

# *CDNLAO Sri Lanka – Country Report 2011*

*NATIONAL LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION SERVICES BOARD*

*14, Independence Avenue*

*Colombo 07*

*SRI LANKA*

*Telephone: 00 94 112687581, Fax: 00 94 112685201*

*E-mail: [directorgeneral@mail.natlib.lk](mailto:directorgeneral@mail.natlib.lk)*

## 1. General Overview in 2010

The 2010 is a very effective and excellence year for the Library sector in Sri Lanka. The National Library & Documentation Centre (NLDC) was 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%. 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.

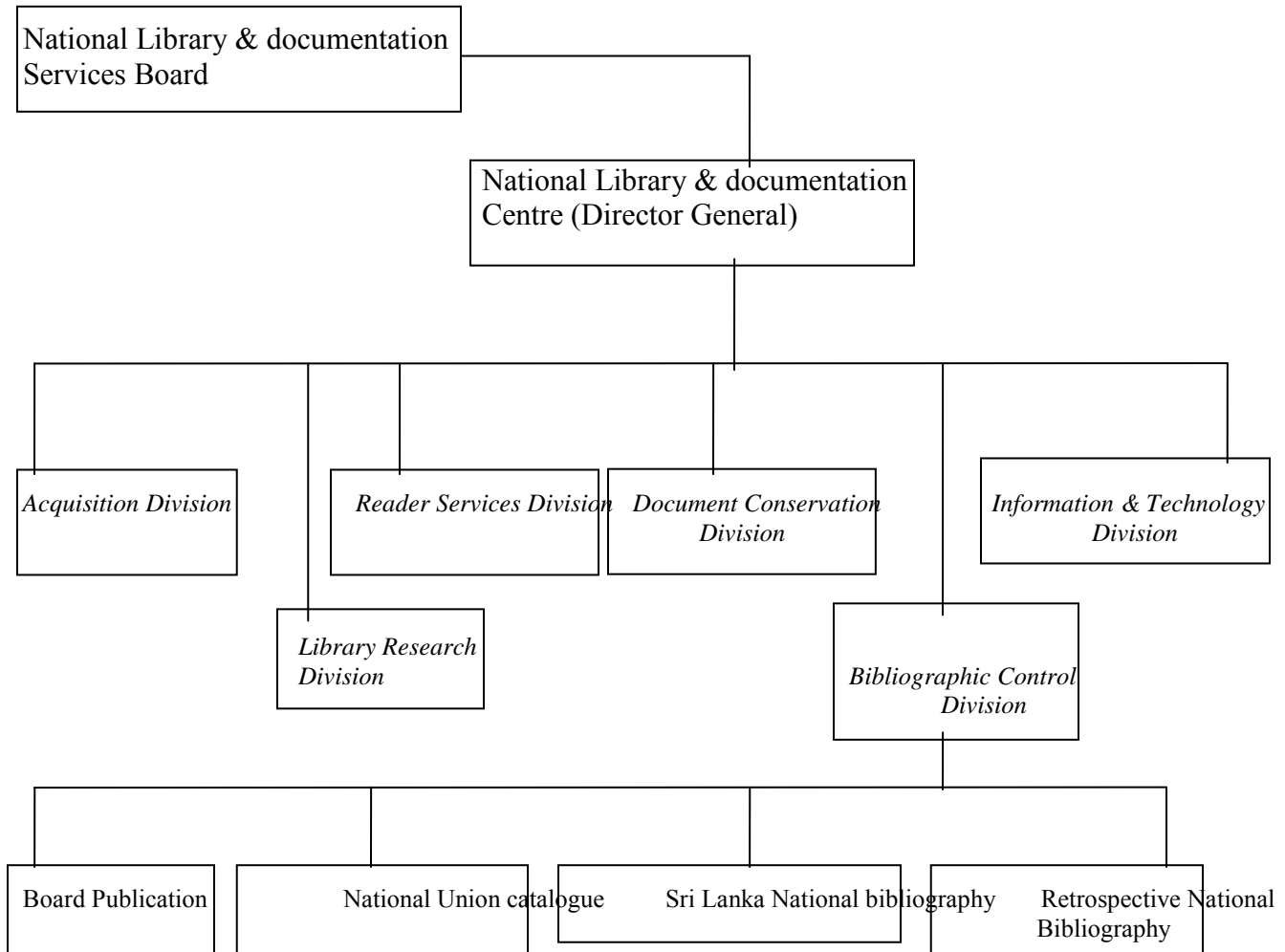
Another important stride of history of the National Library of Sri Lanka was the establishment of the Museum Library in 1877. With the establishment of this library, the Royal Oriental Library also was amalgamated to the Museum Library and, was promoted as a Legal deposit library in Sri Lanka. Still 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.

