

History and Development of Public Libraries in Sri Lanka: From 19th Century to the Present Day



R.A.A.S. Ranaweera

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the history of public libraries in Sri Lanka. The study based on the archival data gathered from various sources institutes related to the public libraries in Sri Lanka.

It was found that the modern library system of the country started with the establishment of 'Subscription Libraries' by the British in the early 19th century to fulfill information and leisure reading needs of expatriates.

The system later developed into a public library system in response to demands of the English educated general public of the country. Towards the final quarter of the century, a well-spread network of public libraries had been functioning in the country, in almost all the main cities.

The post-independence period saw further development of public libraries in Sri Lanka due to the factors such as free education and the acceptance of Sinhala as an official language.

At present there is a wide spread network of public libraries in Sri Lanka attached to local government authorities. There is a quantitative development of public libraries can be seen over the period. However the qualitative development is not satisfactory due to various reasons. In order to strengthen the service of public libraries certain structural changes are to be made in policy-making level.