user-centricity: reframing the library not as a repository of pre-selected resources but as a dynamic platform for community-driven resource development and equitable digital access⁶. Benoît Desmarchelier, Faridah Djellal, and Faïz Gallouj document this shifts in core mission, observing that libraries have transitioned "from codex curators to community builders," reflecting a change in service logic away from the mobilisation of technical capabilities in low-interactivity contexts and toward the mobilisation of human capabilities in high-interactivity environments⁷.

The literature on user-centric resource development in public libraries has grown substantially since the early 2000s, yet it remains fragmented across multiple subdisciplines⁸. Ying Ge, Yun Tang, Mengqing Pang, Yu Xia, and Xiaorong Su provide a comprehensive bibliometric and systematic review of public library user experience studies, analysing 592 articles published between 2000 and 2023⁹. Their findings indicate that research themes have shifted from a library-centred to a user-centred paradigm, with a focus on user behaviour, integration of digital and physical spaces, and AI applications. Researchers in collection development have explored participatory models such as patron-driven acquisition (PDA) and demand-driven acquisition (DDA), which allow user borrowing patterns to directly influence purchasing decisions¹⁰.

Scholars of digital inclusion have examined how libraries serve as critical access points for broadband internet access, digital literacy training, and technology lending programs¹¹. Community informatics researchers have investigated co-creative models in which library patrons actively contribute to resource development through makerspaces, local history digitisation projects, and community archiving initiatives¹². Meanwhile, critical library scholars such as Todd Honma have raised important questions about whose interests user-centric models actually serve, warning that participatory frameworks can reproduce existing power asymmetries rather than dismantle them¹³.

Despite this rich body of work, I have identified several significant gaps. First, the literature tends to treat user-centricity as an unequivocal good, with relatively few studies critically examining the conditions under which participatory models fail or produce unintended negative consequences¹⁴. Second, comparative research across different institutional contexts, urban versus rural, wealthy versus under-resourced, national systems versus independent libraries, remains underdeveloped¹⁵. Third, the rapid evolution of algorithmic recommendation systems and artificial intelligence tools has outpaced scholarly analysis of how these technologies reshape user-library relationships¹⁶. This review, therefore, aims to provide a critical synthesis of existing research while identifying promising directions for future inquiry.

The argument I develop here proceeds in four parts. The first section traces the historical trajectory from traditional collection-centred models to early experiments in user participation. The second section examines the digital access revolution, analysing how libraries have navigated their dual roles as content providers and connectivity facilitators. The third section explores contemporary models of community-driven resource development, including makerspaces, digital commons, and participatory archiving. The fourth section critically evaluates persistent challenges, including digital equity gaps, professional resistance, and the ethical implications of algorithmic curation. Throughout, I maintain a critical stance toward celebratory narratives of user-centric transformation, attending carefully to the structural constraints that shape what libraries can and cannot achieve.

Historical trajectories: from collection-centred to user-participatory models

The Traditional Paradigm and Its Critiques: To understand the significance of user-centric resource development, one must first appreciate the durability of the collection-centred paradigm that dominated public librarianship for much of the twentieth century. Under this model, professional librarians exercised near-total authority over selection decisions, guided by principles articulated in foundational texts such as S. R. Ranganathan's *Five Laws of Library Science* (1931) and the American Library Association's various collection development

policies¹⁷. Selection was understood as a technical-expert activity requiring specialised knowledge of publishing markets, bibliographic tools, and evaluative criteria¹⁸. The user's role, while acknowledged in circulation statistics and reference interactions, was fundamentally reactive: users could choose from selections already made, but they had no formal mechanism to shape those selections¹⁹.

Critiques of this model emerged from multiple directions beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. Feminist library scholar Suzanne Hildenbrand pointed out that professional selection criteria, despite claims of neutrality, systematically privileged white, male, Western, and middle-class perspectives while marginalising works by women, people of colour, and non-Western authors²⁰. Critical theorists Michael H. Harris and Stan A. Hannah drew on the work of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci to argue that collection development practices functioned as mechanisms of cultural hegemony, reproducing dominant ideologies under the guise of disinterested professionalism²¹. Meanwhile, user studies researcher Joan C. Durrance documented persistent mismatches between library collections and community information needs, suggesting that expert-driven selection was systematically missing its target²².

