

INFORMATION LITERACY: GLOBAL CHALLENGES, LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Editors:

Prasanna Ranaweera, P.G.Pemadasa,
Uditha Alahakoon and Ruwan Gamage

National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS)
University of Colombo
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(2012 වර්ෂය තුළ කුරුණෑගල දිස්ත්‍රික්කයේ පවත්වන ලද පුහුණු වැඩසටහන්වලට සහභාගි වූ ගුරු/පාසල් පුස්තකාලයාධිපතින් ඇසුරින්)

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Poster Session

A Content Analysis of Theses, Dissertations and Case Books Submitted to the Library of the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine (PGIM), University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (1982-2011).

Chandani Karunasekara

Development of Resistance of Cigarette Beetles in Library Books against Phosphine Fumigation

L.M. Udaya Prasad Cabral, Pascal Querner

How to use YouTube without Facing Dilemmas

Pujitha Hewawasam, Anusha Abeywardane, Dilani beyrathne, P.G. Nishantha, P.K. Jayasekara, and Ayoni Perera

Establishment of a Legal Deposit Collection at the Main Library of University of Ruhuna

P.K. Jayasekara, R.A.P.S. Senevirathna, P.G. Nishantha, U.A. Lal

Utilization of Online Journals by Undergraduates: A Case Study Based on the Faculty of Agriculture, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.

W.P.T. Dilrukshi

Establishment of a Legal Deposit Collection at the Main Library of University of Ruhuna

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Objective of having a legal deposit collection is to preserve the national documentary heritage of a country. King Francis I (1515 - 1547) established the first legal deposit in the world in 1537 in France. The Great Britain introduced the legal deposit concept in the 17th century (Legal Deposit, 2014).

The history of legal deposits in Sri Lanka started in 1885. According to the Printers and Publishers Ordinance of No. 01 of 1885, three copies of books printed, and of all subsequent editions must be delivered at the *Office of the Registrar* within a month of being printed. These three copies were archived at the National Archives, National Museum Library and the British Museum Library – United Kingdom. In the 1952 amendment, University of Ceylon was also included. That is housed at the University of Peradeniya Library. According to the obligations made in the 1976 amendment, number of copies were increased to 5, the fifth copy was deposited at the National Library & Documentation Services Board (Thilakarathne, 2012).

Since 1990, British Museum Library stopped accepting publications from Sri Lanka as a legal deposit copy, mainly due to high postage cost. Consequently, the National Archives of Sri Lanka stored British Museum copy in their premises.

2. Legal deposit collection at the University of Ruhuna

In 2013, Ministry of National Heritage decided to provide the British Museum Library copy that they stored in the National Archives to a library in Sri Lanka. According

to that decision in March 2013, the Director of National Archives of Sri Lanka made a request to the Vice-Chancellor of University of Ruhuna to accept this huge, valuable collection. After several discussions between the Librarian of University of Ruhuna and the Vice-Chancellor, it was decided to accept this valuable collection. Within the year 2013 the library successfully relocated the whole collection at the main library of University of Ruhuna.

The library was able to develop the space required to establish this collection within a very short time, with the enormous support of the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Legal Deposit Collection of University of Ruhuna consists of 160,000 publications published in the country since 1990. It includes books, newspapers, journals, magazines, handbooks, annual reports, pamphlets, government publications such as gazettes, hansards, acts and school textbooks, proceedings, posters etc. written in various languages. Annually, the collection grows approximately by 5,000 publications. The library maintains this collection as a separate special collection. The materials in the collection have been stored in boxes made from acid free paper and under controlled environmental conditions for conservation purposes.

The depository library is obliged to conserve the collection to provide publications as evidence in legal requirements. National Archives, National Museum and National Library are located in Colombo and only University of Peradeniya was situated in outstations. Users from all over the country had to visit Colombo or Peradeniya to access the resources. Hence, the establishment of a legal deposit collection at the University of Ruhuna is an important step in upgrading the country's documentation policies. In addition to decentralization, it is an important measure of providing security to the country's documentary heritage, and as a disaster prevention strategy.

Most of other institutes only maintain a legal deposit collection as a closed repository, not available for public. Electronic records of the contents is hardly available. The University of Ruhuna Legal Deposit Collection is unique in this regard, as all resources in the collection is searchable. A separate database is maintained, and is publicly available via the library website. Users can search the online catalogue using subject, keyword, title, author, ISBN/ISSN or the publisher. After locating the item from the catalogue, users can make a request for use, after which the physical access to the resource is provided soon. Overall, it is a closed access collection, and distant users can only see the bibliographic record – not the content.

The university administration is currently planning to construct a separate building to house the collection comfortably so that it can be maintained in such a way that scholars from all parts of the island will benefit.

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