

Noolaham Foundation

Project Report



Project Title	Digitization Project in Colombo 2008-2009
Project Number	NF/PG/2008/0001
Project Location	Colombo
Sector	Collection Development - Ongoing Collection Development
Implementing agency and contribution	Noolaham Foundation
Grant Agency and Contribution	Noolaham Foundation
Total Budget and Expenditure	LKR 159,830.00
Project Period	2008 - February 2009
Responsible Stakeholders	Project Coordinator - Ganeshanathan Shaseevan, Contributors : Nagenthirapillai Theepan, Sivaramakrishna Sarma, Rathina Iyer Pathmanaba Iyer

Summary

The **Digitization Project in Colombo 2008-2009** was conducted by Noolaham Foundation during 2008 and early 2009 in Colombo. The objective of the project was to digitize a collection of print publications donated or loaned to Noolaham Foundation for digitization. Thus documents collected in Colombo and diasporic magazines sent by Pathmanaba Iyer were digitized through this project.

This project was implemented from January 2008 and to February 2009. Through this project 148 books and magazines, and 176 diaspora magazines were digitized in 2008 and another 245 documents were digitized in 2009. All 569 documents were made available online through Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library at www.noolaham.org. This project was a successful initiative and it received special appreciation from many Tamil writers and publishers.

Introduction and Background

Documentation and archiving are keys to preserve a community's cultural heritage and knowledge bases. These activities are important information providers to processes that influence the social and economic development of local communities. Documentation and archiving are also influence the manner in which the histories of local communities are written. The functions of documentation and archiving turn out to be particularly difficult tasks in minority communities which are neglected. Hence a more robust community-driven approach to documentation and archiving is important.

Noolaham Foundation was started in 2005 as a digital library to document publications by related to Sri Lankan Tamil communities. Initially Noolaham was purely a volunteer driven initiative and was creating text versions of books. Once the scanning was introduced and

Noolaham started to accept monetary donations, we began to utilize funds towards scanning activities.

During 2007, more than 1000 documents were added to Noolaham Digital Library and quite a number of writers and users came to know about Noolaham's activities. A number of them began to loan or donate publications to Noolaham and requested us to digitize and make them available online. Thus a project was initiated in 2008 utilizing donations to pay for scanning activities.

Objectives and Achievements/Results

The objective of this project was to digitize the publications donated to Noolaham and make them available online. In 2008 Mr. Rathina Iyer Pathmanatha Iyer provided a large number of diaspora magazines for digitization. A number of individuals including Mr. Naakeenthirapillai Theepan and Mr. Sivaraamakrishna Sarma gave the books and magazines for Noolaham to digitize as well. These publications were scanned by paying a piece rate to various individuals and then they were added to the Noolaham Digital Library.

This project was implemented in Colombo. Mr. Ganeshanathan Shaseevan coordinated this project by organizing the infrastructure and contributed towards quality control and uploaded the digitized documents on the digital library as well. After digitization, the publications were either returned to the contributors or donated to libraries. Through this project 569 books and magazines were digitized. The details are as follows:

Year	Number of Documents digitized
2008(Books and Magazines)	148
2008 (Diasporas Magazines)	176
2009-January	106
2009-February	139
Total	569

Constrains / Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- Copyright issues were pointed out. The need for written permissions instead of oral permissions was explained.
- Offering scanned images without any fully searchable text would only partially fulfill users' needs, as many (if not all) desire to search all of the texts available to them. It is necessary to consider providing navigation within the digital data through the use of indexing software. However NF provides enough metadata and brief contents for each digitized document.
- Noolaham foundation needs to open special web portals to those digitized collections as well as Marxism, Capitalism and Globalization etc.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

- Getting permission from the relevant parties to digitize documents through proper legal procedure will prevent any legal issues that may arise.
- Once the digital image is created it needs to be made searchable and accessible. The scanned have to be are processed with optical character recognition software to make the full searchable. But there is no such software available in the market which satisfactorily provided the required results in the Tamil language. Thus entries must be created for each title, issue, image, and possibly article to help the users find what they are looking for.
- The past few years have seen a significant expansion of activity in making copies of older runs of magazines available via the internet. It is anticipated that as commercial and public body investment grows, far more will be available soon. It is also likely that there will be far greater ease of access to texts available as a result of the application of sophisticated software. This will significantly increase the ability of researchers to search quickly through huge quantities of printed magazines, which will be a vast improvement over the former manual process.
- Adequate budget and human resources are necessary to enable quality outcome and to finish the project within the proposed time. These two factors should be given importance when we design projects in the future.