

Country Report

For the 24th Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNL-AO)

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Name of Country :- Sri Lanka
Name of Library :- National Library & Documentation Centre
Name of Director General :- Mr W Sunil
Name of Contact Person :- Mrs I M Katipearachchi
Mailing Address :- No 14, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
Telephone :- 94 11 2685198
Fax :- 94 11 2685201
Web Address :- www.natlib.lk
Email Address :- secretary@mail.natlib.lk

01. General Overview of recent Major Developments

The National Library & Documentation Centre (NLDC) performed its duties as the focal point of the library system of the country. NLDC was able to provide a quality service to the public and the libraries of Sri Lanka amidst severe financial constraints to the Centre as well as for the Island.

Location and history of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an Island situated in the Indian Ocean and is situated about 645 Km north of the equator and is separated from India by Gulf of Mannar as well as the Palk Strait. The total land area of the country is about 65610 square Kilometers.

The population of the country is about 20 million. The majority of Sri Lankans are the Sinhalese and other communities are Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. Literacy rate of the country is 93%. Life expectancy is 75 to 94 years and It is a multilingual and a multi cultural country. The main religion of the country is Buddhism.

In the year 1505 for the first time the Portuguese invaded the island. The Dutch succeeded the Portuguese in 1658. The British invaded the country in 1796 and for the first time of its history, the whole country came under their rule in 1815.

The British government ruled the country till it gets independence in 1948. During the colonial period, some important milestones have taken place in the library sector of the country (then Ceylon). The Portuguese introduced the use of paper to Ceylon. Before that, the islanders used palm leaves as traditional writing material. In the period of Dutch, they introduced the printing press to Ceylon in 1737.

In the British period they started subscription libraries in the some parts of the country.

In 1870, the Royal Oriental Library was set up. One of the main objectives of this library was collecting the documents written in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit languages, to one specific place for the use of future generations. This is a basic function of modern National Libraries as well. Therefore, the establishment of the Royal Oriental Library in Sri Lanka could be considered as the first step of the modern National Library of the Island.

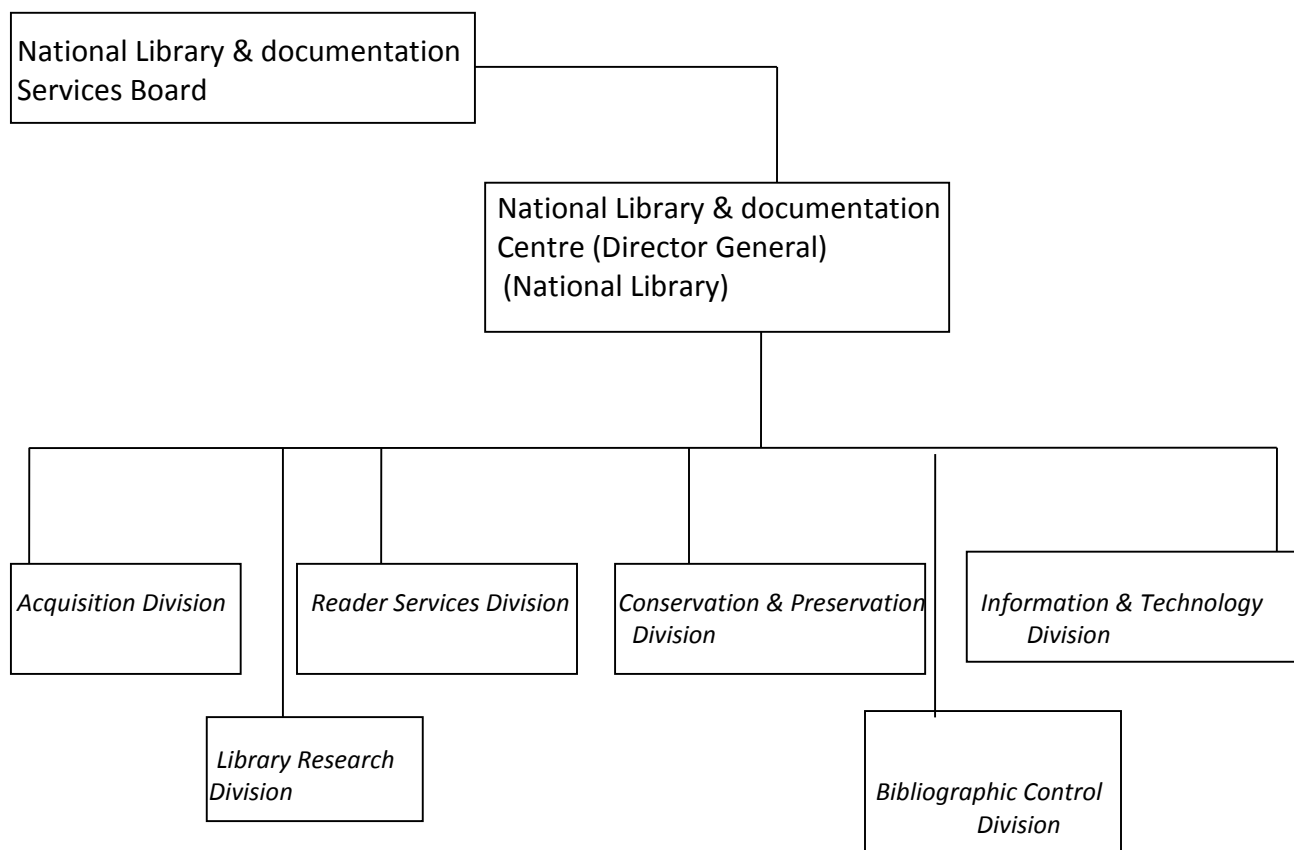
Another important stride of history of the National Library of Sri Lanka was the establishment of the Museum Library in 1877. With the establishment of this library, the Royal Oriental Library also was amalgamated to the Museum Library and, was promoted as a Legal deposit library in Sri Lanka. Still the Museum Library acts as one of the Legal deposit libraries. Before the National Library came to existence the Museum Library of the Sri Lanka performed some duties of the present National Library and therefore it has acted as an unofficial National Library.

