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Country report: Nepal

1. General Overview in Fiscal Year 2007/08

In Nepal, 83 percent people live in the villages where there is no infrastructure for the easy access to information to update their knowledge. They even have to make a day long journey to make a phone call. In many cases the use of PCs are still for secretarial purposes. This small country with an area of 147,181 square km where 26 million people are living with more than 100 mother tongues. The economy of the country is mainly agro-based. Besides the traditional libraries established earlier, schools and colleges are also establishing their own libraries. New public libraries are being opened in the initiation of local people and somewhere with the assistance of some NGOs. Rural Education and Development Nepal (READ) helped community libraries whereas Room to Read established libraries in the community schools in the villages. Both these INGOs also provide assistance to the already established community and school libraries. The READ Nepal an INGO opened 50 community libraries in 39 remote districts of the country. Whereas Room To Read opened 1445 school libraries in 24 districts of the country. In the last fiscal year, the government of Nepal distributed 3.7 million Rupees (US\$57,000.00) among 81 public libraries of 32 districts as grant to uplift their services among the rural community. Last year is the land mark in the field of library services in the country when the government passed the National Policy on Library and Information Services 2007.

Development in the 21st century can not be envisaged without the development and expansion of telecommunication technology; therefore, The Three Year Interim plan aimed to establish telecentres all over the country to provide different ICT-related telecommunication services.¹ During the tenth plan period (2002-2007), internet/email services are available in 59 districts and the 1,831,000 pages of newspapers are archived in CD.²

There are many public/community libraries registered in Nepal, however, most of them exist only in name. Moreover, those which are functional are either poorly equipped and/or do not cater to the needs of a modern society. In fact, there is not a single modern public library in the country that caters the need of various sections of the society.

2. National Library

The national library of Nepal is located at Lalitpur district in Kathmandu valley with 23 staff members of which three including chief librarian are qualified librarians, six others are semi-professionals and rest of others are of administrative nature. There is no legal depository law in the country but the national policy now has been approved by the government in the initiation of this library.

¹ Nepal. National Planning Commission. *Three Year Interim Plan (2007/8- 2009/010)*. Katmandu: NPC, 2007

² . Ibid

2.1. Organizational structure

The national library is under the Ministry of Education and Sports directed by a senior librarian and assisted by a bibliographic officer and a library officer. However the collection of this library has been divided according to the languages; because its collection comprises of various languages in different scripts like English, Newari, Maithali, Hindi. The library staff does not possess modern training to update their traditional knowledge of librarianship.

Because of lack of specified mandate given by the government, this library could not function effectively. It lacks well-trained human resources to perform its functions. The regular library users visiting this library are 70 per day whereas its online catalogue is browsed by 446 users per month in an average through its URL www.nnl.gov.np. Besides, there are 15 children using its children's unit per day.

This library publishes national union catalogue and NNL News (its half-yearly News letter). None of the collection of this library has been digitized but the rare items are microfilmed. This library also has some CDs and audio cassettes in its collections. The local database could be used in the library both in English and in Devanagari font.

2.2 Collection Profile

The collection of most of the libraries does not exceed 50,000. However some libraries have good collection of national as well as international publications. Tribhuvan University Central Library (established in 1959) has the largest collection of books and journals. It has about 3 million collections. Nepal National Library has more than 87,500 collections of books and journals in different languages like English, Nepali, Hindi, Sanskrit, Newari etc. In Nepal, there is no national database as such however each library has its own database containing bibliographic information of their holdings. NNL and Kaiser Library have put almost all their collections into their databases. Some governmental and other libraries have also automated their collection. The mission libraries' services are praiseworthy among the users. The UNIC library service and the library of ICIMOD have better management and services.

Madan Puraskar Library, a private owned library, has a unique collection of books written in Nepali language only. It has about 30,000 volumes of books and journals in its holding. *Dilliraman Kalyani Regmi Memorial Library* also has a good collection of 30,000 books to provide public library services. The collection was donated by Dr. Dilliraman Regmi to the government. *National Archives*, a government institution, has a collection of rare and ancient manuscripts. Its collections have been microfilmed and kept safely for future generation. Similarly *Asa Safu Archives*, a privately run library, has a good collection of palm leaves and manuscripts which have now been digitized. This library was supported by the Japanese group to digitize its manuscript in CD.

Kathmandu Valley Public Library: With the active cooperation and involvement of Nepal's intellectuals, academicians, former diplomats, professors, journalists, professionals and members of civil society, the *Society for Kathmandu Valley Public Library* was established in 2003. It has 42,000 books, reports and periodicals and the monthly users are 3,500.

2.3 Services of the Nepal National Library (NNL)

Services provided by this library are reference service. However, NNL entertains ILL request and provide the Document Delivery Service upon the necessary charge paid by the borrowing libraries and submit the copyright declaration form. The mobile service in the commute areas of Kathmandu valley is a special feature of this library. In the absence of Legal Depository Law, the NNL is not in a position to provide bibliographic services. There is no regular national bibliography as such in Nepal. However, Tribhuvan University Central Library has been publishing it covering their own collection. There is no depository law so that it has been very difficult to publish comprehensive national bibliography.

