

Noolaham Foundation
Final Report



Project Title	Digitization Workshops for Library Science Students
Project Number	NF/PG/2011/0005
Project Location	Jaffna Sri Lanka
Sector	Lectures, Seminars and Workshops
Implementing agency and contribution	Noolaham Foundation (NF)
Grant Agency and Contribution	Noolaham Foundation (NF)
Total Expenditure	Not Recorded
Project Period	December 2010 – February 2011
Project Beneficiaries	Library science students among Tamil speaking community in Sri Lanka.
Responsible Stakeholders	Volunteers and Staff of Noolaham Foundation, Tamil speaking Scholars and Chinthanaik Koodam, Jaffna.

Summary

The **Digitization Workshops for Library Science Students** was carried out by Noolaham Foundation during late 2010 and early 2011 to strengthen operational infrastructure within the Noolaham Foundation's network and to train Library Science students and Noolaham Foundation's volunteers in digitization methods and digital preservation.

In 2010 and 2011, Noolaham Foundation conducted two digitization workshops for five days with library science students under the title of 'Digitization Workshops for Library Science Students'. These workshops were held from December 2010 to October 2011 at Vannarpannai, Jaffna. These workshops were collaborated with Library Science Students, Chinthanaik Koodam, Jaffna and Center for Women, Jaffna. These workshops were facilitated by Ms. A. Valarmathy, program coordinator of Noolaham Foundation. Also Prof. Samuel Ratnajeewan Herbert Hoole and Prof R. Sivachandarn shared keynotes during the workshops. Approximately 50 Library Science students and volunteers participated in the workshops and were benefited by this project.

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.

Research reveals that students, researchers and general peoples look online first when they need information because of the speed and convenience made available by online sources. Most people often turn to a digital library web site or electronic resources when they need information. People believe the information they find on the Internet is good enough for knowledge building. Millions of Tamil related printed books and manuscripts exist in the world but only a tiny fraction of these are digitized and therefore accessible for research, education, and outreach by downstream users. With other ongoing national (and international) collections digitization initiatives, the need exists to better understand how collections will advance specimen digitization for the 21st century.

Usually library science students have few chances to learn about digital library in their early stage of their studies. Almost all developing countries give importance to manual libraries and studies on it. Also library science studies hardly appear in bachelor degree programs in Sri Lanka. And it might be possible to learn about digital libraries as part of Masters Studies programs abroad. Even if there are programs about digital library, those programs rarely provide practical knowledge to students. Sri Lanka and especially in Jaffna is not exception to this situation. Peoples and scholars from Jaffna have less experience and knowledge of the importance of digital libraries. Hence a more robust community-driven approach to documentation and archiving is important. Then NF has decided to share their works and existing knowledge with library science students who were following library science diploma studies. Also it was best practice for them to learn about digital library and it could be a chance to find knowledge as a full volunteer in library science.

Objectives and Achievements

The objective of the *Digitization Workshops for Library Science Students* Project was to build communities of practice, processes, technologies and standards of archival, library and information sciences through communication, networking and collaboration. Noolaham Foundation offered full-day workshops aimed at library professionals, researchers, and educators to provide basic knowledge and cover prominent issues surrounding digital libraries activities. It is one of the activities of the foundation's collaborative project with a digital library workshop. The rationale for the project was to enhance the relationship between computer science and library and information science in the education of librarians, and the importance of providing internships in working digital library programs.

NF conducted two workshops with library science students who followed a library science diploma course. It was held on 7 and 8 December 2010 and 15, 16 and 17 February 2011. As part of the foundation's objectives, these workshops were conducted by NF for the betterment of the Tamil speaking students. The workshops were attended by approximately 50 participants who were trained by Ms. A. Valarmathy, program coordinator of Noolaham Foundation. These workshops were coordinated by Chinthanaikkoodam along with Noolaham Foundation, and were held at Vannarpannai, Jaffna.

During the workshop after introductions, background, and framing, the workshop sessions focused on following themes tools, databases, portals, digitization and workflows, and research applications and challenges. These sessions included keynote talks, shorter, focused talks about collections, break-out group sessions, open discussion, and wrap-ups. At the end of the workshop, the participants had an open discussion about challenges and “next steps” that can be taken to move forward with coordinated specimen digitization efforts within local Tamil speaking community as well as within the Tamil speaking Diaspora community.

Results from the post-discussion evaluation indicated that participants felt the issues related to digitization were critical and relevant. While participants were generally satisfied with the workshop, the surveys also highlighted the need for continued activities that promote digitization. Professor R. Sivachandran’s welcome address and news about the event were published at Thenee, Thesamnet and Ponguthamil websites and a local newspaper as well. NF believes this project will provide wide knowledge and awareness to students on the digital archive and digital preservation.

Constrains / Challenges

- The biggest challenge faced by NF during the project period was that knowledge and awareness among students and community was poor on digitization and digital library.
- Particular library science students were unsure to work on this prospective in the future because in Sri Lanka most of the libraries have in manual archives. It might be a challenge Tamils who are not proficient in English.
- Noolaham foundation expected to work with these students in the future. But it’s unsure to work with them.
- These seminars facilitated by identified resource persons among Sri Lankan Tamils and Noolaham Foundation staff. Some participants were of the view that NF should facilitate these seminars and workshops by having various resource persons from other communities in Sri Lankan.
- Due to lack of awareness, most of the library science students negatively perceive these free seminars, and fail to aspire to the actual value of these free seminars. This was observed among the students as well.
- Members of the Organizing Committee faced difficulties to get this project arranged on time and to gather participants.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- When foundation was going to organize a seminar among the educated likes library science student, foundation could collaborate with various resource persons not only from Sri Lankan Tamils. It will make various kinds of interest to volunteers to continue their activities successfully with NF.
- Noolaham foundation should collaborate with another digital library to conduct these seminars.

Acknowledgements

Noolaham Foundation would like to thank all facilitators, resource persons and participants for joining us in these events despite their busy schedule and Noolaham foundation is very proud of their keen interest and dedication towards our society. NF hopes to collaborate with them in more and more events in the future.

Relevant attachments

During the workshop



