

# The Role of Asiatic Society, Kolkata Preserving Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS): A Study

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## Abstract:

In this study explore the intersection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of the Asiatic Society, emphasizing its collection development, human resource development, and ICT based automation status of it. Also, the study focused on the last five years of library budget at the Asiatic Society. This research study adopted a quantitative research approach. The study focused on collection development at the Asiatic Society. The questionnaires were distributed to the Librarian and Library Information Assistant at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. Also, some of the data is collected from the website of the Asiatic Society. The data is analyzed in Excel i.e., Table, Bar, Pie chart presented in descriptive and interpretative form. The study finds that the total collection of Rare Books is 17,469 and Rare Journals collection is 14,226. It is revealed that 66% of the Technical Staff at the Asiatic Society in Kolkata are vacant as of now. Total 15 subjects' collection are covered in Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The Language of Asiatic Society collection is divided into 5 sections. A huge, historically valuable microfiche collection of 22553 frames, preserving material for preserving historical material in a physical format. Also, the study focused on the library budget of the Asiatic Society, in which the maximum amount was allocated 24.02 Cr.in the year of 2021-22. This research reflected the total collection, rare books, rare journal, staff capacity, budget, and ICT status of The Asiatic Society. This study explores the indigenous knowledge of The Asiatic Society, it is not merely as a colonial-era institution but as a continuing bridge between India's past and present knowledge systems, with critical implications for the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge in the recent era.

**Keywords:** Asiatic Society; Collection Development; Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), Information Communication Technology (ICT), Rare Books.

## 1 Introduction

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata is a historic institution established in 1784 by Sir William Jones, is one of the oldest and most prestigious cultural and research institutions in India <sup>[1]</sup>. It plays a significant role in research, publications, and the archiving of rare manuscripts and other

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academic documents. The Asiatic Society located at Park Street, Kolkata. The Library of the Asiatic Society is its most important asset, and its importance lies not only in the numerical strength of its holdings but also in its rich and unique contents. The Asiatic Society has systematically acquired, preserved, and curated materials ranging from ancient manuscripts to modern scholarly works<sup>[1]</sup>. Its library and museum collections are globally recognized for their richness, covering subjects such as history, philosophy, literature, natural sciences, art, and archaeology. Such efforts not only support academic research but also contribute to the safeguarding of India's documentary heritage<sup>[2]</sup>. These resources serve as primary evidence of the continuity and resilience of indigenous traditions, ensuring their transmission to future generations.

In an age where globalization and technological change pose challenges to traditional knowledge, the Asiatic Society's mission of conserving IKS is highly relevant. Its efforts provide a bridge between the past and the present, enabling scholars, policymakers, and communities to rediscover, reinterpret, and apply indigenous wisdom in contemporary contexts. Thus, the Asiatic Society continues to play a vital role not only in the collection development of knowledge resources but also in the preservation of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems, strengthening the foundation for sustainable intellectual and cultural growth.

### **1.1 Significance of the Study**

This study on the Asiatic Society's role in preserving Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) holds profound significance across multiple dimensions: academic, cultural, technological, and national. It moves beyond a simple historical account to address contemporary global conversations about heritage, identity, and the decolonization of knowledge. This research highlights that preservation is not about locking texts in a vault. By focusing on the Asiatic Society's modern initiatives, the study demonstrates how ancient knowledge can be revived and integrated into modern scientific inquiry. It shows that the past can actively contribute to solving future problems.

### **2 Objective**

The main objective of this study is

- a. To portray total collection of Asiatic Society, Kolkata.
- b. To investigate the last five years' budget for Asiatic Society, Kolkata.
- c. To find out the rare books and rare journal of AS, Kolkata.
- d. To highlight the human resource development of AS, Kolkata.
- e. To depict the overall automation status of AS, Kolkata.