## 2. National Library

### • **History of the National Library 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**



**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.

**Employment**

Total number of employees of the NLDC is 150

### **Library Users**

Membership is open to all readers in the society. There are two types of membership: short term (one day, week) and long terms (One year, 6 months, 3 months). Membership of the organization increased as follows in 2010

|                         |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| Permanent Members       | 31   |
| Membership for 3 months | 540  |
| Annual Membership       | 39   |
| Daily Membership        | 8345 |

### **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. Therefore, it has not any historical report such as the NLs in Europe. 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 2010 the NLDC has acquired following categories to the collection.

| Type                       | Number |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Books                      | 1115   |
| Microfilms                 | 134    |
| Dissertations              | 20     |
| Rare books                 | 155    |
| Legal Deposit Publications | 8250   |

### **Institutional Membership**

The NLDC renewed its institutional membership in following institutions.

1. Australian Library and Information Association
2. American Library Association
3. IFLA
4. National Geographic Society
5. DELNET

### **Digitization**

Still there are no proper infrastructure facilities for digitization. However in 2006 the NLDC was started digitization project on manual basis. During the year 2010 it has digitized 120 books.

## **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 large number of 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. There are two types of catalogues, OPAC and card catalogue. OPAC facilities are open to users since 1993. At the beginning, the NLDC used CD/ISIS software package for automation purposes.

Since 2000 the NLDC has been using the Alice for Windows for all library activities. Since 1998 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 reference desk 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 150 readers. Reference services provided to 350 readers. Due to the demand of readers the reader services section extended its opening hours in Tuesday and Thursday by 2 hours. The Reader services division is open from Monday to Saturday, closed on Sunday and other public holidays.

### **Awareness Workshops**

- Awareness programme on Unicode: Collaboration with the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
- WINISIS Workshop, Collaboration with Sri Lanka Library Association
- Programme on Information Literacy: Collaboration with Sri Lanka Library Association.

## **3. Library at the National Level**

### **Role of the National Library and Documentation Centre at 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” (NLDSB 1998). Therefore, the National Library has a major responsibility of development of all types of libraries in the country.

Library system of the Sri Lanka could be divided to 05 categories.

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

#### **(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 statue 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 libraries are governed by government and local government authorities’. The NLDSB has direct power to control public libraries activities in the country. The National Library has the following advisory competences regarding public libraries.

- Recruitment of personnel
- Grading of libraries
- Library development plan
- Training and education
- Reorganization of academic qualification
- Library standards and norms

