

A Brief Report

on the Activities/Plans/Programmes undertaken by the National Library and Archives of Bhutan as of 2008-09

Bhutan is a landlocked Buddhist Kingdom in the Eastern Himalayas. Bhutan has a rich cultural heritage with a unique architecture, way of life and religious observances. Turning its attention more recently to development matters, the Royal Government of Bhutan has, with determination, given high priority to the maintenance of a distinct national identity and preservation of the cultural and religious heritage. The history of Bhutan can be traced back as far as the 7th century through archaeological remains, as well as from its traditions. The history became richer with the introduction of Buddhism by Lord Padma Sambhava in the 7th century AD who was known as the second Buddha.

Establishment

The National Library was founded in the year 1967 under the patronage of late Royal Grand Mother Ashi Phuntsho Chodon Wangchuck to collect, preserve and promote literary works relating to religion, culture, history, philosophy and traditions of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

The present library built in 1984, comprises a four storeyed traditional building, a two storeyed archive building funded by Royal Library of Denmark, a fumigation house and a three storeyed administrative building built in 2007 under the GoI funding. The four storeyed traditional building houses collections on the four major sects of Mahayana Buddhism and Bon collections. The English collections housed in the ground floor of the traditional building has been shifted to the ground floor of administration building recently.

The Management

- Five successive Directors administered the National Library from 1967 – 2007

Chhoekay Section

- The Chhoekay section of the National Library has more than 10,000 volumes of classical texts containing estimated 150,000 sub titles on various subjects which are fundamental source of Philosophy, Mythology, Paintings, Astrology and culture etc.

English Section

- The section has more than 6,738 titles of books on Buddhism, Himalaya and neighbouring

countries, etc. Besides there are periodicals, magazines, news bulletins and two sets of Pali Tipitaka. The bibliographical data of English collections are recorded on computer database. The readers can search the records by titles, author, subject, keywords etc.

Web Page

- The library's web page was launched under the DANIDA Project funding in English and Dzongkha. Readers can now browse web page of NLB from any part of the world.

Library's Printing and Bookshop

- This section has one cutting and two trader printing machines and a Bookshop manned by three staff.
- It is aimed at generating revenue, through printing and selling miscellaneous publications and religious texts.

Kunga Rabten Branch Library in Trongsar

- The Branch Library at Kunga Rabten Dzong Palace is manned by a Jr. Librarian and a caretaker cum security guard. Presently, the surrounding palace chambers house as a monastic school. Renovation of palace is proposed during 10th FYP

Documentation Survey

- The DANIDA funded documentation survey team completed 9 Dzongkhags, digitised 112 volumes of rare texts and recorded 4,510 volumes. The remaining 11 dzongkhags are yet to be completed. 21 volumes were documented and published as reference catalogue from Thimphu and Paro Dzongkhag and several volumes will be published after the completion of the literary survey in other dzongkhags.

National Archives

- Adjacent to the main library building at Kawangjangsa was constructed in August 2004
- Site development works have been completed in mid June 2005
- Testing of the air condition system concluded at the end of August 2005
- In mid February 2006, we have started setting the documents collected under the Legal Deposit Act.
- Started archiving rare and valuable manuscripts from the main library building

Archival Facilities:

- The building is fully equipped with high quality steel movable and fixed shelves imported

from Denmark.

- Equipped with temperature and relative humidity regulating systems.
- Equipped with fire and burglar alarm systems.

Achievements

- The draft of National Archive Act has been completed and submitted to the Director, Department of Culture for review and comments.
- 1,199 numbers of documents collected under Legal Deposit Act have been processed through scientific procedure for long term physical existence.
- 13 Potis of rare and valuable documents written in gold and silver has been processed through scientific procedure for long term physical existence.
- 7,000 numbers of photographs and negatives have been archived.
- 7,000 numbers of manuscripts in the form of letters have been processed the scientific procedure for long term existence
- 85 numbers of microfilm rolls of varied valuable documents have been archived,.

Future Plan

- Continuation of segregating the old and rare manuscripts and other nationally important documents from the main library.
- Continue to receive the documents under Legal Deposit Act
- To carry out nation wide survey on rare and valuable documents.

Research and Documentation

Modernization poses a threat to the cultural heritage in several ways and prone to being lost completely, specially intangible heritage, the proper research and documentation are being felt very urgent. In view of this, there is a critical need for immediate action to ensure securing and strengthening the research activity as a central component in the Department of Culture in line with the royal government's policy of preservation and promotion of our rich culture.

Division's Function

- Conduct regular research on selected topics that are under threat of disappearing
- Translate religious and historical texts from Dzongkha to English and vice-versa
- Edit and review important documents on culture and religion
- Conduct field visits to collect documents/data in accordance with nature of work
- Organize workshops and seminars
- Attend culture and religion related national and international seminar and conference.