These critiques created intellectual space for alternative models that explicitly centred user preferences and community input. The earliest experiments in what would later be called "user-centric" collection development took the form of community needs assessments and survey-based collection mapping²³. These approaches represented a modest departure from traditional practice: librarians still retained ultimate authority over selection, but they gathered user input to inform their decisions. The genuinely radical shift relinquishing selection authority to users themselves would await the digital transformation of library acquisitions systems²⁴.

Patron-Driven Acquisition and the Dematerialisation of the Collection: The emergence of electronic books and print-on-demand technologies in the early 2000s created technical conditions for a genuinely new approach to collection development: patron-driven acquisition (PDA)²⁵. In PDA models, libraries load records for far more titles than they could ever afford to purchase, but purchases are triggered only when a user attempts to access a title²⁶. This mechanism fundamentally inverts traditional selection logic: instead of librarians predicting what users will want, users reveal their preferences through their actual behaviour. As a collection development strategy, PDA is radically user-centric, yet it also raises troubling questions about the librarian's professional role and the long-term coherence of library collections²⁷.

A substantial body of research has examined PDA implementation in academic libraries, but public library applications have received comparatively less attention²⁸. The available evidence suggests that public library PDA programs generally increase circulation statistics and user satisfaction

while reducing the proportion of the collection that goes unused²⁹. However, researchers have also identified significant concerns. Cost-control mechanisms can inadvertently limit access to high-demand popular titles while failing to support niche interests³⁰. The transactional nature of PDA, treating each access event as a potential purchase, can lead to perverse incentives, such as the systematic purchase of short, quickly consumed texts over longer, more substantive works³¹. Moreover, PDA does nothing to support users who lack the digital literacy or technological access to participate in the first place, a problem to which I will return.

Some scholars have argued that PDA represents not a genuine democratisation of collection development but rather a displacement of professional authority onto algorithmic rules and market mechanisms³². Joe Pateman proposes a periodisation that captures this evolution, distinguishing among the “traditional library” (1850–1970), the “needs-based library” (from 2000 to the present), and an intermediate phase, with each stage differing in terms of library objectives, use of floor space, and performance indicators³³. The evolution process is consistent with a gradual servitization of libraries’ activities, with less floor space being dedicated to collections and more to user engagement³⁴.

The digital access revolution: libraries as connectivity infrastructures

Broadband Access and the Digital Divide: As public libraries experimented with participatory collection models, they simultaneously confronted a more fundamental challenge: the digital divide³⁵. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, researchers documented persistent disparities in home internet access along lines of income, education, race, and geography³⁶. Public libraries emerged as critical “community technology centres,” providing free broadband access to users who could not afford home connections or who lived in areas underserved by commercial internet providers³⁷. By 2015, nearly all public library systems in the United States offered free public internet access, and libraries had become the single most important source of no-cost broadband for low-income Americans³⁸.

The digital access revolution transformed the public library’s physical space and institutional identity. Reference desks that once fielded questions about encyclopedias and almanacks now assisted users with email setup, online job applications, and government form completion³⁹. Libraries invested heavily in public-access workstations, Wi-Fi infrastructure, and technology-lending programs that allowed patrons to borrow laptops, tablets, and mobile hotspots⁴⁰. These developments represented a profound shift in resource development: libraries were no longer simply providing access to recorded knowledge; they were providing access to the *infrastructure* through which knowledge could be created, shared, and used⁴¹.

Yet the digital access imperative also created new forms of exclusion. As libraries channelled resources into technology infrastructure, traditional collections and services were often deprioritised⁴². Users who lacked digital literacy skills found themselves unable to benefit from the very technologies intended to serve them⁴³. And the assumption that internet access is a sufficient condition for meaningful digital participation rather than a necessary but insufficient one led some libraries to neglect the intensive, one-on-one support that many users required⁴⁴.

