

**COLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR THE NATIONAL LIBRARY AND
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF SRI LANKA**

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Abstract

The National Library and Documentation Center (NLDC) was setup in 1990 as a result of long dialogues among scholars in the country. It has been playing a leadership role in some areas of the field of Library and Information Science since its inception. The National Library (NL) is the only library which receives considerable resources annually, compared with other libraries. As a NL of a developing country it has faced severe budgetary constraints. Due to budgetary constraints most activities of the NLDC have collapsed. According to the National Library and Documentation Service Board Act (1998) of Sri Lanka it has to perform large number of responsibilities related to the development of library and information context in the country. But the government authorities do not still consider the NL service as an essential component of development planning in the country. Therefore, the NLDC is struggling first to survive than providing services. As a solution for existing challenges of the NLDC, it should start collaborative programmes with other library system of the country and it is necessary to identify possible areas for collaboration on the short term as well as the long term basis.

Major aim of the study is introduced a new NL model for Sri Lanka based on collaboration. After detailed study of selected national libraries in Europe the researcher formulated new proposals for the NLDC of the Sri Lanka. The collaboration is an indispensable concept for the NL in developed and developing countries. Accordingly, the research project attempts to introduce new model for NL in the country. Proposed model is a mix model of collaboration as well as leadership. But more emphasize has been given to commence of national library activities based on library collaboration.

Collaborative model for the National Library and Documentation Centre of Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

A NL is a living organization as well as a social institution in the contemporary society. It is the heart of library system of any country. Origin of the concept of national libraries goes back to the 16th century, which emerged in the France with the establishment of legal deposit for the benefit of the Bibliotheque du Roi by the ordinance de Montpellier in 1537(Wilson, 1989;pp75-95). Nature and functions of the national libraries (NLs) are differing in country-to-country as well as region-to-region. While some NLs of the world are trying to achieve intellectual aims, some are trying to gain political aims also. These differencing aims of NLs were clearly identified by Bourageo (1958). According to him it is not that clear what a NL really is, nor can we name with certainty the qualities a libraries must possess or the functions it must fulfil in order to be rightly called national .

There is no universally accepted definition of a NL. “ It is easy to think of national library as a well-established category of libraries... occupying a similar position and fulfilling similar roles in most, if not all countries yet national libraries are surprisingly difficult to define”(Line,1979a;p.317

The definition of the United Nation’s Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) for NL has covered overall objectives of a NL (Lor, 1997). Since the UNESCO symposium on NLs of 1958 various attempt have been made to synthesize the declared functions of NLs (Mearns, 1955).One of the most acceptable set of functions of NLs was submitted by Humphreys in 1964 (Humphreys, 1966; pp.158-159) and Line rearranged this order (1980; pp. 16-17).

Cornish (1992) have identified fifteen relevant functions of a NL. Goodrum (1986) discussed about functions and duties of NLs according to period of establishment of NLs. He has highlighted three stages of history of NLs. Lore (1997) has identified eleven functions of NL .Almost all developed countries have setup their NLs and functioning well against the developing countries that are far behind in this process. Nahari (1984) has pointed out some guide lines for establishing NLs in developing countries. Xuerb (1977) also discussed about role of NLs in developing countries. UNESCO and International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) have urged to all government of the world to create NLs with strong legislative empowerment. According to Bagrova,(1992), it is desirable that every country should have a NL and further all NLs that have no legislative base for their activities or that have outdated legislation must urge their government to adopt laws ensuring efficient fulfilment of NL functions.

Most NLs in developed world have based on collaborative model as a solution for some important contemporary problems. NLs in developing world are still based on leadership model. But they need to identify value of collaboration.

1.2 Research Objectives

In this research, the researcher intended to achieve five major objectives namely,

1. To identify the existing collaborative roles of NLs.
2. Identify barriers and challenges which are affecting to collaborative programmes in Sri Lanka.
3. Investigate possible areas of collaboration in NL context in Sri Lanka.
4. Introduce a new model for the NLDC of Sri Lanka instead of the existing model.

