

Establishment of a national preservation laboratory

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka has a history of more than 2500 years. According to historical legends earliest settlers of the country had arrived in 365 BC. Buddhism was established in 240 BC. The immediate impact of establishing Buddhism had inculcated the writing capabilities and as a result Sri Lanka now has a very rich collection of books. Most of these collections are kept in the Department of National Archives, Museum Library and University of Peradeniya Library.

Preservation and conservation of heritage documents are the major responsibility of the National Archives Department. National Museum Library and the National Library and Documentation Centre in the country. Most documents in ancient time are recorded on palm leaves. In addition to this some rare documents are published in printed forms. Therefore, it is high time to start a national programme on conservation and preservation of materials.

At present there is no collaborative project for the conservation of heritage documents. Although there are three national institutes in the county namely the National Museum Library, the Department of National Archives and the National Library and Documentation Center, all of them are working separately as isolated institutions. This situation is a major drawback to the development of conservation and preservation activities in the country.

It is necessary to create a laboratory for the preservation of the national heritage of the country. This centre should be located within the NLDC premises. The principal reason is that NLDC is one of the pioneering organizations in the field of preservation of library materials in the country. The NLDC possesses adequate space, human resources and equipment when compared to other institutions. This laboratory has to be funded by the following three institutions.

- The National Archives Dept.
- The Museum Library
- The NLDC

This presentation discusses the starting of a collaborative project for the building of a National Heritage Conservation and Preservation Laboratory in Sri Lanka.

Key words: Conservation and Preservation, National Library, Department of National Archives, National Museum Library