Current Status & Future Challenges of the Public Libraries in Sri Lanka for the Pattern Change: a Case Study

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Abstract

This study focuses on the current status future challengers of the public libraries where located in the Polonnaruwa district in the North Central Province (NCP) in Sri Lanka with the perspectives of its properties, services, users and the staffs and latter part of the discusses the future challenges with the pattern change of the library professionals' perspective. The questionnaire and interview were used as instruments in this study to collect data. The study revealed that the public libraries of Polonnaruwa District are not in the correct position by collection development. It also pointed out the most of the libraries are administered by the non-professional staffs. The major challenger was examined that library staffs are not in the good satisfaction level about their promotion mechanism. Finally it was reviled that the need of deep study about their problems strategically and address them quickly to uplift the service to the up to date level.

Keywords: Public libraries, Polonaruwa district, Public librarians, Collection development, ICT

Introduction

Generally, public libraries are used by the various communities who come from the infants' age level up to the elders' age levels. Therefore, they play a vital role as the gateways to knowledge for any kind of age groups especially in the metropolitan and rural communities of the worldwide. When comparing to the international scenario, the public library service of Sri Lanka, is still in the conventional mode and even though, some of them are also running by the non-library professionals such as library servant or road labors due to the lukewarm of the local government authorities. Sri Lanka has more than 1500 public libraries in different categories and only few users of large scale libraries which located around Western province and Southern are utilized both conventional and modern facilities. However in several other governments of the Asian countries, pay a huge attention to improve the both traditional and modern services of their public libraries by introducing the various user services such as kindle reading, open reading, Internet café and etc., as they are daily utilized by the various communities who come from small age groups up to old age groups.

This paper analytically evaluates the current status of the public libraries where located in the Polonnaruwa district in the North Central Province (NCP) in Sri Lanka with the perspectives of its properties, services, users and the staffs and latter part of the paper it discussed the future

challenges with the pattern change of the library professionals' perspective.

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to explore the future challenges of public librarians in Polonnaruwa District and the rest of objectives were evaluating the status of the existing collections and developments of IT infrastructure.

Methodology

For this investigation, the case study method was applied and a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) was used as a tool for data collection. The entire population of the study was 56 public libraries in NCP were listed on a statistical handbook on libraries in Sri Lanka, 2018 and 22 libraries among the population including Polonnaruwa districts were intentionally selected as a sample of the study. Further to that, few observations have done in the district and several interviews have conducted with the library officers.

Results and Discussions

Current Situation of the Libraries

First part of the study it was examined the current status of the libraries throughout the several aspects and some of them are tabled as follows;
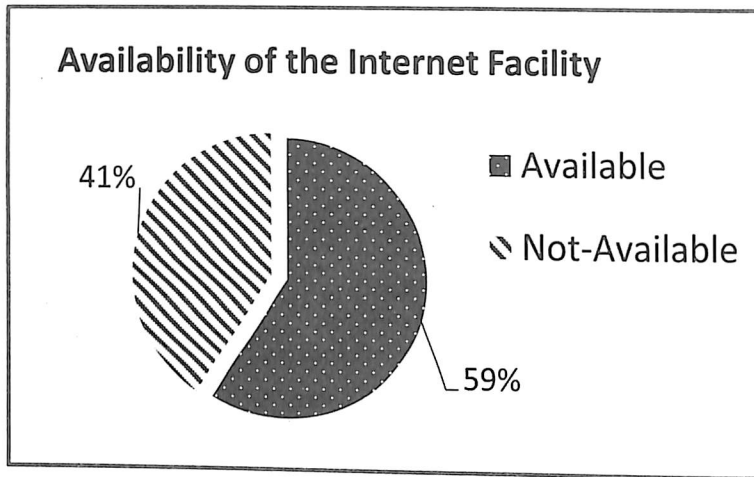
Distribution according to the size of the collection

Table 1: Size of the Collection

Size of the Collection	No of Libraries
Books 5000 <	4
Books 5000-10000	9
Books 10000-15000	6
Books 15000>	3
Total	22

Table 1 indicates that majority of the libraries (9) are housed 5000 to 10000 reading materials while second highest libraries are housed more than that amount (10000-15000). It shows that few libraries (4) are with very less books (5000).

Availability of the Internet Facility

Figure 1: *Availability of the Internet Facility*

Figure 1 clearly shows that 59% of the libraries have able to give Internet access to their users and 41% of libraries have not able to provide such facility in their libraries due to various issues.

Future Requirements of the Library Staff

At the latter part of the study it was evaluated the future requirements of the librarians' under several needs are tabled as follows (Please refer table 2);

The table 2 clearly indicates that librarians' future requirements are very focus to their librarianship and it indicates that they have identified the future users' requirements by experience. Majority of the librarians (20) are requested to enhance the training facilities to increase their IT knowledge and second highest (18) has requested to enhance the training facilities to increase their future librarianship knowledge.

Table 2: Future Requirements of the library staff

Requirement	No (n=22)
Enhance training facility to increase the IT knowledge	20
Enhance training facility to increase the Collection Development knowledge	14
Enhance training facility to increase the Librarianship knowledge	18
Enhance training facility to increase the user satisfaction	13
Enhance training facility to increase the Cataloging & Classification knowledge	10

Conclusion and Suggestions

The study concluded that the status of the public libraries of Polonnaruwa district is not in the good position by collection development and the local authorities must pay more attention to develop them in many ways such as allocate more funds to enhance the collection and provide more infrastructure facilities to increase the internet access. Nevertheless it was concluded that most of the libraries are administrated by the non-professional staffs and it was highlighted the quick recruitment process should start. When discussing the future challenges it was found that library staffs of the sample are not in the good satisfaction about their job status and requested an attention about a proper promotion mechanism. Finally it was proved that library staffs of the sample are ready to change the pattern and face to the future challengers by enhancing their knowledge about various aspects if the local & central government body help them. Therefore, we supposed to held a deep study about their problems strategically and address them quickly to uplift the service to the up to date level.

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