2. Collaboration

Collaboration is a very wide concept and not discussed in depth yet in library science and information context, which is an indispensable concept in organizational management. There is no universally accepted definition for collaboration because of the complexity of the concept. According to Collins English Dictionary (2002) Collaborate is “to work with another or others on a joint project”. Melling and Little (2002) discussed about reasons for why collaborative working takes place? Collaboration is an essential concept for the field of library and information Science. Most NLs in developed world are based on a collaborative model. There are number of areas in this sector to start collaborative project. Moore & Carpenter (2002) have discussed many forms of library collaboration. Brophy has highlighted existing forms of library collaborations (Brophy, 2001).

The United Kingdom is one of countries which have long tradition of library collaborations. (Brazier 2005) discussed collaborative project in UK with special attention to collaboration in digital Archiving in UK. One of most important studies has been made by Zawiyah Baba (2005) on the Networking Cultural heritage: an overview of initiatives for collaboration among national libraries, museums and archives in Asia and Oceania. He has carried out this study based on thirty one NLs in the region. Shepherd (1999) has carried out a study on Collaboration in Research Library Provision with an international review. In his research he has revealed results of case studies in selected countries. In the same year he discussed result of successful collaboration between three university libraries in Canada. NLs of the Netherlands and Belgium have started number of collaborative project on digitization. One of the secrets of the success of world giant NLs such as the Library of Congress, National Library of Australia is starting of collaborative programmes.

3. The National Library and Documentation Centre

As a NL in a developing world the NLDC of Sri Lanka has been identified usefulness of the collaboration. According to aims and objectives of the NLDC it has give priority for library collaboration. Due to unhealthy infrastructure facilities it has unable to achieve some aim and objectives related to library collaboration.

This is the only organization of Sri Lanka, which has legitimate authority to advice to the government on development activities of the library. The library is managed

by a Board of Management. Main objective of the board is to administer, manage and control the affairs of the NLDC.

After detailed study of the national library context Europe the researcher suggest following arias for library collaboration.

4. Library Collaborative Programmes

- 4.1 *Centralized Acquisition with public libraries*
- 4.2 *Collaboration with Higher Education*
- 4.3 *Collaboration with Foreign Mission Libraries*
- 4.4 *Collaboration in Bibliographical Control*
- 4.5 *Collaborative Strategic Planning*
- 4.6 *Collaborative Digitization Projects*
- 4.7 *Collaboration in Research and Development*
- 4.8 *Collaborative Reader Services*
- 4.9 *Collaboration with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation*
- 4.10 *Collaboration with National Libraries of Asia and Oceania-(CDNLAO)*



Collaboration Programmes at National Level

4.1 Centralized Acquisition with public libraries

It is recommended to commence a centralized acquisition programme with the public library system of the country. In Sri Lanka there are 1208 public libraries in 8 provinces. Details are given below.

Table 1: Public Libraries

Provinces	Number of Public Libraries
Western	183
Central	210
North East	242
North West	188
North Central	64
Uva	61
Southern	163
Sabaragamuwa	97

(Source: Annual Report. The NLDC, 2005)

To begin, it is necessary to select a leading library from each province, and this library should coordinate all the public libraries in its province. The NL should take all the acquisition lists from provincial libraries, and purchase the necessary books on behalf of provincial libraries. Via negotiations with publishers and booksellers the NL can obtain a discount which can be distributed among the member public libraries. A complementary opportunity of this method is that it can lead to a Union Catalogue.

4.2 Collaboration with Libraries of Higher Educational Institutions.

There is a widely spread university library network in the country and it consists of 15 university libraries. These libraries function more effectively than other types of libraries.. All the university libraries are governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and there is a professional association in the UGC consisting of university librarians of the country called University Librarians Association (ULA). This association is chaired by the Vice President of the UGC.

It is recommended to start with a collaboration programmes between ULA and the NLDC.

4.2.1 Cooperative Acquisition

This programme can be started with University libraries in the country. In Sri Lanka there are 15 university libraries and the NLDC can commence a cooperative acquisition program with them. This system can be implemented in respect of Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities streams.

4.3 Collaboration with Foreign Mission Libraries

There are two foreign mission libraries with substantial collections in Sri Lanka. They are the Library of the British Council and the American Information Centre. Both of these libraries acquire latest books collections especially those published in Britain and the USA. Audio Visual and electronic sources sections of these libraries are richer than those of the other libraries in the country. A NL should maintain a comprehensive collection of foreign books and periodicals which is a basic function of all NLs. Therefore, it is advisable to start a collaborative programme with the above foreign mission libraries through identification of possible areas of collaboration

4.4 Collaboration in Bibliographic Control

4.4.1 Publication of the National Bibliography

Publication of the national bibliography is a collaborative project between the NLDC and the National Archives Department (NAD) because the NAD is the only legal deposit library in the country. This is an ongoing collaborative project which is very successful.