### **3 Review of Literature**

According to Baquee and Raza (2019)<sup>[3]</sup> revealed the preservation, conservation, and use of manuscripts in the Aligarh Muslim University Library. The statistics point out, more than 99% of manuscripts were written on paper, and 57.75% were in Persian. Manuscripts are preserved using chemicals, such as paradichloro benzene, naphthalene ball, thymol gel, silica gel, and other chemicals. In this connection Mal (2013)<sup>[4]</sup> reported that e-resources in state university

library of U.P. 84% maximum budget is allocated to books, 16% to journal and very a small amount of allocating for accessories. Giri (2015) found the major challenges of collection development in the five academic libraries of the NCT of Delhi [5]. Further, the faculty members are many of time hold books and student cannot access those books. Then, LAC meeting was conducted and the matter was finally resolved. Hunt (2017) [6] attempted a study the collection development in UK university libraries is not exclusively a library practitioner activity, but it needs to be considered within a wider context that takes account of multiple strands of collection selection. Similarly, Yadav (2022) [7] used descriptive research techniques and the use different tools of e-commerce websites, allowing learners to understand the process of choosing books from distinct varieties of academic libraries. Gohain (2019) [8] find out during the period from 2013 to 2017 last five years total 33,752 numbers of books is added to the central library at the Tezpur University. Medawar (2021) [9] investigate that the Qatar National Library preserves the nation's heritage and enables people for learning and discover. Further, Biswas (2017) point out the collection development policy is a planning document produced by the library that identifies and communicates the long-term and short-term collection goals and policies of the library system [10]. Sasikala, Nagaratnamani and Dhanraju (2014) stated that, in almost all libraries, the librarian is one of the individuals who participate in the decision-making process during the book selection process. The librarians surveyed identified a need for more funding as the primary barrier preventing them from purchasing new materials [11]. Garate (2017) stated that the library budget is an essential part to play a vital role in a collection development any library [12].

#### **4 Methodology**

This research study adopted a quantitative research approach. The interview as well as questionnaires were distributed to the Librarian and Library Information Assistant at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. Also, some of the data is collected from the website of the Asiatic Society. The data is analysed in Excel i.e., (Table, Bar, Pie chart) presented in descriptive and interpretative form. The budget data is selected from the last five financial years, which are 2020-2024.

#### **5 Data analysis and Interpretation**

In this section we are analyse the data, gather from The Asiatic Society Library, Kolkata.

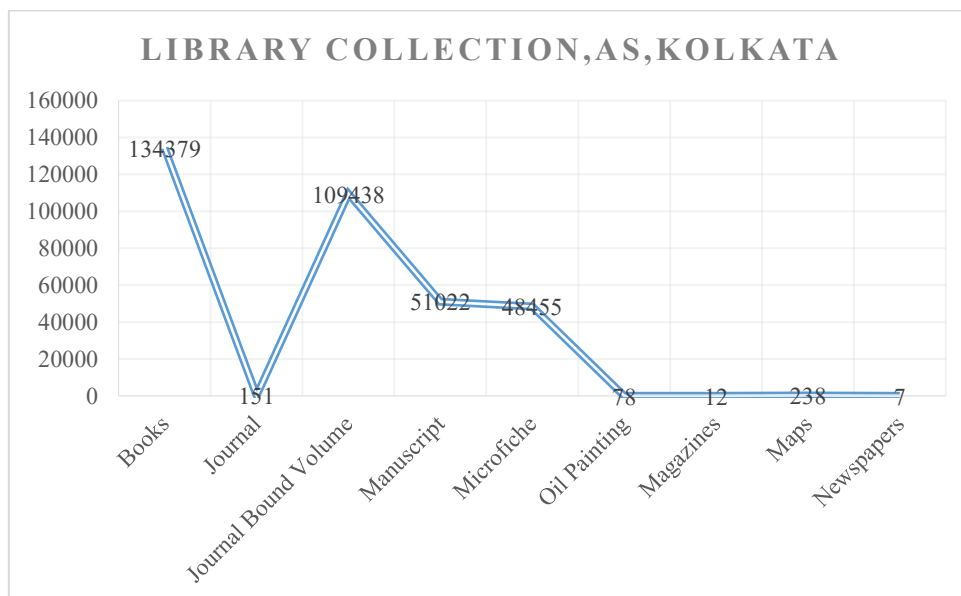
##### **5.1 Library collection in Asiatic Society, Kolkata**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Collection</b>	<b>Asiatic Society</b>
1.	Books	134379
2.	Journals (Title)	151
3.	Journal Bound Volume	109438
4.	Manuscript	51022
5.	Microfiche	22553

6.	Oil Painting	78
7.	Magazines	12
8.	Maps	238
9.	Newspapers	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>317878</b>

