

2009 CDNLAO COUNTRY REPORT

NATIONAL LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF SRI LANKA

1. General Overview in FY2008

As the focal point of the library system of the country, the National Library and Documentation Centre (NLDC) has played a most distinguish role in the year 2008. As NLDC started restructuring the existed organisational set up, the year 2008 was a very effective and excellence year for the Library sector in Sri Lanka. Under these restructuring plans number of new sections was introduced to the Centre.

Background information

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 the 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.

Introduction to National Library and Documentation Centre

The National Library and Documentation Centre is one of the major reference libraries in Sri Lanka established under a Parliament act. This is the only the National Library of Sri Lanka and it plays a leadership role in the Library and Information Science sector in the country. The idea of a national library for Sri Lanka emerged in the 1950s. A number of prominent scholars and a number of Commission reports urged the contemporary governments to consider the establishment of a national library for Sri Lanka. As a result of the recommendations of these reports and conferences, the National Library Services Board was setup in 1970 as an Act of by the Parliament “Ceylon National Library Services Board Act No.17 of 1970”. One of the main responsibilities of this board as mentioned in the above Act was the establishment of a national library for Sri Lanka. The National Library was inaugurated on 27th April, 1990, 22 years after the establishment of the National Library Service Board in Sri Lanka.

Overview of the National Library and Documentation Centre

i. Collection

The National Library and Documentation Centre is one of the largest libraries in the country. Its holdings constitute the most comprehensive collection related to all ethnics

groups in the country. It has over 300,000 printed books around 3,000 manuscripts, 58 News Papers titles, 302 Periodicals titles and around 500 theses. Further it has richer Audio Visual and Electronic collections compared with other libraries of the country.

ii. Audience

The NLDC is operating as a equal opportunity place without any discrimination. The audience comprises of researchers, academics, students, children as well as the general public.

iii. Staff

The staff comprises around 150 members with required knowledge to sector and they are ready to inculcate the readers as active member of information society.

iv. Services

The policy of the NLDC service is “Right information to every reader at the right time”. NLDC provides reference and information services to the knowledge society. The services are being provided in collaboration with other library networks in the country. The Centre fulfils the information needs of the knowledge society with the help of manual and electronic systems and offers reading room facilities for 320 readers.

v. The National Library Membership

The users of the National Library are expected to be researchers. However, any Sri Lankan who can prove their identity could become member of the Centre. Residents and visiting foreigners are also eligible on short term membership.

Membership Statistics 2008

Year	Short Term Membership	Long Term Membership
2008	5880	1932

vi. Library Opening Hours

Day	From	To
Sunday	closed	
Monday	closed	
Tuesday	8.30 am	6.15 pm

Wednesday	8.30 am	4.15 pm
Thursday	8.30 am	6.15 pm
Friday	8.30 am	4.15 pm
Saturday	8.30 am	4.15 pm
* closed on Public Holidays		

vii. Funds

The NLDC totally depends on funds received from the Government. In the year 2008 the Center received a grant of Rs. 65 million from the state. Besides this, no other considerable amount is being received from any other sources.

2. New Information Products and Services

One of the major objectives of the NLDC is preparing of new information products for the use of every type of libraries in the country. With this aim, the NLDC has produced number of information and bibliographic product during the year of 2008. New Current Awareness Services and Bibliographic services are two new products/services.

3 .New Information Services

3.1 Reference Service

Referencing facilities is one of the important services provide by the NLDC which consisting of conventional and electronic materials. The Centre has planned to create an electronic reference desk in near future. It is recommended to start a virtual reference desk with the aim of helping both Sri Lankans and foreigners. There should be facilities to forward queries to the NLDC via Internet. The NLDC has advised to other public libraries in the country to create reference counters in their libraries. Reference section of the national library has answered reference questions asked by readers as follows.

Number of questions answered by the NLDC in 2008

Year	Ready Reference	Long Range Reference
2008	232	182

3.2 Lending, Interlibrary Loan

The NLDC has interlibrary lending system with some local libraries. During the year of 2008 it has lend 800 books to various types of libraries and borrowed 1000 books from local libraries.

3.3 National Bibliographic Services

The NLDC of Sri Lanka plays a leadership role in the bibliographic services in the country. It publishes the National Bibliography (NB) of the country since 1970 based on the copyright collection of the library. The NLDC is one of the five deposit libraries in Sri Lanka. There are no any systematic trade bibliographies or subject bibliographies published by other institutions in Sri Lanka. Accordingly the national bibliography is considered to be the major tool for bibliographic control in country. The Sri Lanka National Bibliography follows the DDC 21st edition and AACR 2 for organization of its entries. The NB of Sri Lanka is published as a printed book. Apart from the NB, the NLDC publishes a number of other bibliographical tools such as Retrospective Bibliographies, Indexes, and Directories etc. In the year 2009, it has planed to release the National Bibliography as an electronic version. In addition to this, the NLDC has compiled authority file to standardize bibliographic activities in the country.

