

Preserving national heritage as a legal deposit: what should be preserved?

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Libraries are the centers of knowledge. The main concept behind any library is to produce high-quality, well informative citizens to the society for its well being. To achieve this concept libraries have to identify, collect, organize, preserve and disseminate recorded knowledge in a country as a National Heritage.

Legal deposit is a statutory obligation which requires that any organization or individual producing any type of documentation in multiple copies, be obliged to deposit one or more copies with a recognized national institution. The purpose is to collect a nation's published output systematically and comprehensively, so that these publications are available to current and future generations of researchers.

Main objective of this research is to investigate the existing status of legal deposit in Sri Lanka and make recommendations to the authority to construct a Law to protect this National Heritage. This paper focuses only on the current status of various types and media of publications in Sri Lanka.

Presently, number of regulations exists relevant to Legal Deposit which have been issued since colonial period. Unfortunately the main purposes of these regulations are not targeted to preserve collectively the National Heritage of Sri Lanka but with different purposes such as political, governmental and institutional objectives.

With the emerging technologies, documents as well as performance are published in different media in various formats such as print and non-print materials. However, with the present regulations all these media are not fully covered. It caters only for a segment of publications. Lack of a statutory requirement to preserve this content is a threat.

Therefore it is worthwhile to make recommendations to establish a law related to all media to preserve our National Heritage. To finalize recommendations it requires negotiations with legal deposit libraries and the publishers. It has to cater for the materials available now and future.

Key words: Legal deposit, National heritage, Non – print materials, Sri Lanka, Libraries

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