INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SRI LANKA

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The primary purposes of the Public Library are to provide resources and services in different media to meet the needs of readers for Education, Information and Personnel Development including recreation and leisure.
Public Library is the principle mean whereby the record of man’s thoughts and leads and expressions of his creative imaginations are made freely available to all. It should be maintained wholly from public funds. Traditionally Public Library has been an open access institution carrying out its role as a multi-purpose agency, providing educational, cultural, recreational and information services to the people.

- UNESCO Public Library Manifesto -
PUBLIC LIBRARY BACKGROUND

• The Public Library is the local center of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to their users.

• The services should be provided on the basis of equality of access for all.

• Regardless of Age, Races, Religion, Nationality, Language or Social Status.
Specific services and materials must be provided

- Linguistic minorities
- People with disabilities
- People in hospitals or prisons

Collection and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. Materials must reflect current trends and evaluation of society as well as the memory of human endeavor and imagination.
HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE IN SRI LANKA
HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE IN SRI LANKA. CONTINUE..

• The service started during the British period in 1800s as voluntary subscription libraries.
• Started in the main town in the country. Ex:- Galle, Colombo, etc.
• Purposes-
  • For the use of British officers who worked in Sri Lanka.
  • Provide books for leisure reading.
  • The libraries were given support by the governments.
CURRENT SITUATION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN SRI LANKA

• Total number of Public Libraries – 1135
• Maintain by the Local Government institution.
  • Municipal Councils
  • Urban Councils
  • Regional Councils
• Sri Lanka consists of nine (09) provinces.
• Commissioner of Local Government (CLG) has been appointed for each province.
• CLG is to supervise and coordinate local government activities of each province.
Currently, the public library system in Sri Lanka. Continue..

• Normally, a province is divided into two or three administrative districts.

• Assistant Commissioners of Local Government (ACLG) have been appointed for each district.

• The supervision and financial allocations are provided by the respective local government institutions.

• Public Library can generate income through membership fee, conducting training courses, etc.
ONGOING PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

• Project on libraries for knowledge enhancement

The project implemented by the National Library of Sri Lanka in collaboration with Information Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) Sri Lanka.

Under this project following facilities are given by the selected public libraries.

• Digital infrastructure facilities – Network facilities
• Provided necessary equipment – All in one computers, tabs, photocopy machines, library furniture, etc.
• Training library staff on digital library management system.
• Digital library project

The project is maintained by the Ministry of Local Government of Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Open University of Sri Lanka.

Under this project,

Information technology facilities are developed in selected public libraries using ‘Koha’ library software.
• **Sustainable library development programme - 2020**

The project is conducted by the National Library of Sri Lanka. Under this project,

• Donations library equipment and reading materials to underprivileged public libraries.

• Public library grading programme – The libraries are graded to Grade iii, Grade ii, Grade I and Supra Grade according to their level of development.
Sustainable library development programme – 2020

Continue..

• Conducting library training programmes.
  • Library management
  • Information Communication Technology
  • Conservation and preservation
  • Compilation of documentation sources
  • Cataloguing and classification
• Sustainable library development programme – 2020

Continue..

• Introducing Policies and Guidelines

The National Library has introduced number of policies and guidelines.

Ex:- Policy for misplaced library materials in libraries.

Collection management and acquisition policy.

• National Reading Month Programme

This project is carried out by the National Library for reading promotion of library readers. Under this project, various reading promotion programmes are conducted with the assistance of other libraries.
PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

• Lack of library resources – specially in rural public libraries.
• Lack of staff – Many libraries have no professional librarians.
• Utilization of Information Technology is not adequate.
• Public libraries are functioning under the local government institutions. The head of these institutions are politicians and do not receive professional guidance and supervision.
• Lack of funds.
• Lack of training for librarians.
MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

• Adequate resources should be provided to the public library.
  • Information resources
  • Physical resources
  • Financial resources
  • Human resources
  • Services should be expanded
  • IT infrastructure should be developed to meet the present requirement.
• A public library act has not so far been introduced.
• Services should be given a higher priority by local government.
• Redefining the role of public libraries in the country.
• Modernization of public libraries to be implemented.
CONCLUSION

Sri Lanka has achieved a tremendous development in the public library sector. Sri Lanka has a long history of public library development. However public library system needs more improvement and modernization. A number of measures have been taken to achieve this object.