4.4.2 National Union Catalogue (NUC)

The NLDC should act as the focal point of the project of the NUC. Compilation of the NUC is a collaborative project of the NL. In this regard it should maintain a close relationship with all the other libraries of the country. The NL has to take necessary action to get help from all types of libraries in the country for the NUC project. It is necessary to give special training for all librarians who contribute to union catalogue regarding usage and value of the union catalogue programme in the country. This is an ongoing collaborative project of the NLDC.

4.5 Collaborative Strategic Planning

Strategic planning (SP) is a long term project of the NLDC. Although the NLDC was opened in 1990 still there is no SP process. SP is not an easy task, and therefore it should be done with the cooperation of other suitable partners.

4.6 Collaborative Digitization Projects

Digitization is a new concept to Sri Lanka and it is a highly expensive project which is difficult to be done only by the NL itself. It is involving high costs and trained manpower. Therefore, it is recommended to start collaborative programmes with prominent partners in the field of Information Technology. There are few experts in the field of digitization in the country and it is necessary to get their expertise knowledge in connection with this venture. Before commencing digitization projects, a feasibility study in this regard is recommended.

4.7 Collaboration in Research and Development

The section of research and development is one of the most important departments of NLs in the world. In some NLs this department is the largest one having a large number of human resources. In the field of research and development the NLDC has to play a major role as a coordinator as well as a partner. Progress or development of any country or specific discipline is based on research activities.

4.8 Collaborative Reader Services

The ultimate goal of any kind of library is reader service. The NLDC has to perform growing information requests of the reader community with its limited resources. It is not possible to perform all readers' requirements exclusively with the NLDC resources. It is advisable to have a collaborative agreement for reader services with suitable partners.

Library Collaborative Programmes at International Level (New)

4.9 Collaboration with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

„This association confined to a specific geographical area in South East Asia and consists of 07 countries.

- India
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Bangladesh
- Nepal
- Bhutan
- Maldives

All the above countries have established their NLs and some of those are functioning smoothly. According to the geographical location of the region it is somewhat easy for these countries to maintain close relationships among NLs. However there is no collaborative activity among national libraries of the SAARC at present. It is essential to establish an association of chief executives of NLs in the SAARC region to promote regional collaboration in NLs.

4.10 Collaboration with National Libraries of Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO)

CDNLAO is a regional association of IFLA, related to Asia and Oceania. This regional association was established in 1988. There is no prospect of starting collaborative programmes in the NL context among countries of CDNLAO. Currently they only hold their annual meetings. There are numerous of possibilities of starting collaborative programmes in specific areas of LIS. It is necessary to create specific regional associations under the CDNLAO umbrella. Possible areas of collaboration are:

- National Library Automation

- Digitization
- Conservation and Preservation

Conclusion

The NLDC was established in 1990 as a result of long discussions. The organizational structure of the NLDC is still based on the structure of state cooperation which existed in 1970s. Therefore it was not suitable for the present NL context in the country. Since the inception of the NLDC no one has submitted any proposal to restructure the NL system of the country.

This proposal is based on an in-depth study of some NLs in selected countries in Europe. Based on these experiences the researcher has paid much required attention to provide possible suggestions for the development of library systems in Sri Lanka. As a developing country Sri Lanka also has common features that are prevailing in the third world countries such as poor funding, low salaries, poor staffing, poor performance, lack of impact, low profile etc. As a third world country per capita of Sri Lanka is 1100 USD. Under this situation the NLDC can not commence highly expensive projects and programmes like NLs in Europe. To implement the above proposal it is needed to carry on a feasibility study. There should be a professional dialogue among library professionals in the country in this regard. As a third world country Sri Lanka cannot allocate large amount of money to this kind of proposal. According to the present situation large part of the budget expenditure of the government is allocated for the defence of the country due to terrorist problems. The inflation rate of the economy is going up year by year. Under these circumstances we have to think about implementation of this proposal and therefore, the best solution is to implement of the proposal one by one.

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