Project Title	Digitization Project hosted by Jaffna Public Library 2011-2012
Project Number	NF/PG/2011/0004
Project Location	Jaffna, Colombo
Sector	Print Publications Archive - Books
Implementing Agency and Contribution	Noolaham Foundation (NF)
Grant Agency and Contribution	Noolaham Foundation
Total Budget and Expenditure	Not Recorded
Start and End date	2011 - 2012
Responsible Stakeholders	Jaffna Public Library (JPL), Volunteers of Noolaham Foundation

Summary

The **Digitization Project hosted by Jaffna Public Library 2011-2012** was carried out by Noolaham Foundation during the years 2011 and 2012. The objectives of this project were to document and archive the collections related to the Tamil speaking communities held by the Jaffna Public Library. It was a collaborative project undertaken by Noolaham Foundation and the Jaffna Public Library. This project enhanced access to information sources as a vast and diverse range of printed publications were digitized and made available online. The digital copies of publications that came out before 1981 were handed over to the Jaffna Public Library.

Through this project 1840 documents were digitized and most of them were made available on Noolaham Foundation's digital library at www.noolaham.org. It was a significant achievement by Noolaham Foundation as these collections consist of texts on Philosophy and Psychology, Computing and Information Technology, Religion ,Social Sciences such as Sociology, Casteism, Feminism, Politics, Economics, Marxism, Law, Child care, Education, Business, Culture, folklore and Sex, Language and Linguistics such as lexicography, Tamil grammar, Sinhala Language and so on, Science and logic, Indigenous Medicine, Astrology, Agriculture and Cooking, Arts, Sculpture, Music, Cinema, Literature, Literary history, Poems, Prose and Verse, Short Stories, Jokes, Novel, Drama, Children's Literature and history.Most of the documents digitized were made available online for free access and could be downloaded from the user-friendly interface of Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library. This project was a successful initiative and received special appreciation from scholars and the library circles.

Introduction and Background

Noolaham Foundation is a legally registered (GA 2390), non-profit entity, founded to provide enhanced access to information sources and foster knowledge-based development

in Sri Lanka. It maintains an online digital library, facilitates information preservation programs, provides financial assistance and technical guidance for digitization initiatives and actively participates in awareness-raising campaigns. Noolaham Foundation collaborates with various organizations in project work and in sharing expertise. Noolaham Foundation's mission is to build strong relationships with cultural and educational institutions and to recruit and support new organizations.

The Jaffna Public Library is an important library based in Jaffna and it maintains thousands of documents related to Sri Lankan Tamils. This splendid library was built in 1933 and functions under the Jaffna Municipal Council. It had been one of the biggest and finest libraries in Southeast Asia in the 1960-70s, until it was burnt on 31 May 1981 by hooligans. It was one of the most violent examples of book burning in the 20th century and many Tamils outside Jaffna remained unaware of the massive blow to the Tamil heritage caused by the destruction of this precious library. At the time of its destruction, the library had around 97,000 of books and priceless manuscripts, some of which were rare and centuries old and spoke about Jaffna culture. Some of them were personal collections of famous scholars. The only manuscript of Yalpana Vaipava Malai (யாழ்ப்பாண வைபவமாலை) written by a Tamil poet called Mayilvagana Pulavar 1736 AD was destroyed in the fire. In 2001, the rehabilitation of the library was completed with a new structure and new books in place. However, old books and manuscripts were not replaced.

The cultural memory and heritage of the Jaffna Public Library are vital for social and cultural development. Documentation and archiving are keys to the knowledge profile of a community. These activities are important information providers to processes that influence the social and economic development of local communities. Documentation and archiving are also influential in 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. Documenting, preserving and developing all spheres of knowledge related to the Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities is an urgent need in our times. Although it is impossible to fully recover what we have lost, if we act with urgency and skill we will be able to collect at least some documents that the Tamil speaking communities need to read and be familiar with. These factors necessitated digital archiving**.** Therefore Noolaham Foundation's Digital Archive Program identifies, digitizes and makes these works accessible to the wider scholarly community and the public. This particular project was undertaken hand in hand with the communities.

Implementation Procedure

- Noolaham Foundation implemented and managed the project in collaboration with the Jaffna Public Library. The management and running process were controlled by Noolaham Foundation. A transparent implementation process was followed to reduce misunderstanding and avoid conflict, and other short comings.
- For this project Noolaham Foundation established a working unit at the library. The required working space and furniture were provided by the library. Human resources

and technical facilities including a computer and a scanner were contributed by Noolaham Foundation.

- The source materials were reviewed for completeness and usability prior to scanning by NF's staff.
- NF prepared an inventory as a spreadsheet listing describing contents of each document to verify duplicate work and for purposes of tracking and handling. The documents were scanned without inflicting further damage and some documents were left out without being digitized because it was impossible to scan some volumes without damaging them.
- The different phases of the work were distributed between the different locations and different staff in Colombo and Jaffna because of the magnitude of the project.