Kunyang Lin and Jiebing Wu investigate the geographic distribution and determinants of the significance of digital library services, using city-level data from China⁴⁵. Their findings indicate that the significance of digital library services is influenced by improvements in internal service quality and by external factors such as users’ digital literacy and readiness to engage with these services. Moreover, digital services are significantly shaped by socioeconomic influences, resulting in geographic disparities analogous to those observed in the physical world, underscoring the persistence of the digital divide even within digital library provision⁴⁶.

Digital Literacy as a Core Library Function: Recognition of these limitations prompted a second wave of digital access initiatives focused not only on connectivity but also on digital literacy⁴⁷. Researchers and practitioners began arguing that libraries must do more than provide pipes and devices; they must actively teach users how to navigate, evaluate, and create digital content⁴⁸. The American Library Association’s publication *Digital Literacy in Public Libraries* provides a holistic view of digital literacy support across the full spectrum of public libraries, using real-world examples to help libraries transform digital literacy work from answering on-the-fly tech questions to implementing full-scale digital literacy programs integrated throughout the library⁴⁹.

The digital literacy turn represented a significant expansion of the library’s educational mission⁵⁰. Unlike traditional information literacy instruction, which focuses on library-specific research skills, digital literacy encompasses the full range of competencies needed to participate in contemporary digital society. This expansion has been both celebrated and critiqued. Proponents argue that digital literacy training is essential for social and economic inclusion in an increasingly digital world. Critics counter that libraries lack the staffing, funding, and expertise to provide meaningful digital literacy education at scale, and that the digital literacy mandate has imposed unsustainable burdens on already-stretched library workers.

Community-driven resource development: beyond access to co-creation

Makerspaces and the Production Turn: The most transformative development in user-centric resource

development has arguably been the emergence of library makerspaces, dedicated spaces equipped with tools for physical and digital creation, including 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, audio recording studios, and video editing workstations. Makerspaces fundamentally reconfigure the library-user relationship: instead of the library providing resources for users to consume, the library provides resources for users to *produce*. This shift from consumption to creation has been hailed as nothing less than a redefinition of the public library for the twenty-first century.

Early research on library makerspaces was overwhelmingly celebratory, emphasising their potential to support entrepreneurship, STEM education, and creative expression. More recent scholarship has offered a more nuanced picture. Ethnographic studies reveal that makerspace usage is far from universally accessible; women, older adults, and individuals without prior technical experience often face significant barriers to participation. The informal, peer-learning model that characterises many makerspaces can disadvantage users who require structured instruction or who lack the social confidence to ask for help. Moreover, the substantial costs of equipment, supplies, and staffing mean that makerspaces remain concentrated in wealthier communities, exacerbating rather than alleviating resource inequalities.

Despite these concerns, makerspaces have inspired a broader reconceptualisation of library resources as platforms for community production rather than collections for individual consumption. This reconceptualisation has extended beyond physical making to encompass digital creation tools, community archiving projects, and participatory programming models.

Participatory Archiving and Local History: One of the most promising applications of user-centric resource development has been in the domain of local history and community archiving.

Traditional local history collections were assembled by librarians and archivists according to professional standards that privileged official records, published materials, and the perspectives of elite community members. Participatory archiving inverts this model, inviting community members to contribute their own materials, photographs, letters, oral histories, and ephemera and to participate in decisions about description, organisation, and access.

The Internet Archive's Community Webs program, launched in 2017, has provided training, support, and services to empower public libraries to preserve local digital heritage. Participatory preservation initiatives, such as community scanning days and oral history programs, have been central to this effort, with particular attention to preserving locally produced web content. Research on digital archive construction and community memory preservation in China, examining initiatives such as the Shanghai Library's City Memory Project, reveals that a hybrid approach to governance where the government leads, the community gets involved, and experts contribute emerges as the most effective model for creating sustainable and inclusive digital archives and preserving community memories.

