

## **An Overview of Iran's Public Libraries in 2025 Vision**

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### **Abstract**

This study tries to investigate the rate of meeting goals of Public Libraries 2025 Vision and compare this situation in 2025 with that of in 2010 and 2015. So, different situations in three different years, namely, 2010, 2015, and 2025 have been compared by taking into account the indicators regarding 2025 vision document using related data taken from public libraries in each province separately. The findings show that the current situation of the five indicators studied in 2025 has significant difference compared with that of in 2015. Also a comparison between the current situation in 2015 and a past one in 2010 shows a significant difference and an increase in them in terms of three indicators, space, resources and employee. It should be mentioned that there are not a significant difference between these two years, 2010 and 2015, regarding two indicators, book borrowing and membership.

**Keywords:** Public Libraries, Iran, Public Libraries Foundation, 2025 Vision Goals.

### **Introduction**

Public library design is an important realm within which the role and philosophy of the public library as a public space is communicated (Clark, 2012).

The first independent law on public libraries emphasized public library management with the centrality of the Board of Trustees and Country Association (Public Libraries Foundation, n. d.), but it was not operationalized.

With the formation of the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent eight-year imposed war with Iraq and as a result of limited financial resources, lack of licensed recruitment, and non-approved libraries, the "establishment and management of public libraries" in the nursery in 2003 was the final approval and public libraries to "non-state public institution" converted to "Public Libraries Foundation" (Public Libraries Foundation, n. d.)

After this, the foundation decided to define a vision for its own. Therefore, in 2005, it started some studies according to the national vision of Iran in order to achieve their goals in 2025. But since it was a new institution, it could not start at 2005 and the document of public library vision was approved in 2010. All public libraries in Iran are managed by Public Library Foundation that located in Tehran with only one administration in each province in charge of local management of public libraries.

Now, we are in 2018 and there is an opportunity of seven years to reach 2025 vision goals. Thus, it is necessary to identify the amount of growth of public libraries compared to its first period and to identify its difference with the optimum situation in order to achieve vision goals. In doing so, an overview of 2025 vision of public libraries in Iran from the beginning of the vision in 2010 is provided, the quantity of access to 2025 goals is represented and three different situations in 2010, 2015 and 2025 are taken into account. In fact, the respective indicators, i.e. space, borrowing books, resources, membership, and librarians' qualifications in public libraries in 2010 and 2015 are compared with the vision document in 2025.

Public Library Foundation is responsible for supervising three kinds of libraries namely, Institutional library, Collaborative Library, and Independent Library. Public libraries are “a nonprofit library established for the use of the general public and maintained chiefly by public funds” (Dictionary.com, 2018.). The purpose of the public library is, as specified in the library law, to assist the information service of the public and cultural activities, reading activities, and lifelong learning. It was established for the purpose of national or local governments and is open to the public, such as public agencies, and private agencies (Ahn, 2012).

Institutional library is a kind of public library that do all work and programs by Public Library Foundation. Public library includes all public libraries and is in charge of all related costs, personnel, etc. Collaborative Library is a kind of public library that is managed by partnership of an institute with public libraries. In such a library, the responsibility of management, space, employees and providing equipment is done by the partner and public library foundation helps them in some cases such as providing resources, library software, some equipment and training librarians (Public Libraries Foundation, n. d.). Regarding Independent Library, There are some public libraries that are non- governmental but serve all kinds of people. Regarding the law, such libraries must get the permission from public library foundation. The founders of independent library provide the space, resources, employees, costs and have the responsibility for all matters related to these libraries. Such libraries are called public independent libraries.

### **Literature review**

Public libraries are the places in which all people in a society, without any exception can use their services that are long lasting education and entertainment. Ekhsson (2008) mentioned that people perceive public libraries as a whole society in which all members are their users, whereas the bookstore concentrates on the sectors of the environment that affect their selling. The public libraries are more active in the society and are a basic source of information. Therefore, public libraries must specify their visions and strategies to have the

most influential effects in the society and do these functions as much as possible. Hansen and Sorensen (2011) believe that supporting the strategies of such libraries by using an innovative and creative system in a modern library to solve the qualitative and quantitative problems in order to reach the vision and meet the needs of all users, is possible.