Some libraries have borrowing facility while others do not have. Most of the academic libraries check out their books to the students and teachers. Apart from this, some public libraries also have such kind of facility.

2.4 Promotional programmes

In association with other NGOs and INGOs the reading campaign activities are being performed by this library. In cooperation with other major libraries the concept of information literacy is being published to aware the regular and potential users.

The FM radio, broadcasting environmental information, interviewed the Chief Librarian of Nepal National Library on 27 November 2007. The Environment Library at Badegaon of Lalitpur is also providing library services to the community from the same premises. Nepal Television (NTV), a state-run TV telecasted a 16 minute documentary about NNL on 11 July 2007. The documentary intends to promote its various services and facilities among the general public.

2.5 Library budget

The total acquisition budget for the last fiscal year is NPRs 0.74 million (USD 10570) to purchase books on Nepal and necessary Newspapers and Journals. Apart from it, this library receives, various publications as gift. The volume of publication acquired through exchange is very small. Not only had the case of receiving donation we also donate books to the small community libraries as received from the authors and from the publishers.

2.6 Projects Seminars, workshops, etc.

Upon the request of World Vision International Nepal which has been working in rural area to uplift the life of people including education sector, Nepal National Library organized a 4 day long Basic Library Management training from February 21-24, 2007 for the librarians from different rural areas of Lalitpur district. Tribhuvan University Library Science Students' Alumni Association (TULSSAA) held its annual general assembly and organized a talk programme on the existing situation of libraries outside Kathmandu valley which was held in Nawalparasi out of Kathmandu during 6-8 April 2007.

The NNL is a depository of the ADB. In 2007, the NNL also joined hands with the UNIC library. The national library maintained good cooperation with the libraries and library related institutes locally, whereas in international level it could not maintained its relation because of lack of fund to get registered as member of such institute e.g.

IFLA. The INASP/PERI programme is helpful for the library users to browse the databases of different learned periodicals. A Workshop on eIFL.net Programmes and the Building of a Sustainable Consortium of Libraries was held in Kathmandu. The programme highlighted on OSS to be used in the libraries of Nepal.

2.7 Youth Information Centre

All the 75 districts in the country have district information centres. Out of 75 such centres only a few such centres are functional. Besides, the Ministry of Education and Sports decided on 20th February 2008 to established one Youth Information Centre in each Development Regions. The Regional Youth Information Centres are as follows:

1. Triphala National Library, Dhulabari, Mechi Nagar Municipality – 1 in eastern development region;
2. Nepal National Library, Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur in Central Development Region;
3. Laxmi Smriti Pustakalaya, Syangja in Western Development Region
4. Mahendra Pustakalaya, Tribhuvan Chok, Nepalgunj in Mid-Western Development Region; and
5. Kailali Jana Pustakalaya, Dhanagadhi in Far-Western Development Region

The entire newly opened centre started to provide youth related information to the respective users.

3. Library at the national level

The public libraries have to be registered in the district administration office. The numbers of such public libraries are growing day by day. KVPL is one of them. At present, total numbers of various types of libraries do not exceed 1200. Nepal lacks library council but there are professional associations such as Nepal Library Association (NLA), Tribhuvan University Library Science Student's Alumni Association (TULSSAA) and the Library And Information Science Students Association (LISSA). There are more than 600 public libraries in the country. The mobile service of the NNL with its own Land Rover through the community libraries are found more effective. The special libraries are rather more effective and efficient in the country. Of the five universities, the library of Tribhuvan University is worth mentioning. It is difficult to find out the exact number of academic libraries in Nepal because not all the schools and colleges possess their own library. Most of the private high schools have their own library, but only limited government schools have their own till now. The private and government owned colleges have their own libraries having collection to serve the students and teachers of the respective colleges. Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL) has the largest collection.

3.1. Ecclesiastical libraries

Various Mosques (Bihars) and Temples have collection of religious books. It is not only the religious institutions; the holy priests have their own rare collection as personal libraries. It is only the District Administration Office which keeps record of the public libraries. The national library or the entire government agencies do not have the record of such libraries in the country. However, it seems as if the local enthusiastic people approach the NNL before the establishment of the new library in the country. The street library opened by the young students in Kathmandu is a milestone for the pedestrians. The cyber café is widely used by today's youths in the

down town. Attempts are being made by various libraries for the establishment of digital libraries in the country. Recently a readers club has been organized in Kathmandu to develop and update knowledge of the readers.