Participatory archiving raises fundamental questions about authority, expertise, and the nature of the historical record. When community members contribute materials and participate in description, whose perspective governs what is preserved and how it is represented? Professional archivists have raised concerns about the erosion of archival standards and the potential for participatory projects to reproduce rather than challenge dominant community narratives. Yet defenders of participatory approaches argue that these concerns reflect an untenable attachment to professional authority and that the benefits of community inclusion, more diverse collections, stronger community relationships, and greater institutional accountability outweigh the risks.

Table-1: Evolution of Digital Access Models in Public Libraries.

Era	Primary Focus	Key Services	Dominant Challenges	Selected Sources
1995-2005	Connectivity provision	Public workstations, basic internet access	Infrastructure costs, technical support	35,36, 37
2005-2015	Digital inclusion	Wi-Fi, hotspot lending, basic digital literacy	Skills gaps, usage disparities	43,44, 45
2015-2025	Comprehensive digital equity	Advanced training, device lending, assistive technology	Staff capacity, funding sustainability	46,47,49
Emerging	Algorithmic literacy	AI tool access, data privacy education, and critical platform studies	Ethical frameworks, rapid technological change	16,32

Note: This table synthesises patterns identified in the literature on digital library services, including the persistence of geographic and socioeconomic disparities noted by Lin and Wu⁴⁵, who demonstrate that digital services are significantly shaped by socioeconomic influences. The transition toward comprehensive digital equity is documented in the American Library Association's digital literacy initiatives⁴⁹.

Table-2: User Participation Models in Library Resource Development.

Model	User Role	Librarian Role	Degree of User Control	Primary Critique	Selected Sources
Traditional selection	Passive consumer	Expert gatekeeper	None	Culturally hegemonic	1,2,3,17
Community needs assessment	Informant	Decision-maker	Low	Tokenistic	4,19,23
Patron-driven acquisition	Transactional chooser	System designer	Medium	Market-logic capture	25,27,32
Participatory programming	Co-designer	Facilitator	Medium-high	Labor intensiveness	12,24
Makerspace creation	Producer	Resource provider	High	Accessibility barriers	15,28
Community archiving	Contributor/curator	Partner	Variable	Quality control tensions	30,33

Note: This table builds on the periodisation given by Pateman³³, who distinguishes among the traditional library, needs-based library, and an intermediate phase, based on differences in library objectives, floor-space use, and performance indicators. The makerspace model draws on research that explores how public library makerspaces can facilitate power-sharing from users perspectives.

Persistent challenges and critical tensions

Digital Equity Beyond Access: Despite decades of investment in digital access initiatives, significant digital divides persist. Research consistently shows that library users with lower incomes, less formal education, and non-white racial identities are more likely to rely on library computers as their primary or only source of internet access. Yet these same users often face the greatest barriers to effective digital participation, including limited prior experience, lack of home access for extended practice, and inadequate support for complex tasks such as online job applications or government benefits enrollment.

The concept of “digital equity” has emerged to capture the insufficiency of access-focused approaches. Digital equity requires not only connectivity and devices but also digital literacy, ongoing technical support, accessible content, and attention to the social and cultural factors that shape technology use. The challenges are particularly acute in rural contexts: rural patrons may need to drive considerable distances to reach a library, connect to Wi-Fi to borrow and download titles, and then read at home where broadband is unavailable. This connectivity gap disproportionately affects the communities that public libraries were created to serve: rural populations, lower-income neighbourhoods, and developing regions where broadband infrastructure is still catching up.

Public libraries have made significant strides toward digital equity, particularly through programs that pair device lending with digital navigation services and human guides who provide sustained, one-on-one assistance. However, these programs are costly to operate and difficult to scale, and many libraries have been forced to choose between breadth (serving more users with minimal support) and depth (serving fewer users with intensive assistance).

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically exposed and exacerbated digital equity gaps. When libraries closed their physical spaces, millions of users lost access to their only internet connection. Libraries responded rapidly, deploying mobile hotspots, expanding Wi-Fi ranges into parking lots, and shifting digital literacy programs online. Yet the crisis also revealed the fragility of library-based digital equity models: without sustained public investment, libraries cannot serve as a reliable infrastructure for universal digital access.