National Library and Documentation Centre (National Library)

- **History of the National Library and Documentation Centre of Sri Lanka**

The idea of a National Library for Sri Lanka emerged in the 1950's. A number of prominent scholars and number of Commission reports urged the contemporary governments to consider the establishment of a National and from 1950-1970. Very important dialogues took place in this regard and as a result of those attempts the National Library was inaugurated in 1990.

- **Organizational Structure**



02. Relationship to Government

National Library and Documentation Centre of Sri Lanka is functioning under the Ministry of Education.

Mission of the National Library and Documentation Centre (NLDC)

Plan and co-ordinate library services at National level

Develop a Sri Lanka Information Resource Excellence Centre at the National Library and to co-ordinate and assist other major Sri Lankan collections in the Country.

Assist and encourage the establishment of Information Resource Excellence Centres in specific fields and inter-link them through a national information network.

Facilitate access to national and international databases

Provides learning opportunities to every Sri Lankan and thereby assist the advancement of Sri Lanka.

Assist Sri Lanka to become a culturally enriched and intellectually advanced nation.

03. Key Facts & Figures

Employment

Total number of employees of the NLDSB is 197

Library Users

Membership is open to all readers in the society. There are two types of membership: short term (one day) and long terms (One year, 3 months). Membership of the organization increased as follows in 2014

Permanent Members	3361
Short term Membership	7867

Collection

The NLDC of Sri Lanka has the third largest, library collection of the country. The largest collection of the country located in the National Museum Library because it was set up in 1877. The NLDC of the Sri Lanka is a newly established library in the country in 1990.

Historical manuscripts and books of the country are stored in the Museum Library and the National Archives Department (NAD) and the National Library does not possess a leading collection from the historical point of view. The section of the acquisition is one of founding sections of the library.

During the year of 2014 the NLDC has acquired following categories of resources to the collection.

Type	Number
Books	1358
Dissertations	16
Legal Deposit Publications	8850
News papers	15,650

Institutional Membership

The NLDC renewed its institutional membership in following institutions.

1. Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science
2. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka
3. National Geographic Society

Digitization

Still there are no proper infrastructure facilities for digitization. However in 2006 the NLDC was started digitization project in basic level.

Services

Reader Services

The collection of the NLDC is especially intended for research and education and therefore this section can be considered as the heart of the NLDC. The reader services provided by the NLDC as follows:

1. Reference Services
2. Internet & CD –ROM Services
3. Inquiry Services
4. Referral Services
5. Documentation Services
6. Inter-Library Loan Services
7. Database Searching Services
8. Photocopy Service
9. Current Awareness Service
10. Selective Dissemination of Information Services
11. Information Repackaging Services

All the materials are kept on closed access system and the main reference sources are kept on open access system. Readers can approach the collection through title, translator, editor, subject and classification number. OPAC facilities are open to users since 1993.

Since 2000 the NLDC has been using the Alice for Windows for cataloguing activities. And since 2015, has been using the “KOHA” open source software for acquisition activities. The National Library collection is available through the web site as well.

The NLDC has a good collection of CDs in various subjects’ fields and it is connected to the Internet since 1998. There are three reading rooms with reading facilities for 320 readers in the NLDC. There is a main counter in the ground floor to help reader’s inquiry. During the year of 2007 the NLDC formed Friends of the national Libraries.

Internet services provided by the centre were used by 396 readers. Reference services provided to large number of readers. The Reader services division is open from Monday to Saturday, closed on Sunday and other public holidays.

Awareness Workshops

- Awareness programme on National Library resources and services in Collaboration with the National Institute of Library and Information Science (NILIS), University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Awareness Workshop in Collaboration with Sri Lanka Library Association

- Programme on Information resources and services in Collaboration with Sri Lanka Science Foundation.

Library services in the National Level

Role of the National Library and Documentation Centre in National Level

The NLDC is the only governmental body in the field of Library & Information Science which has legal power of advising the government regarding issues in the sector. According to National Library and Documentation Services Board Act (NLDSB 1998) one of the functions of the NLDC is “ to promote, advise and assist in, the establishment, development and maintenance of library and documentation networks’, including networks of public, school, academic, government and other libraries and documentation centres serving all sections of the communities in Sri Lanka” . Therefore, the National Library has a major responsibility of development of all types of libraries in the country.

