

# Noolaham Foundation

## Project Report



<b>Project title</b>	Tamil Times Digitization Project
<b>Project number</b>	NF/PG/2009/0002
<b>Project location</b>	Jaffna, Colombo
<b>Sector</b>	Collection Development, Digital Archive
<b>Implementing agency and contribution</b>	Noolaham Foundation
<b>Grant Agency and Contribution</b>	Noolaham Foundation
<b>Total Budget and Expenditure</b>	Not Recorded
<b>Start and End date</b>	2009
<b>Responsible Stakeholder/s</b>	Volunteers of Noolaham Foundation, Tamil Times publishers, UK.

### Summary:

The Tamil Times Digitization Project was carried out in 2009 to digitize all issues of the *Tamil Times* magazine. *Tamil Times* (ISSN 0266 4488) is an English monthly news magazine that covered on Sri Lankan Tamil issues. It was published in London UK continuously from 1981 to the late 2000s. It provides valuable documentation and analysis of the Tamil struggle and Sri Lankan and International politics during this crucial period.

Through this project which was carried out with the support of the publishers of *Tamil Times*, all 297 issues of *Tamil Times* were digitized and made available online through Noolaham Foundation's digital library at [www.noolaham.org](http://www.noolaham.org). A web portal was also created at the digital library so that the users can access information about the magazines and read the issues easily.

### Introduction and Background

Newspapers and magazines are used as primary sources by researchers for their information needs. Unlike books, periodicals are printed only once and rarely get reprinted. Periodicals are discarded by most libraries and only archiving libraries (such as National Archives) carry copies of them. But they are printed on poor quality newsprint paper which does not last longer. Thus archiving libraries try to copy them for long term preservation and during the last fifty years, the preferred medium for copying newspapers has been microfilm. But since the 1990s, digital copying is preferred by many institutions.

There're so many monthly news magazines published from all over the world about different ethnic groups. Among them the *Tamil Times* was published from London, United Kingdom and distributed internationally. It is an English monthly news magazine focused on Sri Lankan Tamil issues. It was published from 1981 to late 2000s. It provides valuable documentation and analysis about the Tamil struggle and the Sri Lankan and International politics during these crucial times. The First issue of *Tamil Times* (October 1981) covered the burning of the Jaffna Public Library. The last issue (September 2006) included extensive

coverage about Peace Talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. Moreover some of its issues targeted art and cultural events, readers' forum and etc. Tamil Times was published continuously for 25 years and it is a most valuable information source to learn about the Tamil struggle, Sri Lankan politics and International politics of that period.

Noolaham Foundation has been digitizing all publications related to Sri Lankan Tamil communities since 2005. It has given special attention to digitizing periodicals which are archived by only a few institutions. Digitization of periodicals enables long term preservation of the materials and enhanced access to those materials.

**Objective/s and Achievements or Results:**

The objective of this project was to digitize all issues of Tamil Times and make them available online. It was expected that adding all volumes of this magazine will enhance the use of Noolaham's Digital Library collection and cater to the information needs of the researchers and the general public.

Mr. Pathmanatha Iyer played a major role in this collection development project by initiating and supporting this project. High quality digital images of 300dpi in 24bit colour were scanned using Mustek A3 scanner and master copies were archived. Derivative images were converted to the pdf format and made available via the Digital Library.

***Digitized magazines***

<b><i>Publication years</i></b>	<b><i>No of issues</i></b>
1980s	95
1990s	119
2000s	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>

All 297 issues of the *Tamil Times* were digitized through this project and made available online through Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library at [www.noolaham.org](http://www.noolaham.org). Pages were created for each magazine where Table of Contents, Meta data and links to the digitized version were included. These pages increase the visibility of the magazines and enable the reader to search for information inside the magazine. A dedicated portal was also created where all issues of the Tamil Times magazines can be accessed with ease.

**Constrains / Challenges and lesson learned:**

- 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.
- Some publications are not available at the publishers' and community level. There was a threat to abandon their publications and an enormous amount of valuable information

remains uncollected and risks being permanently lost. Re-collecting these publications was a hard job during this project period.

### Suggestions and Recommendations:

- Once the digital image has been created, it needs to be made searchable and accessible. The images are processed with the optical character recognition software to make the magazine text searchable. But there is no such software available in the market which satisfactorily provided the required results in Tamil language. Still the best solution of the system needs to be discussed and metadata must be created for each title, issue, image, and possibly article to help the users find what they are looking for.
- Collecting all issues of the magazine was a good achievement and Noolaham Foundation should continuously strive to collect complete collections in the future as well.
- Noolaham Foundation should collaborate more and more with other publishers and groups in creating digital content to share information and resources.

### Relevant Attachment:

#### **Annexure 1 - The web portal for Tamil Times Monthly Magazines:**

[http://www.noolaham.org/wiki/index.php/%E0%AE%B5%E0%AE%B2%E0%AF%88%E0%AE%B5%E0%AE%BE%E0%AE%9A%E0%AE%B2%E0%AF%8D:Tamil\\_Times](http://www.noolaham.org/wiki/index.php/%E0%AE%B5%E0%AE%B2%E0%AF%88%E0%AE%B5%E0%AE%BE%E0%AE%9A%E0%AE%B2%E0%AF%8D:Tamil_Times)

வலைவாசல்:Tamil Times Share / Save


---

**Tamil Times** தொகு

Tamil Times (ISSN 0266 4488) is an English monthly news magazine focused on Sri Lankan Tamil issues. It was published in London UK continuously from 1981 to late 2000s. It provides valuable documentation and analysis about the Tamil struggle and the Sri Lankan and International politics during these crucial times.

---


**Featured Issue** தொகு



Tamil Times covering the 1983 massacre.

Issue Nov 1983, Issue Dec 1983


**First Issue** தொகு



Issue published in October 1981

Tamil Times 1981.10

**Last Issue** தொகு



The First issue of the Tamil Times (October 1981) covered the burning of Jaffna Library. The last issue (September 2006) included extensive coverage about Peace Talks. Tamil Times was published for 25 continuous years (297 issues) and it is a valuable information source to learn about Tamil struggle, Sri Lankan politics and International politics during that time.