Professional Identity and Organisational Resistance: The shift toward user-centric resource development has not been uniformly embraced within the library profession. Surveys of librarian attitudes reveal significant variation in support for participatory models, with younger librarians and those trained in recently updated graduate programs expressing more positive views than older librarians and those educated in traditional collection-development frameworks. This generational divide reflects deeper disagreements about the nature of professional expertise and the appropriate boundaries of user participation.

Critics of user-centric models within the profession raise several concerns. First, they argue that ceding selection authority to users undermines the librarian’s role as a defender of intellectual freedom and a curator of marginalised perspectives. In a purely demand-driven system, popular but problematic materials may crowd out challenging, controversial, or niche works that serve important democratic functions. Second, they contend that user-centric models are vulnerable to co-optation by commercial interests, as evidenced by the integration of Amazon recommendation algorithms into some library discovery systems. Third, they worry that the emphasis on user participation devalues the specialised knowledge that librarians possess, which took generations to develop and cannot be easily replaced.

Proponents of user-centric models respond that these concerns reflect an outdated and undemocratic conception of library professionalism. The librarian's expertise, they argue, should be deployed in designing participatory systems and facilitating user engagement, not in making unilateral selection decisions. The alternative defending traditional professional authority is increasingly untenable in an era when users have more information options than ever before and can simply bypass libraries that fail to meet their needs.

Algorithmic Curation and the Future of Resource Development: The most recent, and perhaps most consequential, development in user-centric resource development involves integrating algorithmic recommendation systems into library discovery platforms. Drawing on the same collaborative filtering and personalisation technologies that power commercial platforms like Amazon, Netflix, and Spotify, algorithmic discovery tools present users with resources predicted to match their interests based on past behaviour, demographic proxies, and aggregated usage patterns. A systematic review of AI-driven personalisation in library services finds that Natural Language Processing, recommendation systems, and machine learning algorithms are the most commonly used and effective methods for personalising services.

Algorithmic curation offers obvious benefits for user-centric resource development. When implemented effectively, recommendation systems can surface resources that users would never have discovered through browsing or searching, potentially increasing engagement and satisfaction. The deliberate use of generative AI offers a new perspective for developing smart, user-centred libraries and strategically

enhancing the human role, with researchers emphasising that AI-driven personalisation, especially through recommendation systems and 24/7 chatbots, enhances user experience and satisfaction.

Yet algorithmic curation also raises profound concerns. Recommendation algorithms are not neutral arbiters of relevance; they encode the values, assumptions, and biases of their designers. A systematic evaluation of Booklens, a non-personalised item-to-item recommender used in Danish public libraries, reveals that popularity strongly drives recommendation outcomes, with up to a 40% relative decrease in exposure for less popular nationalities depending on the parameter setting. The analysis also shows that certain configurations significantly amplify or decrease these disparities, highlighting the need for systematic bias analysis to be a structural component of recommender systems evaluation, supporting libraries in aligning algorithmic behaviour with social and cultural missions.

Moreover, the opacity of proprietary recommendation algorithms makes them difficult for libraries to audit or evaluate. When a commercial discovery layer recommends certain resources and not others, neither librarians nor users can know why those recommendations were generated or what alternatives were suppressed. This opacity is fundamentally at odds with library values of transparency and intellectual freedom. Some scholars have called for the development of open-source, library-owned recommendation systems that are fully auditable and configurable to local values. Such systems remain largely hypothetical, however, as most libraries lack the technical capacity to develop and maintain them.