Library system of the Sri Lanka can be divided to 06 categories.

- (A) Academic Libraries
- (B) Public Libraries
- (C) Special Libraries
- (D) School Libraries
- (E) National Library
- (F) Pirivena Libraries

(A) Academic Library

There are 15 university libraries in Sri Lanka which are autonomous bodies. All universities are governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka which is a statute body of the government. The main funding source for university libraries is the government through the UGC. There is a special committee of University librarians set up in the UGC which is chaired by a Board member of the UGC. The Director General (DG) of the NLDC is a representative of the committee. According to the NLDSB Act, 1998 of the Sri Lanka the NLDC has a responsibility of providing advice and assistance to the development of the university library system of the country.

(B) Public Libraries

There are about 1200 public libraries in the country. All public libraries are governed by government and local government authorities’. The NLDSB has no direct power to control public libraries activities in the country. The National Library provides advisory services on following areas.

- Recruitment of personnel
- Grading of libraries
- Library development plan

- Training and education
- Reorganization of academic qualification
- Library standards and norms
- Organisation of Collection
- Conservation
- Automation and Information Technology

According to the NLDSB Act 1998 it has to provide guidance and assistance for development of every type of library in the country. In most occasions public libraries are asking advice from the NLDSB and the NLDC regarding some professional issues.

(C) School Libraries

There are about 5664 School Libraries in the country. One of the responsibilities of the NLDC is to develop and provide advice and guidance to school libraries. There is a School Library development project in the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka was implemented few years ago with the help of the government funds. The main aim of the project was the establishment of new school libraries and the redevelopment of the existing school libraries in the county.

(D) Special Libraries

There are 65 special libraries in the country related to the government as well as private institutions and organizations. Most of these libraries are involved in information networks and also Union Catalogue project carried out by the NLDC. Apart from this no any attempt has been made to develop relationship between the NLDC and special libraries.

Education and Training

• Institutions which provides library education

1. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kelaniya
2. Sri Lanka Library Association
3. National Institute of library and Information Science
4. National Library & Documentation Services Board
5. School and Piriven Library units of Ministry of Education

The NLDC could keep closer contact with these institutions in upgrading the contribution made by those institutions. The above organizations provide a formal education programmes in librarianship while the NLDC generally conduct programmes related to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of libraries. The NLDC conducts CPD programmes like distance level certificate courses, workshops, seminars and conferences, lectures and in house training programmes.

Infrastructure

Library Networks

AGRINET – Agricultural Information Network

SLISTINE – Science and Technology Information Network

HELLIS – Health Library and Information Science

Role of the National Library and Documentation Centre at International Level

The NLDC is the only institution that represents various international forums in the subject. It has power to make International Corporation with external communities.

The NLDC maintain a good relationship with International communities in the discipline.

The NLDC maintains relations with following institutional associations and organizations.

- CDNLAO – Conference of Directors of National Libraries of Asia & Oceania
- IFLA- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
- ISBN – International Standard Book Number } The National Centre for International Standard Book Number
- ISMN – International Standard Music Number } The National Centre for International Standard Music Number
- ISSN – International Standard Serial Number } The National Centre for International Standard Serial Number
- UNESCO – Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Preservation

The conservation and preservation section is playing a leading role in the NLDC. This section was set up in 1982.

Functions of the section:

01. Conservation and preservation of the National Library collection
02. Conservation activities of other libraries in national levels.
03. Production of library stationeries for other libraries.
04. Organizing workshops and seminars on conservation.

Units of the section

01. Book binding centre
02. Documentation Conservation Unit

This section of the NLDC provides advisory services to rest of the libraries of the country. It has established local centres in various places with the aim of preservation library materials on regional basis. Currently there are 126 local conservation centres in Sri Lanka. The NLDC gives manpower training and equipments donations to those centres to carry on preservation activities.

04. New Developments in Creating and Collection Building

01. Building a collection in Intangible Cultural Heritage started.

02. Building a collection National Library Publications started.

03. Collection of policies and plans of Sri Lanka started.

05. Managing Collections

01. National Library Formal collection Development policy has been prepared.

02. Reorganization of the National Library Collection Started.

06. New Developments in Providing Access to collections

01. A number of Databases related bibliographic and Documentation Services have been connected to internet.

* Newspaper article Index

* Theses Index

*Conference Index

* Directory of Library Professionals in Sri Lanka

07. Collaboration with other institutions

*Legal deposit material are acquired from National Archives.

* Digitization project with the National Science Foundation

* Awareness programmes with the Sri Lanka Library Association.

Conclusion

The nation and country need new dimensions in research for the development and well being as education, higher education and technical education in the country. Knowledge is considered as the change agent of the advancement of the new dimensions which required by the country. Within this context, contribution of Sri Lanka national library in the next two decades for harnessing the knowledge, economy and library services is enormous.

Director General

National Library & Documentation Centre of Sri Lanka
