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# LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE COLOMBO MUNICIPALITY

## - A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

GALHENAGE DON AMARASIRI

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# DECLARATION

The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of prof. Nandasena Ratnapala and Mr. H.M. Guneratne Banda and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any University or any other institution for another Degree/Deploma.

G.D.Amarasiri

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boards which deal with specialized subjects areas. For example, the library of the Police Department should have the library material specially on subjects like crime, criminology, law etc. Foreign mission libraries are maintained by various foreign diplomatic institutions.

The study of social role played by these different categories of libraries is very important. Libraries are closely associated not only with the intellectual structure of society but also changes in the organisational structure of society. Lowell Martin's article on the library as a social institution remains the best sociological interpretation of the library explicitly in terms of currently accepted social science concepts. The library development is closely related to the social development in general and each facilitates and shapes the other. One of the most interesting and useful outgrowth of French Sociologist Emil Durkhim's general orientation has been the development of the sociological interpretation of knowledge. The libraries are used as agencies for diffusion of cultural products either from one culture to another or from one social class to another within the same culture.

The interpretation of the library as a social institution has centered around the public library because the public library serves a wide public and also the association with political participation. Libraries should adapt themselves genuinely to the requirements of various sub cultures so that they would find their needs. A significant impediment to change in librarianship is the low level of development in adult education and child education.

The reading habit of readers who use these libraries was also studied. The reading behaviours, reading needs and obstacles for reading of various groups of readers such as children, school students, adults, blind and visual handicapped persons etc., were widely

discussed. Problems of reading, different aspects of reading such as reading for continuing education, professional reading were also studied.

In this study a survey was conducted on the reading behaviour of the readers in the Colombo Municipality areas. In this survey, different aspects of reading habit such as reading of books, library usage reasons for not using libraries, library membership, the ways of spending leisure, personal libraries, reading habit of other family members, frequency of reading, readings hours, sources of obtaining books for reading, objectives of reading, subject areas of reading, duration of reading at a time, sources of acquisition of social knowledge on current events, sections of interests in newspapers, obstacles for reading were investigated.

Important facts regarding the reading behaviour were discovered through this survey regarding the above mentioned aspects of reading behaviour. It was found that social-cultural factors have effected the reading behaviour of the readers in the Colombo Municipality area. The competitive life style of the urban people has tremendous influence on the reading behaviour. Under the present economic situation everyone has to be engaged in an employment for their living. Therefore the time they have for reading is very little. These socio-economic factor have greatly influenced the reading behaviour of the people.

## Objective of the study

## Main objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate the social forces sharpening the reading habit of the readers in the Colombo Municipality area.

### Other Objectives

- To study historical background of the library service in Sri Lanka.
- To make a classification of libraries in the Colombo Municipality area.
- To study the social role of these libraries.

### Methodology

The exploratory data analysis method is used in this study. Respondents were selected from the Colombo Municipality area using a random sample. The main data collecting technique was the questionnaire. Questionnaires were given to 140 respondents. The data acquired through the questionnaire was analysed and presented in the analytical part of this thesis. In the presentation of results, statistical tables have been used. It was possible to come to sound conclusions through the results of the questionnaire survey. The history of library service in Sri Lanka, sociological interpretations of libraries by various scholars were studied through written records. Written records include books, reports, directories, journal articles and annual reports. Encyclopaedias, glossaries theses and dissertations, indexes, conference and seminar papers, electronic media like CD-ROM, and internet. In addition many libraries in the

Colombo municipality area were personally visited to observe and collect data postgraduate institutes, universities are some of the institutes personally visited.

**Review of Related Literature**

Choudhury, and Padhee, (1993) report result of a questionnaire survey of the reading habit and interests of 200 undergraduate students in Rourkela College, India. The objectives were to : find out the reading interests of the students; assess the relative priority of those interests; ascertain the role played by the college library in promoting and improving reading habits by providing proper facilities; reveal how far the college library helps in the effective use of the library; and suggest appropriate measures for the promotion of good reading habit.

Chandler (1976) has conducted a research on books and reading in society in the United Kingdom. The report of the National Libraries Committee was distinguished by a number of important surveys of the national libraries which are to be linked together in the new British Library. An analysis of readers application slips at the British Museum Library, a survey of loan requests from the National Central Library, a survey of issues from the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, and a readership survey of the National Reference Library of Science and Invention find the Science Museum Library. These surveys are representative of the many surveys of the use of libraries which are necessary for forward planning.

Tventera (1976) has studied the readers and readers interests in Norway. Eilert Sundt is one of the leading sociologists. He worked first and foremost among the so-called lower class of society-peasants, workers, and craftsman, sailors and fisherman. In many books of a

demographic-ethnological character. he analysed the social life of the people - their ways of living their relation to food, to alcoholic beverages. to cleanliness. to sex and books and reading. We can learn much from Eilert Sundt. Most important is that we should not isolate the study of books and reading but integrate them into the broader social picture. He concentrated his investigations on the lower classes only. Therefore, we cannot draw broad conclusions from his study.