Objective/s and Achievements or Results:
The project's mission was to document and archive printed collections housed by the Jaffna Public Library and to make them available to all and capacitate communities to engage in knowledge building and learning.

As the collection at Jaffna Public Library was massive, this project took almost two years and an average of 900 documents was added to the Digital Library each year. The digitization was carried out by accessing the collection based on subject classification. Various kinds of 1,840 documents were digitized and indexed on the digital e-library of Noolaham Foundation "www.noolaham.org". These include many personally collected rare documents and this was a massive achievement of this project. In addition, this intervention will also provide researchers and innovators with useful information, and pave the way for the expansion of knowledge among experts.

The digitized documents belonging to periods before 1981 were handed over to the Jaffna Public Library at the NF's 'Panaiyolai' documentation seminar held on 09.09.2012 in Jaffna.

Long-term Sustainability Plan
As mentioned earlier, the library's collection was massive, and thus NF is planning to keep a working unit at the library to archive the upcoming documents. The upcoming documents related to the Tamil speaking communities will be digitized through NF's collection development projects and the digital archive program in the future. The chief librarian has expressed a positive response and has agreed to provide office space and required furniture for the upcoming archiving activities. And NF has its own sustainability mechanism which will ensure that the digital library and digital resources are preserved online in the years to come.

Constrains / Challenges
- Large amount of funds were required to hire human resources, train new staff and to make the required equipment available.
- Using the flat bed scanner for every print publication seemed to be hard because most of the documents were bound with hard board material – usual library binding. Thus the project staff faced some difficulties during the scanning process.

- The type of documents could vary in a variety of ways such as the size of the book, quality of paper, clarity of print, font face used, type of binding etc. Old documents which were delicate and had deteriorated over time needed extra care apart from requiring special routines to process them.
- Noolaham Foundation implemented this project in Colombo and Jaffna. The storage and transfer of the data generated by each center is a major task. The Jaffna center generates tens of GBs of data every day. Since network transfer of such large quantities of data is neither feasible nor economical, it has to be physically moved in Hard Drives or DVDs to Colombo. Pipelining the data within the various phases of the digitization process is also a serious issue.
- Maintaining large amount of digital data on the web for access from anywhere in the world at any time is a huge challenge. Accurate search and quick retrieval of the digital content against user queries is a major research problem.
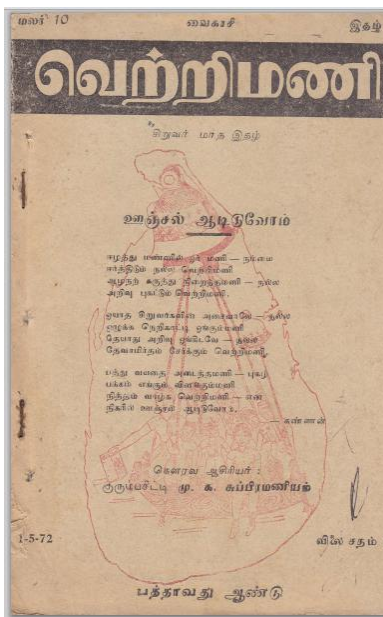
Suggestion and Recommendation

- Noolaham Foundation has to increase its budget to facilitate digital library planning and digitization works. These kinds of work should be in tandem with other related organizations such as libraries and information centers. The collaborating activity will support virtual re-unification of digital library resources.
- Since no commercial OCR is available for Tamil language character recognition, the textual content is not available for these documents. This severely handicaps searching, which is restricted only to the title and keyword level. Special techniques need to be developed to search within the documents.
- The search engines of today work on the principle of keyword matching and perform searches only in one language at a time. With a large corpus of multilingual data is provided along with multilingual summarization and translation tools, a well-directed research effort would be needed to ensure concept- and content-based retrieval of knowledge from across multilingual data.
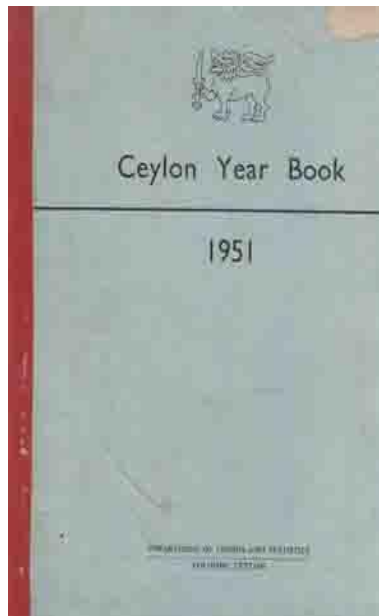
Acknowledgments

Relevant Attachment: Some of the cover pages of digitized documents

'Vetrimani' 01.05.1972

Ceylon Year Book 1951

The Tamil 04.1955