

Annual Report of the National Library and Documentation Services Board (National Library of Sri Lanka) 2017-2018

Name of Country :- Sri Lanka

Name of Library :- National Library & Documentation Services Board

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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%. 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.

Relationship to the Government

National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB) is a government organisation established in 1970 by an act of parliament of Sri Lanka.

The new act of the NLDSB was introduced in 1998. Presently the NLDSB is functioning under the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka and main role of NLDSB is to maintain the National Library of Sri Lanka and implementation of library development activities in national level. The legal deposit law of Sri Lanka is implemented by the Department of National Archives of Sri Lanka. According to the legal deposit law, five copies of each publication published in the country should be deposited in the Department of National Archives and the National Library receives one copy. National Library advises and assists other libraries in the country. National Library maintains close relations with other institutions in the library field such as Sri Lanka Library Association, National Institute of Library and Information Science, University of Colombo and University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka which offer library science graduate and postgraduate degrees.

The annual allocation received to the NLDSB from government treasury in 2018 is Rs.160 million. In addition, NLDSB earn some income through its services. The existing staff of the NLDSB is 163 and permanent cadre is 197. The number of graduates of the staff is about 25. The total number of items in the collection is about one million. The total number of digital objects is about 10000. The number of readers who visit the National Library is about 10,000 per month.

Recent Major Development

The inauguration of the National Digital Library can be mentioned as a major development of the National Library. The National Digital Library which is functioning under NLDSB can be considered as the main digital library and the development of the collection is in progress.

In addition, a number of digital library projects in national level is in progress. In the digitization project of the national library has achieved a tremendous progress during the recent years.

New Development in Building and Managing Collection

The renovation of the existing building of the NLDSB is in progress. Under this project the existing building is renovated to suit the modern requirements. A new extension building will also be constructed.

Some changes of the collection management will also be made in conjunction with the building renovation. Modern and attractive library environment is expected to be created in the national library through this renovation.

New Development in Providing Access to Collections

Online access has been provided to some digital resources which were digitized in recent years.

These resources include national library publication including Sri Lanka National Bibliography, rare book collection and a large collection of old gazettes published in Sri Lanka, open access facilities are expected to be provided to some parts of the collection under the new collection arrangement implemented with the building renovation of the National Library.

New Development in other Services

A new electronic card system (e-card system) has been introduced to national library readers. The readers are facilitated all library requirements through this card facility. A survey on reading habit of school children in Northern and Eastern provinces was carried out recently. These provinces were effected by conflict situation during the last three decades. Presently peace has been restored in these areas. A IFLA/PAC centre was established in the National Library in 2015. This centre has carried out many workshops and seminars in National and International levels on the subject of conservation and preservation of library materials.

NLDSB implements a number of projects for the development of other libraries. These projects include providing resources training of librarians, grading of libraries, providing advice and automation.

The NLDSB maintain close relations with National Archives of Sri Lanka. NLDSB receives deposit copies under the legal deposit law from the National Archives. The National Museum Library of Sri Lanka is one of the largest libraries in the country. NLDSB maintains close relations with the museum library.

International Collaboration

The NLDSB as the main government body in the library and information field in Sri Lanka maintain relations with international organisations in the library and information field. NLDSB is a member of the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA). The NLDSB combines to several UNESCO projects such as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and Memory of the World (MOW) NLDSB is the focal point of these projects in Sri Lanka. In addition, NLDSB functions as the national agency of ISBN, ISSN and ISMN. NLDSB also maintains book exchange programme with several other national libraries in the world.