**Table 1 Library collection in AS, Kolkata, Data as on 31.08.2025**

On the basis of Table 1 shows the total collection of books is 134379 at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. It has a huge collection of Journal title is 151 and Journal Bound Volume is 109438. AS has a huge collection of Manuscript, that is 22553. Most of the Indian language and script including Bengali, Gujarati, Gurmukhi, Assamese, Kanarese, Urdu, Marathi, Rajasthani, Sarada, Armenian, Sinhalese, Modi, Nagari, Newari, Oriya, Arabic, Chinese, Siamese, Persian, Pushto, Javanese, Turki, Burmese, Tibetan etc. The materials are used for the manuscripts also varied: palm and palmyra leaves, barks of different trees, papers of various grades. Microfiche collection is 48455. Oil Painting collection is 78. Magazines collection is 12. Map collection is 238. News Papers collection is 7.



**Figure 1 Library collection in AS, Kolkata**

From the figure 1 shows that huge Indigenous Knowledge are preserved. Also the figure 1 point out the total collection of AS, Kolkata including Books, Journal, Journal Bound Volume, Manuscript, Microfiche, Oil Painting, Magazines, Maps, Newspapers.

### 5.2 Subject and Language cover by Asiatic Society, Kolkata

Sl. No.	Subject	Language
1.	Anthropology	English, French, German, Greek, Latin,

2.	Archaeology	Portuguese, Spanish and other European Languages
3.	Art & Architecture	
4.	Ayurveda, Gender studies	Pali, Prakrit, Sanskrit & other ancient Indian languages
5.	History	
6.	History of Medicine	
7.	History of Science and Technology	Hindi, Gujrati, Bengali, Tamil, Telegu, Rajasthani, Assamese, Marathi & other modern Indian Languages
8.	Language & Literature	
9.	Environment	
10.	Philosophy	Perso-Arabic and Urdu Languages
11.	Religion	
12.	Social Science	
13.	Travel & Geography	Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Turkese, Mongolian, Hebrew, Indonesian & other Asian languages
14.	Folk lore and Literature	
15.	Biography	

**Table 2 Subject and Language cover by AS, Kolkata**

Table 2 represents the total 15 subjects' collection are covered in Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The Language of Asiatic Society collection is divided into 5 sections that are usually covered in books and other materials for learning IKS. Section one is cover English, French, German, Greek, Latin, Portuguese, Spanish and other European Languages. Section two is cover Pali, Prakrit, Sanskrit & other ancient Indian languages. Section three is cover Hindi, Gujrati, Bengali, Tamil, Telegu, Rajasthani, Assamese, Marathi & other modern Indian Languages. Section four is cover Perso-Arabic and Urdu Languages. Section five is cover Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Trukese, Mongolian, Hebrew, Indonesian & other Asian languages.

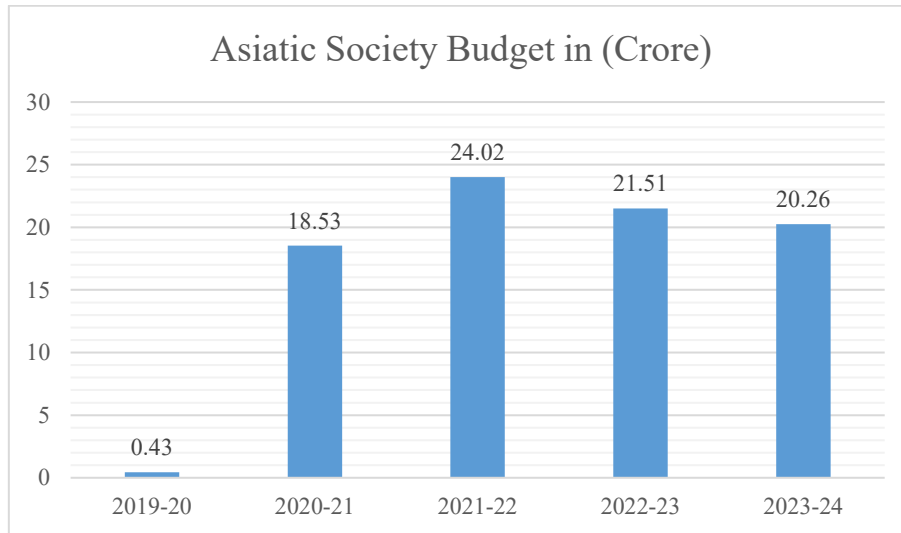
### 5.3 Financial Library Budget (2019-2024)