3.4 Reading promotion

In Sri Lanka, the literacy rate is very high in compared with other developing countries. The current literacy rate is around 93 percent. The NLDC has organized number of reading events in the country during the year of 2008. On a request made by the National Library & Documentation Services Board, the Government has named the Month of October as the National Reading Month since 2004, with a view to encourage Sri Lankan people for reading and information searching habits. Since 2004, a variety of programs at different levels, covering almost all the subject scopes have been implemented concurrent with the National Reading Month. The National Library and Documentation Services Board have taken the initiative to promote and continue series of programs each year, enabling to reach wider scopes and to become more meaningful.

Similarly, with the prime objective of capacity building of readership and reading skills of the people of Sri Lanka and to build up a prosperous nation, various programs were held during the National Reading Month in year 2008 as well. Competitions such as Poster, Photo, Short Stories, and Essay etc. were held at national level under various reading categories. Seminars, particularly aimed at school children, were organized at provincial level on the theme: "Inculcating the Habit of Reading within Students". In addition, books were donated towards the development of school libraries. Further, under the direction of National Library and Documentation Services Board, Public Libraries, Schools, higher education institutes, cultural centers and voluntary

organizations have launched various other reading promotion programs during the National Reading Month. Inauguration ceremony of National Reading Month was held at Suchi National School, Hambantota on 02-10-2008. A special workshop was held and short lectures were delivered with a view to induce children for reading. Further, books have been donated to the schools of the area with a view to develop school libraries.

3.5 Information Literacy Programme

Although the literacy rate is high in Sri Lanka, the information literacy rate is too low. The NDLC has started collaborative programme with the help of Sri Lanka Library Association to enhance information literacy of the readers. Workshops, seminars and information literacy camps were organized under this project.

3.6 Acquisition, Donation and Exchange

The NLDC is one of the deposit libraries in the country. The origin of the legal deposit law of the country goes back to the Printers and Publishers Ordinance of 1885. According to this Act, 5 copies of each new publication of the country must be sent to 5 libraries including a copy to NLDC. Accordingly the NLDC receives deposit copies freely and it has been caused to development of national library collection. As a developing country, Sri Lanka has faced severe financial constraints in acquisition. For acquisition section, the NLDC was allocated 33 million rupees. While the government has donated 5005 million rupees for school libraries it has granted 33 million rupees to the acquisition section of the Centre. Apart from this the NLDC has an exchange programme of library materials especially with foreign national libraries. In the region of Asia and Oceania, the following libraries are major customers of the NLDC in library materials exchange programmes.

3.7 Digital Library

The NLDSB has decided to form a National Digital Library attached to the NLDC in 2011 and preliminary surveys are going on. The NLDC carry on digitization works on manual basis since 2007. As a first step it has been digitizing rare manuscript collection of the NLDC. Apart from this, it has planned to start a digitization project named the Memory of Sri Lanka.

The Memory of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a history of more than 2500 years. According to historical legends, earliest settlers of the country have arrived in 365 BC. Buddhism was established in 240 BC. Immediate impact of establishing Buddhism was inculcated the writing capabilities and as a result of it, Sri Lanka now has a very rich collection of books. Most of these collections are kept in the National Archives, Museum Library and University library of Peradeniya. Therefore, it is high time to start a digitization project

named “Memory of Sri Lanka” based on historical and heritage collections mentioned above. This programme should be commenced with the collaboration of heritage institutions of Sri Lanka such as Archives, Museums and other libraries and make them available via the internet.

4. New and Ongoing Projects

4.1 Seminars, Workshop etc.

In the year, 2008 the NLDC organized number of in house and away seminars. There are 09 provinces in Sri Lanka. The NLDSB has decided to establish 09 regional national libraries with the aim of providing efficient national library services to remote areas of the country. Under the supervision of the NLDSB two provinces of country already have set up two regional national libraries in the province of Central and Uva. Other provinces also have been initiating basic steps to create regional national libraries in their provinces. Although the NLDC was established in 1990, still there is no any building extension plan. In 2008, the NLDC has submitted a building extension plan to the government of Sri Lanka.

4.2 Local, Regional and International Project

The National Library and Documentation Centre have started a project of creating Readers Societies in all over the island. Main objective of the project is enhancement of information literacy of the community. In 2008 the NLDC has guided to form about 10 reader societies in the island. The NLDC has submitted a special report to the Norwegian Embassy to get a grant for an extension of south wing of the national library.

Conclusion

The NLDC has faced to severe budget constraints in the year of 2008. Under this situation it is very difficult to provide perfect reader services. To avoid these unhealthy infrastructure facilities the NLDC has introduced the concept of collaboration for the national library system of Sri Lanka.

Digital Preservation-The National Library and Documentation Centre of

Sri Lanka

Digitization is a new trend in the field of Library and Information Science. Libraries and Information Centers in the developed countries are more familiar with the digitization, whereas the libraries of the developing countries are not so familiar with this concept owing to the high cost and the lack of infrastructure facilities. Digitization is simply a process of conversion of any physical or analogue item into a digital representation. The NLDC is still considering of commencing a digitization programme on heritage documents in Sri Lanka. Due to the lack of infrastructure facilities, it has not been possible to commence this project. However, we have started

digitization programme on manual basis. The folklore collection of the national library is digitized step by step with the principal aim of preservation and retrieval. The Memory of Sri Lanka is a new project which is to be started in near future under the framework of digital preservation and it is described below.

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