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**

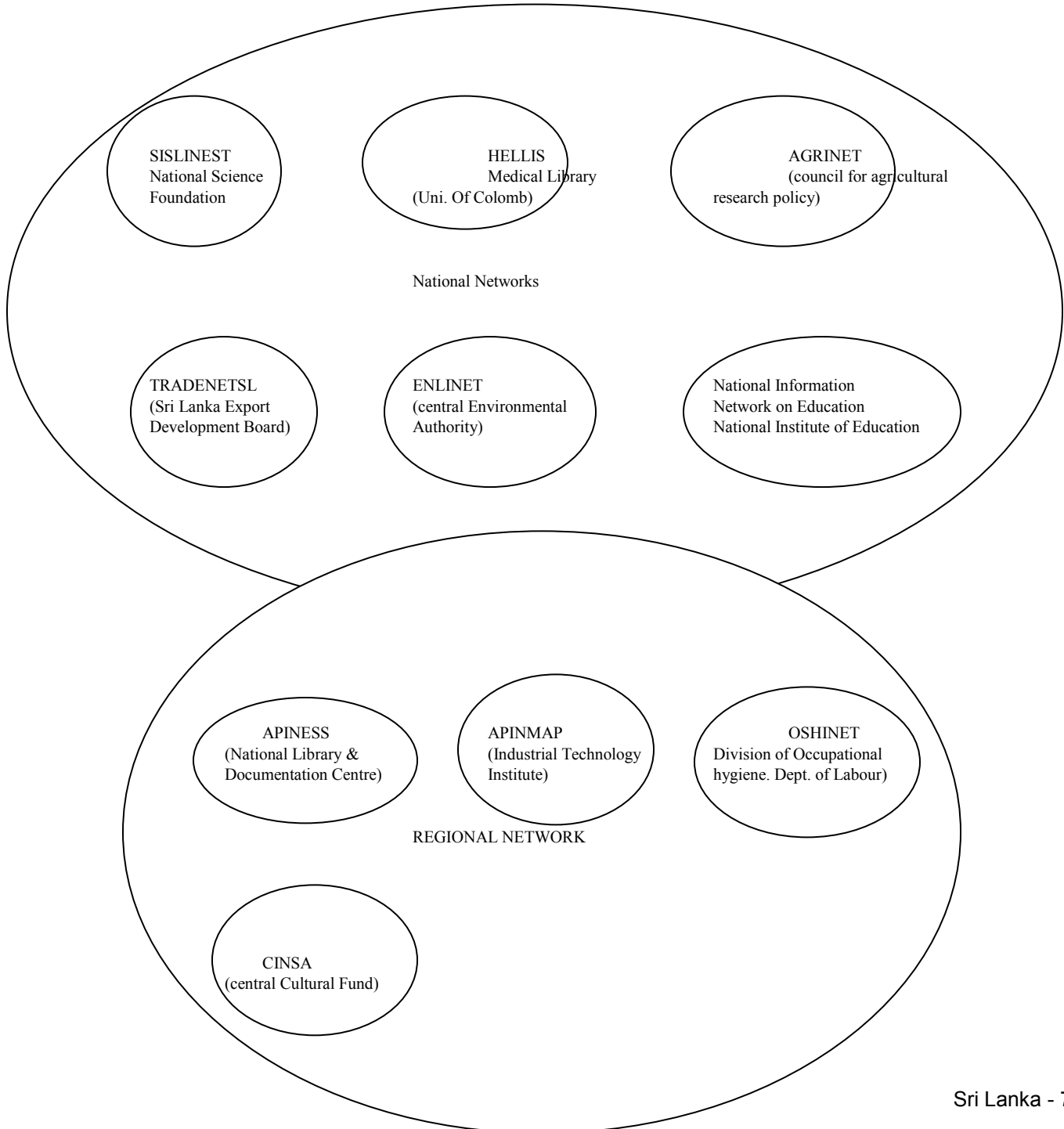
There are about 6000 School Libraries in the country. One of the responsibilities of the NLDC is to develop and provide advice and guidance to school libraries. There is a School Library development project in Sri Lanka with the help of the World Bank. The main aim of the project is the establishment of 2000 new school libraries and the redevelopment of the existing 2000 school libraries in the county. The NLDC has been acting as the coordinator and leading body of the project in Sri Lanka.

**(D) Special Libraries**

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

**4. Infrastructure**

- Library Network  
National and Regional Networks leading by the NLDC  
Library Networks



The NLDC maintains relationship with 08 library networks in Sri Lanka  
SLSTINET – Sri Lanka Scientific and Technical Information Network  
HELIS – Health Science Library Literature and Information System  
AGRINET – Agricultural Information Network  
ENLINET – Environment Library Network  
CINSA – Cultural Information Network in South Asia  
APINMAP – Asia Pacific Information Network on Medical and Aromatic Plants  
OSHINET – Occupational Safety and Health Information Network  
APINESS – Asia-Pacific Information Network in Social Sciences

### **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 has collaborated with following associations and organizations.

- CDNLAO – Conference of Directors of National Libraries of Asia & Oceania
- APINESS – Asia Pacific Information Network in Social Sciences
- 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 –

### **5. 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. Conserve and preserve of the National Library collection
02. Conservation activities of other libraries on national levels.
03. Production of library stationeries on library standards
04. Organizing workshops and seminars for library personnel in the country

Three types of centres are in the conservation unit of the NLDC

01. Book binding centre
02. Preservation Unit
03. Fumigation 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.

This section has a major responsibility regarding the reconstruction of the Tsunami devastated libraries in the country. Due to Tsunami waves more than 200 libraries were damaged in the coastal areas of the country. Therefore, the conservation and preservation section started a programme of conservation and preservation of damaged collections of libraries.

The project on rebuilding of Tsunami devastated libraries is still going on especially in southern and eastern provinces in Sri Lanka. This project is continuing with the help of UNESCO/IFAP/BAI. The public library of Hikkaduwa was built with the assistance of the London Library Association of UK.

## **6. Education and Training**

### **• Library Schools in Sri Lanka**

1. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kelaniya
2. Sri Lanka Library Association
3. National Institute of library and Information Science
4. Buddhist university, Anuradhapura

The NLDC could keep closer contact with these library schools 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.

## **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 are rapidly changing. Knowledge has been 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.