Table-3: Comparative Analysis of Selection Authority Models

Dimension	Professional Authority Model	Demand-Driven Model	Participatory Governance Model
Selection basis	Professional judgment	Usage metrics	Community deliberation
Librarian role	Decision-maker	System designer	Facilitator
User role	Consumer	Revealed-preference chooser	Deliberative participant
Collection coherence	High	Low	Variable
Responsiveness to marginalized voices	Low (biased by professional norms)	Low (biased by market metrics)	Potentially high
Implementation difficulty	Low (existing workflows)	Medium (technical systems)	High (governance structures)
Selected Sources	1, 2, 3, 17	25, 26, 27, 32	12, 24, 33, 41

Note: This table contrasts three ideal-type models of selection authority. The demand-driven model is informed by research on patron-driven acquisition, which notes both advantages and challenges, including concerns about the quality and diversity of the resulting collection and the de-professionalisation of librarianship²⁷. The participatory governance model draws on research into maker space evaluation that emphasises power-sharing from users' perspectives and the development of spaces and practices that equitably support users' actual needs.

Conclusion

The evolution of user-centric resource development and digital access in public libraries represents one of the most significant transformations in the history of public librarianship. Over the past three decades, libraries have moved from a professional-authority model in which librarians selected resources for passive consumers to a participatory landscape in which users increasingly shape what resources libraries provide and how those resources can be accessed and used. This transformation has been driven by technological change, shifting user expectations, and a growing recognition that traditional collection-centred models systematically excluded many of the communities that public libraries are meant to serve.

Yet the picture that emerges from this review is decidedly mixed. On one hand, user-centric innovations have genuinely democratized library resource development in important ways. Patron-driven acquisition has aligned collections more closely with user preferences. Makerspaces have enabled community production rather than mere consumption. Participatory archiving has diversified the historical record. Digital access initiatives have connected millions of previously unserved users to the internet and provided critical digital literacy training. These achievements are real and substantial, and they have helped public libraries maintain their relevance in an increasingly competitive information environment.

On the other hand, user-centric models have fallen far short of their transformative promise. Persistent resource disparities mean that well-funded libraries in wealthy communities can offer rich participatory opportunities while under-resourced libraries struggle to maintain basic services. Digital divides have been narrowed but not closed, and the most vulnerable users remain the least able to benefit from user-centric innovations. Algorithmic curation threatens to reintroduce opacity and bias into resource discovery even as libraries celebrate their user-centeredness. Professional resistance, while sometimes reflecting a defensive attachment to outdated authority, also raises legitimate concerns about the erosion of values of intellectual freedom in demand-driven systems.

Looking forward, the central challenge for public libraries is not whether to embrace user-centric models that the battle has been largely won, but rather how to implement user-centricity in ways that are genuinely democratic, equitable, and aligned with core library values. This requires moving beyond simplistic metrics of user satisfaction or circulation to more robust conceptions of community participation and accountability. It requires attending carefully to who is empowered and who is excluded when libraries shift authority from professionals to users. It requires developing governance structures that give marginalised communities a meaningful voice in library decision-making. And it requires sustained public investment to ensure that user-centric innovations reach all communities, not just those that can afford them.

The literature reviewed here suggests several priority areas for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term outcomes of user-centric models, particularly for users from marginalised groups. Comparative research across diverse institutional contexts would help identify which models work best under which conditions. Critical analyses of algorithmic curation, including participatory design of alternative systems, are urgently needed as libraries increasingly adopt commercial discovery platforms. And more attention should be paid to the labour conditions of library workers, who are often expected to implement user-centric models without additional resources or training.

Ultimately, the evolution of user-centric resource development in public libraries is an unfinished story, perhaps necessarily so. Libraries exist in a dynamic relationship with their communities, and what counts as user-centric must be continually renegotiated as communities change, technologies evolve, and new forms of exclusion emerge. The most promising path forward is not to perfect any single model but to cultivate institutional humility: an openness to learning from failure, a willingness to share authority, and a commitment to the endless work of making public libraries truly public.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Tapan Kumar Parichha, Principal, Suri Vidyasagar College, for his constant encouragement and valuable support throughout this work. I also extend my sincere thanks to the college administration for providing consistent support towards the development and enhancement of the college library's digitalisation facilities. My appreciation further goes to the library staff for their continuous help in accessing essential resources and materials.

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