Sl. No.	Year	Asiatic Society Budget in (Crore)
1.	2019-20	0.43
2.	2020-21	18.53
3.	2021-22	24.02
4.	2022-23	21.51

5.	2023-24	20.26
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**Table 3 Annual Library Budget (2019-2024)**

The library budget of the Asiatic Society in Kolkata is shown in Table 3. It is found that the last five financial years’ maximum amount of budgets was allocated in the year of 2021-22 i.e., 24.02 Cr, followed by 2022-23, i.e., 21.51 Cr, 2023-24, i.e., 20.26 Cr, 2020-21, i.e., 18.53 Cr, and the minimum amount of budgets was allocated in the year of 2019-20, i.e., 0.43 Cr.



**Figure 2 Financial Library Budget in AS, Kolkata**

Based on Figure 2 clear indicate that 2019-20 year due to Covid-19 lockdown period library budget was low i.e. 0.43 Cr. Year of 2020-21 library budget was increased i.e.18.53 Cr. The highest library budget in this last five years of 2021-22 i.e.24.02Cr.

**5.4 Rare Books and Rare Journal of AS, Kolkata**

Sl. No.	Rare Collection	Total
1.	Rare Books	17469
2.	Rare Journal	14226

**Table 4 Rare books and journal of AS, Kolkata**

In Table 4 depicts the total collection of Rare Books and Rare Journal of the Asiatic Society in Kolkata. The Rare Books collection is 17469 and Rare Journal collection is 14226. The Asiatic Society has already scanned 5,550 books and 3,12,000 pages with a face-up scan. Apart from in-house digitization of books, journals, and manuscripts, ‘Digitization and Archiving of the journals and books of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata’, a project of the society was initiated in December 2016. Complete sets of Asiatic Researches (1788-1842), Memoirs of the Asiatic Society journals of the Asiatic Society (1832-2016), and Bibliotheca Indica Series have been scanned.

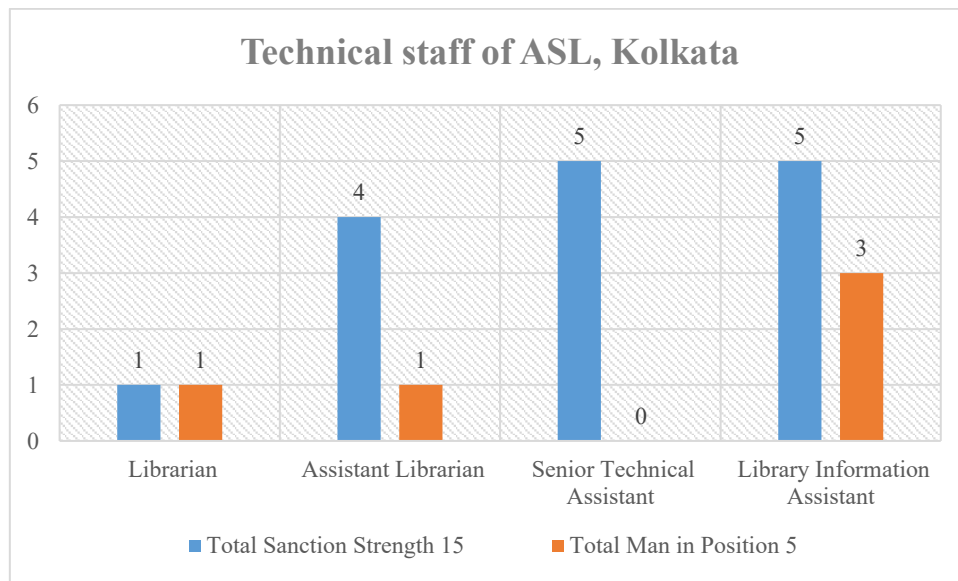
**5.5 Total technical staff of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata.**

Sl. No	Post	Sanction Strength	Man in Position
1.	Librarian	1	1
2.	Assistant Librarian	4	1
3.	Senior Technical Assistant	5	0
4.	Library Information Assistant	5	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 4 Total technical staff of AS, Kolkata**

Table 4 represent the technical staff of the Asiatic Society in Kolkata. Total sanction strength post is 15. Out of 15 posts, 1 post is Librarian, 4 posts are Assistant Librarian, 5 posts are Senior Technical Assistant, 5 posts are Library Information Assistant. Man in the position in technical staff of the Asiatic Society Library in Kolkata is 5. The Librarian post is filled up, but the Assistant Librarian post 3 are vacant. Senior Technical Assistant post 5 are vacant. Library Information Assistant post 2 is vacant as of now.