- Coordinate research activities undertaken by various divisions under DoC
- Strengthen collaborative research with other related national and international institutions.

Research and Publications

- Ngnondroi Thri
- Phagpa Gyalwachen
- Zungbul Laglen in Dzongkha
- Zung for Punakha
- Kunkhyen kabum
- A Treasure of Songs of Bhutan
- Driglam Namzhag in Bi-lingual
- Driglam Namzhag Norbui Threngwa
- Translation of the biography of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo
- Guide to Taktshang Monastery
- Drugi Choesi Ki Rab by Dasho Phuntsho Wangdi

Ongoing Publications

- Research and translation on Seula Jamgoen Ngawang Gyeltshen (will be publish coinciding with centenary celebration)
- The papers presented by the Scholars during the International conference on the history and culture of Bhutan "The Mirror of the past and Bridge to the future will also be published within June,2008 coinciding with the centenary celebration
- Reserch on the source of Red Scarf

Research Activities to be carried out

- Revision of Driglam namzhag Book
- Editing and translation of rare texts
- Research and documentation of historical sites of Pema Lingpa
- Visits to neighbouring countries
- Documentation of important cultural events and sites
- To conduct seminars and workshops

Reader Services

To develop the library, collections are carried out in the form of purchase and donation. The library has also been receiving quite regularly books donation from Japan Foundation, Taiwan, Germany,

Diamond Publication, Snow Lion Publication and other organization. Reader service is free to all.

Legal Deposit Act

As per Legal Deposit Act passed by the 77th session of the National Assembly of Bhutan, hundreds of printed and non-printed materials in the country are collected.

On the basis of ISBN number issued by the Centre for Bhutan Studies, Legal Deposit Section pursued collection and registration of publications for easy access for researchers to carry out their research works.

Conservation Section

The Conservation Section is entrusted to take care of books and wooden blocks of the National Library of Bhutan. Library possesses over 10,000 wooden blocks and 7000 metal blocks for publications whenever there is market demand.

Fumigation

Wooden blocks are treated in the fumigation machine to prevent damage from insects, and are stored in air tight boxes and stacked in the sandal wood shelves to prolong their life.

ICT Section

Under the Danida Project: Institutional Linkage of National Library of Bhutan with the Royal Library of Denmark, the National Library has immensely improved its ICT infrastructure and capacity.

With support from Danida, the National Library has also developed a database for almost all Chokey and English publications. The database entry was started since the beginning of the project. Information on 1, 09,435 sub-titles in Chokey and 5035 titles of English books have been entered into the computers till date.

The IT Section of National Library has completed data entry of entire collections and is fully automated, which means the users will be able to gain access to information on the library through

Internet. The National Library plays its role as a treasury of knowledge and information in the country.

The scriptural documentation survey team under the IT Section of the National Library has digitalized over 100 volumes of rare manuscripts and encapsulated them in the CD ROMs for preservation and future reference.

The IT Section has launched a website www.library.gov.bt for the National Library in 2002 and it was updated and re-launched recently.

The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (TBRC), USA has presented two external hard drive containing more than 4,000 volumes of Religious Texts along with a duplex printer to the National Library. The items are kept in the IT section and materials available in the hard drive can be printed whenever necessary.

Microfilm Section

With support from UNDP in the form of equipments and gadgets, the microfilming section microfilmed 1,250 volumes of rare and old manuscripts borrowed from the various monasteries within the country in 337 rolls of 30.5mm films. The materials can be scanned and used by any visitor or put on the net for external users.

In 1987, National Library made positive films of 30 volumes of important chokey books in 30 rolls of 30.5mm films.

The main objective of the microfilm section is to borrow *pechha* or books, which are not available in the National Library and microfilm them. The microfilmed books will be made accessible to the users through website in the near future.

Printing, publication and sale

The library has small metal block printing unit which carries out printing of rare and popular books as per the requirement of the government and local market demands.

The National Library has a small bookstall in the library campus to generate funds for supporting new publications. The money generated from the sales is deposited to a revolving fund to be used for future publications and purchasing books

Shortcomings

The National library faces even today is shortage of sufficient expertise and trained personnel in the field.

Although, as mentioned above, Danida has stepped into upgrading the ICT facilities of the Library, there is still long way to go. It is still yet to reap the full benefits of ICT in delivering services efficiently due to lack of technical capacity and also limited facilities. For example, despite huge growing pressure for information from people around the country, searching through database in web opac in local language is fraught with numerous limitations and is almost impossible.

Future plan

The Library has plan to set up three Regional Libraries to reach out to different parts of the country if we are in a position to mobilize external funding.

The Library has initiated digitizing rare manuscripts. However, the idea of creating a digital library is far from achieving. Acute lack of fund, manpower and skills are reasons behind it. Considering the importance of recording important information in digital form and making access easy to everyone, a digital library fed into internet is what the Library is looking at in near future.

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