Nowadays, the technological changes have altered different aspects of life, so a review of technological and social trends of public libraries is necessary. Koizumi (2014) try to elucidate changes in strategy, organization, and operation in the field of public library management that focus on case involving U. S. public libraries and the Tokyo Metropolitan Library in Japan from the 1960s to the 2010s. Also Schwirtlich (2010) has presented the draft of the strategic plan in accordance with the way of thinking in the Public Libraries of Victoria by reviewing the process of changes in the above mentioned strategy, the vision of the Ministerial Advisory Council of Public Libraries and the way it seeks to cope with these technological and social trends. In this draft, three strategic projects have been stated for the Victoria Library Board and the Public Libraries by using collaborating network to help to respond to the changing environment in the next few years.

After codification of the strategy, it is the time to evaluate its function. The evaluation of the function helps us to know how effective are the performed activities in reaching the aims and if necessary to modify the strategies of attaining the goals. Ahn (2012) has studied science and specialized education programs in the local public libraries held for five years and investigated whether this program can be maintained, deleted or reduced as an operational strategy of the libraries.

Also, in Iran, the vision document codified in 2005 and in accordance with it, the vision document of the public libraries was published in 2009 after five years of delay. On the basis of this document, Iran should attain the first position among the countries of the region. Atashak (2014) in the evaluation of the development of education for all the countries mentioned in the Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2025 has come to this conclusion that among the 25 countries, Iran ranked 18 and has been at the average level of education for all. The condition of vision document of public libraries is not satisfying. Khashei and Hosseini (2012) found the gap between idea and action in the vision of public libraries and Isfandyari-Moghaddam and Saberi (2014) attributed this point to the expansion of the country, the population scattering, lack of adequate financing, inadequate attention to the issue of books and reading, the lack of people inclination to study and to demand library, low book circulation, the lack of attention of the relevant authorities in this case, the high cost of housing in big cities and... . Khashei (2014) proposed a model using strategic control to solve the problems and pave the way to implement strategic control of the public libraries strategic vision in Iran. Regarding previous studies uncover the importance of public libraries especially in Iran and matters of state-of-the-art and its future concern accountable bodies.

### **Research Questions**

This study provides an overview of 2025 vision of public libraries in Iran from the beginning of the vision in 2010. It also tries to show the quantity of access to 2025 goals and

compare the three different situations in 2010, 2015 and 2025. Then, we examine the following exploratory questions:

1. How is the situation of public libraries space in 2010, 2015 and Vision document in 2025?
2. What is the condition of public libraries borrowing book in 2010, 2015 and vision document in 2025?
3. How is the status of public libraries resources in the years 2010 and 2015 compared with the vision document of the public libraries in 2025?
4. What is the position of public libraries membership in 2010 and 2015 compared with the public libraries of vision document in 2025?
5. How is the librarians' qualification in public libraries in 2010 and 2015 compared with the vision document of the Public Library in 2025?

### Methodology

This study compares different situations in three different years, namely, 2010, 2015, and 2025 and the indicators regarding 2025 vision document are taken into account. According to 2025 Vision, Public Libraries Foundation has been planned to obtain the first place in the region and get the fifteenth place in the world regarding the indicators of space, membership, borrowing book, library resources and employees (Public libraries foundation, 2010). Initially, it communicated with the public library Foundation and received the necessary data. The statistical population of this study is all public libraries covered by this Foundation. For this purpose, the data related to each indicator in each province is taken into account separately and analyzed using SPSS 22 software.

### Findings

The findings compared the situation of public libraries in the country in terms of five indicators 'library space', 'borrowing book', 'library resources', 'number of members', and 'employees' in the years Of 2010, 2015 and 2025 vision.