**Note: Data as on 25-09-2025**



**Figure 3 Technical staff of AS, Kolkata**

The most valuable asset of every service organization is its technical staff. Figure 3 reveals the total sanction posts is 15 and the total man in positions is 5. We find that the 66% technical staff of the Asiatic Society in Kolkata are vacant as of now. The highest vacant post is Senior Technical Assistant, which is 5.

**5.5.1 Total non-technical staff of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata**

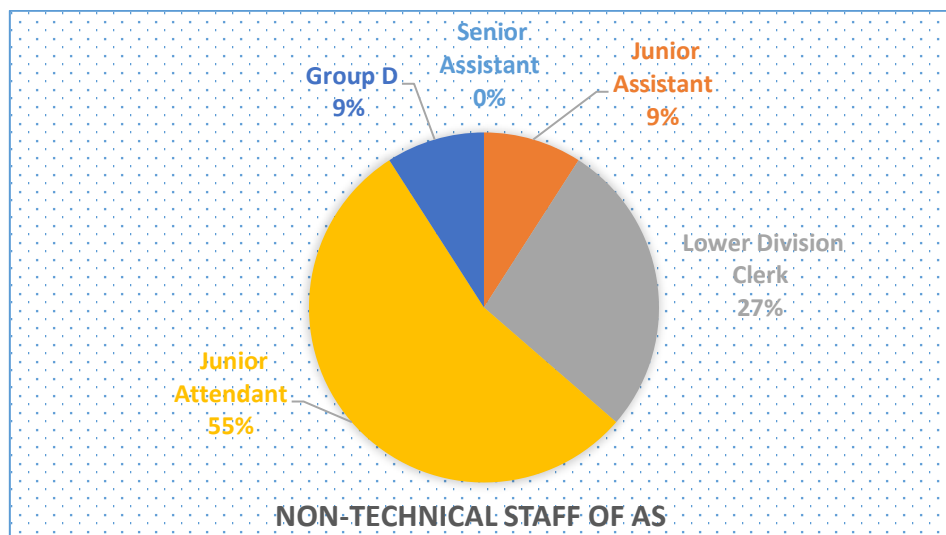
Sl. No	Post	Man in Position
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1.	Senior Assistant	Vacant
2.	Junior Assistant	1
3.	Lower Division Clerk	3
4.	Junior Attendant	6
5.	Group D	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>11</b>

**Table 4 Total Non-Technical staff of AS, Kolkata**

Library staff need to know, think, and act in specific ways to provide their users with the best possible service. It is also found in Table 4, that the total non-technical man in positions is 11. The Senior Assistant post is vacant. The Man in position in Junior Assistant post is 1. Followed by man in positions in Lower Division Clerk post is 3. Man in positions in Junior Attendant post is 6. Man in positions in Group D post is 1.

**Note: Data as on 25-09-2025**



**Figure 4 Non-technical staff of AS, Kolkata**

Figure 4 represents that the non-technical staff of Junior Attendant is 55 % (6). Man in positions in Lower Division Clerk is 27% (3), followed by Junior Assistant is 9% (1), Group D is 9% (1) and the Senior Assistant post is vacant as of now.