3.2. Library and manpower development

Almost all the librarians obtained their academic degree from the universities before their recruitment. There are quite a few opportunities to update their traditional knowledge. The SAARC Documentation Centre in New Delhi has regular annual programmes to provide training including the academic 2 years course. The staff of national library and of Tribhuvan University Central libraries sometimes have such opportunities to refresh themselves to cope with the current knowledge. An international conference on Information and Knowledge Management (ICIKM 2008) was held in Kathmandu on 27-29 March 2008 in which many working librarians participated to refresh their knowledge. The theme of the conference is Information and Knowledge Management in a Connected World: a Challenge for the Developing Countries. The conference is organised jointly by Healthnet Nepal and Tribhuvan University Central Library. Ms. Chin-Che Chen delivered keynote address.

Mr. Dasharath Thapa, Chief of NNL attended Creating Partnership with Libraries in Asia: Regional workshop, 6-9 November 2007, Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop was jointly organized by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at Headquarters and the Library of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Mr. Damodar Bhattarai, Bibliographer of NNL participated on the workshop on Leadership Development for Senior Executives of National Libraries in Developing Countries, 6-22 August 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The workshop was organized by National Library of Malaysia under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Mr. Bhattarai, also participated on SAARC Documentation Centre (SDC) workshop on Digital Libraries and Data Repositories, 16-20 December 2007 Kathmandu, Nepal. The workshop was organized by Government of Nepal, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology in assistance with SAARC Documentation Centre New Delhi.

Similarly, NLA president Mr. Bhola Shrestha, attended a three day conference on Interlending and Document Supply, 29-31 October, 2007, in Singapore.

4. Infrastructure

After the Telecommunication Policy 2003, Science and Technology Policy 2005, Cyber Law 2005 and the amendment in the Telecommunication Act, ICT services have been flourished in the country. Telecom Companies have distributed a total of 17,21,985 telephone lines by mid-March 2007 including mobile and GMPCS. Total internet service users are 249, 385 in 2007. Out of 3915 VDCs, 2,549 of them have telephone services. Nepal Telecommunication Authority has issued 165 licenses including the 33 ISPs in the country.³ 15 TV channels are in operation at present and licenses were issued for 487 cable TV transmission. Licenses were issued for 202 FM radios. The state-run TV has been transmitted among 66 percent and the Radio Nepal has been broadcasted to cover 80 percent of the total area of the country. Regarding

³ Nepal. Ministry of Finance. *Economic Survey: 2006/2007*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Finance, 2007.

the IT facilities, the library has a dial-up connection through the WLink. In near future the NNL has plan to provide services through the ADSL service of Nepal Telecom.

4.1 Physical infrastructure

Most of the buildings which have been housing library are not built for library purpose except the TUCL. Other libraries do not have ample facilities to attract the users.

5. Preservation

The government of Japan under its Cultural Grant Aid Programme provided microfilming equipment in 2001 including an automatic binding machine. The library microfilmed its rare collection with the help of this equipment. There is no other programme like digitizing of its collections. Photocopying services are available in the library premises. The then chief of PAC Asia Centre of the National Diet Library Mr. Takao Murayama studied preservation and conservation situation of library materials in the libraries of Nepal in February 2004. Similarly the officers of NNL participated various workshops and study visit programmes for the preservation of library materials in the country. Photocopy service is available in almost all the libraries in the country. Preservation of the rare manuscripts in the *Asha Saphu Kuthi* library is a notable work successfully performed by the library with the Japanese group. Requests are being made to the publishers to use the acid-free papers when printing the books. Till now there is no programme as such for the disaster preparedness in the country.

6. Education and training

In Nepal, the numbers of professional librarians are about 250 whereas the number of paraprofessionals comes to be 400. A formal one-year bachelor degree was started in 1995 by the Tribhuvan University (oldest university). Every year it enrolls 22 post graduates (now this course has become 2 years Master's Level by eliminating the Bachelor's Level). As mentioned in **Library and Information Policy 2007**, the library science course has now been included in the certificate level course for which the curriculum has already been drafted. Various in-service trainings are being provided each year for the professionals and para-professionals. The short term training programmes are being organized by various institutions in the country. Nepal National Library also provides week long training throughout the country in association with other institutions.

Prior to this, any interested person to pursue his/her study in library science had to go to foreign countries. However many short training programmes were conducted during that time also. Today, the Nepal Library Association (NLA), Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL), NNL, Tribhuvan University Library Science Students Alumni Association (TULSSAA), LIMISEC and LISSA are providing short term (35 days) training under the course designed by the Centre for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT).

7. Copyright and Library Act

As mentioned earlier, there is no Library act in the country except the Local Self Governance Act 1999 which is not effective in the absence of regulations under the Act. The attempt made by the NNL to get the Legal depository act to be enacted could not be enacted. The NNL had been working as the Office of the Registrar of Copyright

in Nepal. However after the new Copyright Act, 2003, a separate Copyright office has been set up under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation. The new copyright law was drafted under the guidelines given by the WIPO. But the law is not yet effective to protect from piracy. In music sector the royalty collection society has also been formed according to the regulations. The National Booksellers and Publishers Association is yet to form such society.

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