Itvan Kamras (1976) has discussed the reading habit research in Hungary. The central statistical survey of the central statistical office finally established that 38 percent of readers read at least one book in a quarter of year. The second census of readers which was taken by the group of market Research of the Association of Hungarian publishers and Booksellers as part of a, major representative survey showed that some 20 percent were not accounted for by the first census clearly shows that the number of regular readers is comparatively small

Kiribage, (1994) describes how active readers are created and how children need to be guided to realise what satisfaction and advantage are to be found in books. He discusses some of the factors that influence the development of a reader. Identifies stages in the development of reading and emphasises the importance of the reading environment. He also discusses the 4 attributes which distinguish readers from non-readers: literacy; access; environmental conditions; and time to read.

Numkwen, (1994) examines the educational, economic and social factors that have led to the lack of reading habit among Nigerians. The average Nigerian only reads to pass examinations. He argues that the absence of a reading culture in Nigeria inhibits library development He

makes recommendations to helps to fight illiteracy and instil the reading habit in Nigerians and discusses the role of librarians, libraries and publishing in this process.

Piyadasa (1985) has studied the development of library service in Sri Lanka from the ancient time to the present day era. In his study he has concentrated on the ancient library system in Sri Lanka mainly the monastic libraries, ancient bibliographical methods and the gradual development of the public library system. He has also studied the establishment of various institutions related to the library service in Sri Lanka like Museum Department and the Museum Library, National Archives, Sri Lanka Library Association and the Sri Lanka National Library services Board. His study is important as a historical study of the library service in Sri Lanka.

Ranasinghe (1994) has studied the Sri Lanka National Bibliography in terms of historical and critical viewpoints. The objective of the study is to identify the strengths and weakness of the Sri Lanka National Bibliography as a selection, cataloguing and reference tool. The method of analysis involved the examination of published as well as archival material. A random sample drawn from the issues of the Sri Lanka National Bibliography is a natural extension of a recorded bibliographical tradition started in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The finding s of the study leads to the formation of a number of proposals that envisage the future development of Sri Lanka National Bibliography as a more effective national bibliographical tool.

Cornish (1992) has studied the changing role of the national library in the new information environment. He has studied the changing role of the various aspects of national libraries.

He has pointed out that national libraries are facing great changes and need to be re-examined their role in the new information environment in which they find themselves.

Ranasinghe, S H IS (1989) has studied the resource sharing among Sri Lankan Libraries. She has studied the development and growth of libraries in Sri Lanka, the present library system in Sri Lanka, the problems of existing library situation in Sri Lanka , existing resource sharing systems among major libraries in Sri Lanka and problems and methods of implementation of resource sharing in Sri Lanka. She concluded that the main problems relating to existing library situation are : lack of a national policy on information and libraries, lack of sufficient tends, lack of qualified staff, insufficiency of local publications, lack of technical resources and absence of adequate legislation

Gurguson (1992) has discussed the socio- economic and management constraint faced by national libraries today. Problems regarding values and attitudes towards national libraries, weaknesses of internal and external environments of national libraries, problems in the identification of the mission of the national libraries, lack of awareness about the national library concept etc. As a developing country, Sri Lanka also is facing similar problems. He has concluded that effective strategic planning is one certain way of minimising the effects of uncertainty and change.

Fernando (1991) has discussed the reading facilities for the blind and visually handicapped. The estimated population of the country in 1989 was 16.806,000 and the total number of blind persons in the country was estimated to be around, 122,700. Prominent among the social welfare institutions which are concerned primarily with the prevention of blindness, usual impairment and primary eye care are the Helen Keller international Sri Lanka,

Sarvodaya National Movement and Sri Lanka Council for the blind. The institutions involved in library services to the blind and visually handicapped are the Sri Lanka Council for the blind, Colombo Public Library and the school for the blind at Ratmalana.

**Hypotheses**

On the basis of the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were drawn.

(1) Majority of the respondents do not read books.

(2) Majority of the respondents do not use libraries.

(3) The major reason for not using libraries is lack of time.

(4) The objectives of the reading of the majority of the respondents is the acquisition of knowledge.

(5) Newspaper is the main source of acquisition of social knowledge on current events.

(6) The main obstacle for reading is the behaviour of other family members.

**Significance of the study**

Only few research studies on the reading habit have been conducted in Sri Lanka. None of the studies already conducted has concentrated on the social aspect of reading behaviour. Also no one has conducted a sociological study on the library service in the Colombo municipality area. This study aims to provide some guide lines to the top level policy makers on how to over come problems of reading. This study will also be helpful to those who conduct further- research on this subject. This study will also be useful to librarians and library science students in their further education.

**Definition of terms**

**Audio Visual materials** – The term used for aids to teaching through ear and eye, such as phonograph records, slides and motion-picture films. 1

**Browsing** – Describing the investigation, without design the contents of a collection of books or documents. 2

**Cultural Transmission** - Refers to the process by which accumulated culture is passed down, by both formal and informal methods from generation to Generation through learning of the way of acting thinking and feeling a culture. 3

**Culture** -- The term used for the human creation and use of symbols and artifacts Culture may be taken as constituting the "way of life" of an entire society, and this will include codes of manners, dress,' language, rituals, norms of behaviour. 4

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