**5.6 Availability of ICT Based Infrastructure of Asiatic Society, Kolkata**

Sl. No	Name of ICT enabled components	Number
1.	LIBSYS 10 Library Automation Software	1

2.	Web OPAC	Web based/URL http://111.93.173.14/opac/
3.	High-Resolution Scanner	2
4.	Server	2
5.	Barcode Scanner	2
6.	Barcode Printer	4
7.	Digital Projector	1
8.	Computer (Desktop & Laptop)	12
9.	Reprographic Machine	3
10.	Document Scanner	2
11.	Microfiche Cum film Reader	1
12.	Printer	6
13.	CC TV	35
14.	LAN port	25
15.	Wi-Fi	Centralised
	<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>

**Table 5 of ICT Based Infrastructure of Asiatic Society, Kolkata**

Table 5 highlights the availability of different ICT-based infrastructure in the Asiatic Society. The library is a housekeeping operation done by the LIBSIS software, version 10. Web OPAC is a web-based system that the user can use to search their books or documents. A High-Resolution Scanner is used to scan the documents. Two server are used, one for LIBSYS LMS and another for Institutional Software (DSpace). Barcode scanner is used to scan the ID cards and scanning for other purpose. Digital projector is used for workshops, seminars, training, and conference display the theme. Total number of computers is 12, including Desktops & Laptops, used for office purposes and the user OPAC terminal. Reprographic Machine is 2 used for office work purpose as well as use by students, scholars, and library member. Total of 6 printers are used. The protection for sensitive equipment and documents CCTV is a 24\*7 recording retention & access control policy. Total 12 computers and 25 LAN ports support staff workstations and some public terminals also. Centralised Wi-Fi is enough to run an automated library with basic digitization and user-services capacity.

## 6 Finding

The following major finding of the study is-

- a. The study found that the Asiatic Society, Kolkata has developed one of the most

significant collections of manuscripts i.e., 50122, books i.e., 134379, maps i.e., 238, microfiche i.e., 48455, journal i.e., 151, journal bound volume i.e., 109438 and oil paintings i.e., 78 (Table 1).

- b. Total 15 subjects' collection are covered in Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The Language of Asiatic Society collection is divided into 5 sections that are usually covered in books and other materials for learning IKS (Table 2).
- c. The study finds that the total collection of Rare Books is 17469 and Rare Journals is 14226. (Table 4).
- d. It was found that the Asiatic Society library in Kolkata, last five financial years' maximum amount of budgets was available in the year of 2021-22 i.e., 24.02 Cr, and the minimum amount of budgets was allocated in the year of 2019-20, i.e., 0.43 Cr, (Table 3).
- e. The study revealed that the Assistant Librarian was involved in the Acquisition process, book selection, and book purchase process, and was headed by the Librarian of the Asiatic Society Library. Also, the Library members, research scholars, and staff recommendations were crucial in selecting the library collection.
- f. The study revealed that 66% of the Technical Staff at the Asiatic Society in Kolkata are vacant as of now (Figure 3).
- g. Further study finds out that the total Non-Technical Staff is 11 at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. Out of the 11, highest Non-Technical Staff categories the Junior Attendant category is 55 % (6) (Figure 4). The Senior Technical Assistant post is also vacant out of 5 it is 0 (Table 4).
- h. A huge, valuable microfiche collection of 22553 frames, preserving historical material and unique archival material in a durable physical format (Table 1).
- i. The Asiatic Society Library undertakes the weeding out of library materials whenever required before the March 31st of every year.

## 7 Conclusion

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata has played a pioneering role in safeguarding and disseminating knowledge systems that are central to India's cultural and intellectual heritage. Through its extensive collection development strategies, ranging from rare manuscripts, archival documents, and oil painting, maps, journals, and microfiche. The Society has positioned itself as a custodian of both recorded history and living traditions. Its initiatives in rare book collection and rare journal (Table 4), digitization, and scholarly access have ensured that Indigenous Knowledge (IK), which often receives rightful recognition and preservation.

The Asiatic Society efforts reflect a variety of subjects covered (Table 2), digitization and archiving of the journals and books, while also adapting to digital platforms for wider accessibility. This strategy strengthens academic research, supports cultural continuity, and ensures that future generations can engage with traditional wisdom in contemporary contexts. However, sustained financial support (Table 3), advanced digitization infrastructure (Table 5), and collaborative partnerships with universities, libraries, and indigenous communities remain crucial for expanding its impact.

Lastly, the Asiatic Society, Kolkata where the preservation of Indigenous Knowledge not only

protects cultural identity but also contributes to global scholarship. Its role highlights the importance of libraries and cultural institutions in promoting knowledge equity, heritage conservation, and intellectual diversity in a rapidly changing world.

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