#### **1. Investigating the public libraries in terms of space indicator in 2010, 2015 and Vision document of 2025.**

The public library building is a vessel of contradictory desires and perceptions (Clark, 2012). The results in 2010 indicate that there were 2595 public libraries in the country and out of them, 74.1 percent (1924 libraries) is Institutional, 25.5 percent (662 Libraries) is Collaborative, and only 0.4 percent is Independent (Table 1). Most libraries are institutional in the provinces. This is while in Qom, only 40 percent (22 libraries) are institutional libraries. Results show 60 percent of libraries are collaborative in Qom province. In Hamedan province, only 1.6% of public libraries are collaborative. As indicated in the table 1, the present study consisted of only nine independent libraries that one-third of them are located in Khorasan Razavi province.

Table 1

*Iran's public libraries in 2010*

Types of public libraries	Institutional library		Collaborative Library		Independent Library		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	1924	74.1	662	25.5	9	0.4	2595	100

In 2015 the number of public libraries in the country is 3352 (Table 2) that shows the increase of growth of 25.3 percent. The comparison of different types of libraries in the mentioned year shows that 71.3 percent of them are institutional and this shows a decrease compared to that in 2010. In this year, the percentage of institutional libraries and independent libraries are increased to 28 and 7.0 percent, respectively. The highest percentage of institutional libraries is in Hamedan province in this year (98.4 percent) out of 103 libraries. Also, the most percentage (60 percent) of collaborative libraries (19 libraries) can be seen in Qom province in this year. Findings show all the libraries in Kish Free Zone are also collaborative libraries (7 libraries).

Table 2

*Iran's public libraries in 2015*

Types of public libraries	Institutional library		Collaborative Library		Independent Library		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	2317	71.3	912	28	23	0.7	3252	100

The analysis of space indicator on the basis of the 2025 vision and considering one library per 25000 people's (one L/25000 P) shows that this indicator, in 2010, is equal to 0.88 and this number is increased to 1.03 in 2015 (Table 3) that reflects the relative improvement status in terms of Space indicator. But this indicator in 2025 vision is equal to 2.09 that shows a lack in the number of libraries compared to that of 2025 vision. The comparison of the provinces shows that, in 2010, Yazd province is the only province that can be regarded in the domain of 2025 vision indicator (2.53). But in 2015, library space indicator in Semnan, Kohgiluyeh, South Khorasan, and Yazd provinces is higher than the 2025 vision indicator. According to the findings, the lowest indicator in the two studied years is Tehran province (one L/25000 P is 0.349 and 0.57 for 2010 and 2015, respectively).

Table 3

Library space indicator in 2010 and 2015

	2010			2015		
	No. of libraries	Population	one L/25000 P	No. of libraries	Population	one L/25000 P
Total	2595	73650570	0.88	3245	78775000	1.03

The results of the Independent t-test show that the average of the library space indicator in 2010 is 1.1 and in 2015 is 1.287 (Table 4). The difference with respect to the obtained results of the T-test is statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore the inference being that that library space indicator has been improved in 2015 compared to 2010.

Table 4

*T-test result of library space indicator in 2010 and 2015*

Sig.	df	T	Std. Deviation	Mean	Year
0.000	30	2.66	0.555	1.1	2010
			0.527	1.287	2015

Also, the average of the space indicator in the two years are lower than the mean envisioned for 2025.

## 2. Investigating the public libraries in terms of borrowing book indicator in 2010, 2015 and Vision document of 2025

According to Table 5, in 2010, a total of 44,380,884 books have been borrowed that 67.8 percent has been borrowed inside the library and 32.2 percent borrowed outside the library (Table 5). Most outside borrowed books are related to Kerman province (77.7 percent). However, most inside borrowed book has occurred in Qazvin province.

