Noolaham Foundation
Project Report

Project title	Sarinihar Digitization Project
Project number	NF/PG/2010/0003
Project location	Colombo
Sector	Collection Development - Ongoing Collection Development, Special Collections
Implementing agencyand contribution	Noolaham Foundation
Grant Agency and Contribution	Noolaham Foundation
Total Budgetand Expenditure	Not Recorded
Start and End date	2010
Responsible Stakeholders	Volunteers of Noolaham Foundation, Sarinihar publishers

Summary

The **Sarinihar Digitization Project** was a collaborative project carried out by Noolaham Foundation and Sarinihar Publishers to digitize the past issues of *Sarinihar* newspaper and magazines in 2010. This was implemented as a collaborative project between the publishers and Noolaham Foundation in 2010. *Sarinihar* focused sharply on issues related to the Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities and the civil war. Sarinihar newspaper contains news articles such as political commentaries, political poetry and stories as well as essays and reports on issues of local and regional importance including issues such as feminism and caste discrimination, illuminating contemporary debates about the Sri Lankan Tamils' liberation war, the effects of the civil war, Sri Lankans' aspirations and anxieties in the war period. The newspaper also disseminated a lot of information on the lives of notable individuals and ancestors. It included photographs, graphics and editorial cartoons. *Sarinihar* publications could be considered as historical documents about the scars created by the war in Sri Lanka. It covered the major political developments that the island witnessed from the 1990s onwards.

A total of 214 *Sarinihar* issues dating from 11.06.1990 to 18.2.2001and four *Sarinihar* magazines were digitized through this project and made available online through Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library www.noolaham.org.Table of contents were manually inputted to enhance the searchability of the content. A web portal was also created at the digital library so that users could access information about the magazines and read the issues easily.

Introduction and Background

Newspapers are loaded with information, but if they are not systematically archived, finding past issues is not that easy. Only a few libraries such as the national archives keep past issues of newspapers but accessing them from various geographical locations is not possible as they are usually not available through interlibrary loan and they are not going to be

reprinted. Even with access to a newspaper, unless the paper has been indexed, searching for the desired information can be a tiresome quest.

Digitization makes such primary information sources available for all and the searchability of digital libraries makes it even easier to access the desired information. Noolaham Foundation has been digitizing all publications related to Sri Lankan Tamil communities since 2005. It has given special attention to digitizing periodicals archived by only a few other institutions. These periodicals are harder to access in the long run. Digitization of periodicals enables long term preservation and enhanced access.

Sarinihar newspaper was started as a monthly newpaper in 1990 and later became a weekly newspaper. It was stopped in 2001. And then it was released again in March 2007 as a magazine on a monthly basis. Their editorial board was exceptionally dedicated, resourceful and had brave journalists who took great personal risks in order to follow closely the ongoing civil war and bring accurate news of it to Sarinihar's readership in a better way than many competing newspapers.

Objective/s and Achievements or Results

The objective of this project was to digitize all available copies of *Sarinihar* and its magazines. It was expected that adding all volumes of this magazine to Noolaham will enhance the use of Noolaham Digital Library and cater to the information needs of researchers and the general public. 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. A dedicated portal was also created where all digitized issues of the *Sarinihar* magazines can be accessed with ease. (Annexure 1).

The available monthly newspaper year wise

Year of publications	No of digitized newspaper
1990	05
1991	07
1992	07
1993	16
1994	28
1995	25
1996	24
1997	25
1998	20
1999	24
2000	26
2001	07
Total	**214**

Totally 214 valuable *Sarinihar* newspapers and 4 magazines were digitized through this project and made available online through Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library at www.noolaham.org. The Table of Contents and other descriptive metadata were indexed for each document so that the users can identify the needed resources and search within the documents easily. A web portal was created as well.

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.

- During the project the project staff faced some difficulties on scanning, because the used A3 size scanner was not enough in size to scan this news paper as a whole. Usually this news papers' middle page was printed on an A2 size broadsheet. When it was scanned by an A3 scanner, page news and pictures that ran up to the middle of the page were broken and appeared onto the following when converted to pdf. Sometimes, viewers might be disappointed due to thi problem.

- Due to the unstable political situation in Sri Lanka some of publications are not available at the publishers' and at the community level and an enormous amount of valuable information in published formats remains uncollected and risks being permanently lost. The recollection of rare publications seemed to be a hard task during this project period.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

- Once the digital image has been created they need to be made searchable and accessible. The images are processed with optical character recognition software to make the newspaper text searchable. But there is no such software available in the market to satisfactorily offer the required results in Tamil. Still a better solution 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.

- Noolaham Foundation should allocate proper funding to buy A2 size flatbed scanners or sophisticated scanners to implement this type of project without any technical interruption.

- The publications left out should be digitized and made available to the Tamil speaking community when resources are available and Noolaham Foundation should find those documents from the Tamil community and community based libraries with the help of its volunteers.

Acknowledgments

Relevant Attachment:

A photograph of the digitized Sarinihar newspaper and Magazine