Table 5

*Borrowing Book in Iran's public libraries 2010*

	Borrowing Book					
	Inside the library		outside the library		total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	14284752	32.2	30096132	67.8	44380884	100

But in 2015, despite the population growth, the number of borrowing books declined to 32017912 volumes that 80.1 percent is the outside borrowing and the rest is the inside borrowing. According to the Table 6, in Lorestan province, 94.1 percent of borrowings were outside while in Qom province this is 63.7.

Table 6

*Book borrowing in Iran's public libraries in 2015*

	Borrowing Book					
	Inside the library		outside the library		total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	6,374,748	19.9	25,643,164	80.1	32017912	100

The results regarding Borrowing Book is obtained by dividing the total number of the borrowing books to the total population (B/P) in each province, indicates that, in 2010, the indicator is 0.6 while in 2015 this figure declined to 0.41 which indicates the less willingness

of people in borrowing the books from the libraries. The highest number of borrowing book indicator relates to indicator Yazd province (2.1) and the lowest relates to Sistan and Baluchestan (0.18) and Tehran (0.22) in 2010. In 2015, the highest Borrowing Book has occurred in Yazd province (32.1) and the lowest has been in Hormozgan (0.11) and Sistan and Baluchestan (0.12), respectively.

Table 7

*Borrowing Book indicator 2010 and 2015*

	2010			2015		
	Borrowing No.	population	B/P	Borrowing No.	population	B/P
Total	44380884	73,650,570	0.6	32017912	78775000	0.41

The results show the indicator (B/P) is clearly different from the indicator of development vision (2025) that is estimated as 5.24.

The results of the Independent T-test show that the mean of Borrowing Book indicator in 2010 is 0.79 and it is more than the mean in 2015 that is 0.497. This difference on the basis of the t-test result ( $T=6.02$ ) with confidence level of 95% is significant and the obtained result can be generalized to the entire population ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 8) and there is an significant gap between the years studied with the 2025 vision (5.24).

Table 8

*T-test result of Borrowing Book indicator in 2010 and 2015*

Sig.	df	T	Std. Deviation	Mean deference	Year
0.000	30	6.02	0.46	0.79	2010
			0.29	0.497	2015

### **3. Investigating the public libraries of the country provinces in terms of resource indicator in 2010, 2015 with the Vision of public library foundation (2025)**

The number of copies of books and resources in public libraries in the country shows that there were 25,786,328 books in 2010 in the whole country. This number is increased in 2015 to 40,944,167 books that shows percent growth of 58.8.

According to Table 9 in 2010, there has been 0.35 books per each inhabitant (B/I). This ratio is increased to 0.52 in 2015 that both indicators have significant difference in proportion to resource indicator of vision 2025 that is equal to 3.37. Based on the mentioned table, the highest proportion of resources to the population has been in Yazed province (1.38 and 1.79 for 2010 and 2015, respectively). However, this indicator in Tehran in 2010 (0.15) and in the province of Sistan and Baluchestan in 2015 (0.21) was the lowest place.

Table 9

*Library resource indicator in 2010 and 2015*

	2010			2015		
	No. of resources	population	B/I	No. of resources	population	B/I
Total	25,786,328	73,650,570	0.35	40944167	78775000	0.52

Significance of mean difference in the two years of the study show that the mean of this indicator in 2010 has been equal to 0.464 and there has been an increase to 0.65 in 2015. This difference as the result of the obtained t-test ( $T=-9.66$ ) is significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) at the level of 95% and the result that the resource indicator in 2015 compared to that of in 2010 in the country has been improved can be generalized to the entire population. (Table 10) Also, the average of the library resource indicator in the years studied is very different from the 2025 vision in terms of lower position.

Table 10

*T-test result of library resource indicator in 2010 with that of in 2015*

Sig.	df	T	Std. Deviation	Mean deference	Year
0.000	30	9.66	0.26	0.464	2010
			0.33	0.65	2015

#### **4. Investigating the public libraries of the country provinces in terms of membership indicator in 2010, 2015 with the Vision of public library foundation (2025)**

The results show that public libraries in the country in 2010 have had 2,078,595 members and this means that the members of public libraries in the country have been 2.8 for every 100 people. There is an increase in the number of members in 2015 to 2,271,044 member and due to the population growth of membership indicator there is not very significant difference compared to that of in 2010 (Table 11). According to the indicator of visions Public Libraries Foundation in 2025, which is equal to 27.29, this indicator is much more different than the indicator during the years of the study.

Table 11

*Membership indicator in 2010 and 2015*

	2010			2015		
	No. of members	population	Indicator	No. of members	Population	Indicator
Total	2,078,595	73,650,570	2.88	2271044	78775000	2.88

The results of the t-test (Table 12) show that there is no statistically significant difference between public libraries membership in 2010 and 2015 ( $P > 0.05$ ).

Table 12

*T-test result of membership indicator in 2010 and 2015*

Year	Mean deference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
2010	3.44	1.78	0.56	30	0.578
2015	3.6	1.73			

The comparison of the average of the membership indicator in the two years of the study with the 2025 vision (27.29) shows a large gap.

### **5. Investigating the situation of public libraries of the country provinces in terms of librarians' indicator in 2010, 2015 with the Vision document of the public library foundation in 2025**

The last indicator investigates the status of public libraries in the country regarding the number of librarians. The results show that 4475 employees worked in public libraries across the country in 2010. In 2015, this number has been increased to 6302 librarians.

Table 13

*Librarian indicator in 2010 and 2015*

	2010			2015		
	NO.of librarian	population	Indicator	No. of librarian	population	Indicator
Total	4,475	73,650,570	0.12	6302	78775000	0.16

The results of the t-test (Table 14) show that the difference between the mean of employee indicator in 2010 (0.152) and the mean of this indicator in 2015 (0.199) is significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Table 14

*T-test result of i librarians indicator in 2010 and 2015*

Year	Mean deference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
2010	0.152	0.067	6.8	30	0.000
2015	0.199	0.084			

Also, compared to the librarian's indicator in 2010 and 2015, we see significant differences with the 2025 vision.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study assesses the impact of a library service on communities and on individuals by seeking evidence that programs, services, work culture and facilities are appropriate and based on community need and in line with best practice. It will be a powerful tool to assist in comparing community trends, needs and expectations against directions and delivery

(Schwirllich, 2010).

The librarian stated that changes in operational processes by such information technologies and systems are the most significant shift that has occurred at the library (Koizumi, 2014). This study, illustrate the past, present and future of public libraries according to 2025 vision. In addition, it can help managers and librarians to change along with the new technology.

The social and organizational changes in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries have led to an unprecedented moment in history. Innovations occur daily and constantly in all fields, from health (where previously undreamt0of longevity is now a reality) to logistics and communications, with the emergence of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and wireless technology (Jussani, Krakauer, and Polo, 2010).

According to the research findings the five indicators have significant difference to the goals of 2025 vision and it seems that it is impossible to achieve these goals. But doing research and studying to find a suitable pattern to achieve these goals is necessary. Therefore, revision of public libraries in the vision document of 2025 in order to make plans to achieve possible objectives should not be ignored.

The institution of public libraries has done noticeable activities to provide the aims of document vision and to develop and promote the libraries in the country. There is still a great distance to reach the defined position in the horizon of 1404, though some achievements have been attained in some scales. It should be mentioned that the process of this development is slow and it does need to make the development fast. It seems that this development requires full attention and the consideration of administrative agencies. Therefore, doing researches to review the aims of document vision, paying attention to indigenous and local needs, providing the field of cooperation of other agencies and charities, considering the quick development of technology, reviewing and modifying the projects under construction (if necessary), paying specific attention to the culture of book and reading and institutionalizing them from the childhood, assigning books for the market basket of people and ... have been proposed.

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