



**Dr. (Ms) Nayana Wijayasundara**

**Keynote Speech.....**

Greetings from Sri Lanka! *Ayubowan*- which means „may you live long’ as Sri Lankans greet anytime of the day!

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the organizing committee for inviting me to the conference on web-based library and information services in academic libraries. I am honored to be here to deliver my speech to this august gathering.

Today’s conference theme is “Web-based library and information services in academic libraries”. I’m sure that there will be many research papers and discussions on that topic are ready for today’s proceedings. Thus, I thought of bringing out certain concepts from our Sri Lankan university system generally, not specifically on web-based services. Let me introduce you to the

**“Recent Changes and Developments in Sri Lankan Academic Libraries”**

Sri Lankan university libraries have experienced a tremendous evolution towards modernization during the last few years. These transformations have come up with additional dimensions beyond excellent management, technical embracement, myriad organizational skills and efficient collection development.

Appearance of a library counts a lot. If your library looks worn out- doesn’t confuse this with the term old-actually we need to preserve old buildings as they are the symbols of our culture and heritage – worn out library can be more easily dismissed as non-essential. We need to maintain the physical environment of the library by investing in upgrades, painting walls with matching colours, sometimes with theme colours of the university. Providing attractive furnishing and keeping them clean and tidy including the surroundings are very essential. Appropriate colours, fabrics and a nice finish can also help a space stand the best of time. It doesn’t matter whether your Library is huge or small. Welcoming, appealing library is not an option. It is a requirement.

Introducing my own university library, Library of University of Sri Jaywardenepura (USJP), the building is nearly 35 years old. It badly needed colour washing and repair. Renovation was carried out phase by phase giving minimal disturbance to our clients. We made the main counter very attractive as it is the first sight to any person who enters the library. We wanted

to make the place welcoming. If someone walks further into the library from the gate at side of the counter, a spacious lobby can be found. Ambiance is important because when someone walks into a space, it immediately generates an impression from the space.

We always look for attractive and multifunctional furniture. Instead of just producing same furniture items we already have, we should give innovative design ideas to furniture suppliers and get the best furniture to fit our needs.

READ shaped book rack was designed to house “Just – returned” books. This 6 feet height and 16 1/2 feet long letter formation rack gives an elegant look to the library. It is visible to the far end of the main entrance. Knowing the fact that, majority of “Just – returned” books are in high demand and frequently circulated, our library customers have a habit of browsing the books in this rack. On the other hand, those who are new to the system, just walk in there to see what it is. With time they also get familiar to this.

Triangular shaped computer tables are specially designed for the Interactive Study Area of our library. Made out of steel and wood, these tables serve the purpose of changing the area to suit with different purposes by arranging the tables in various ways. When we conduct sessions for students, we arrange those in rows in single or in pairs. When it is organized for learning commons 3 units together, 4 units together, 5 units facing inside or outside can be arranged. These tables can be moved very easily as they are made with caster wheels.

Gadget corner is another element designed, which facilitates using computers for a short period of time while standing. Polystyrene cover is decorated with a specially designed sticker, and 2 computers are kept side by side and two users can stand face to face and use the computers. Kiosk is another gadget we introduced to our library. It is provided to browse the OPAC and floor plans of library with touch screen facility. The upper and lower parts of the screen are allocated for screening library notices and sometimes certain video clips related to nature or history. They are previously uploaded and automatically run throughout the day.

In addition we have provided attractive reading promotion library posters to give a new look to the library. Most of the university libraries have developed their Institutional Repositories (IRs). Publications done by the own university staff is collected in their IR. Going beyond a future step USJP library has developed its IR named as Scholar Bank depositing university full-text theses, convocation speeches, newspaper clippings and other creative works like lyrics of songs written by our professors in music/arts.

In order to increase the efficiency of housekeeping functions of the library, and to give a better service, Sri Lankan university libraries started automation process in early 1990's using commercial packages like Libsys, Alice for windows, Libsult etc. With the evolution of open source software, IT experts among the library professionals looked for the possibility of application of open source integrated library management software into our libraries. At present 11 libraries out of 15 public universities use KOHA open source software for their catalogue maintenance and circulation functions. Our Library catalogue was on Alice for windows for about 11 years and moved to KOHA in 2014. The main advantage of this move was not only saving the huge annual maintenance cost, but we were able to enter our

catalogue entries without transliterating Sinhala/Tamil titles of books because KOHA supports not only English characters, but it supports characters of our own languages. This was a tremendous move, as I see, because transliteration according to the existing standards caused many problems for our common customers as most of them do not know the transliteration standards. E.g. „tha’ sound in Sinhala has to be written as „ta’ when transliterated, whereas „ta’ sound is also transliterated in the same way. So, when reading out transliterated titles, many customers get confused whether it is „tha’ or „ta’ as both are transliterated as „ta’. At the same time, we were able to provide renewing and reservation of items remotely for our customers.

Sri Lankan universities embarked in providing electronic database access services in late 1990’s with the generous support of SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency). Under a special project of SIDA, few scholarly electronic databases were provided through INASP (International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications) to universities and research institutions in Sri Lanka. Later, several universities subscribed to additional electronic databases depending on their fund availability. Access to HINARI was granted through WHO for the Medical Faculty communities. With time, electronic database providers reduced or restricted their service provision to Sri Lanka through these projects as they might have foreseen market place in Sri Lanka though it may be a very small segment. How did we face this scenario? All of the university libraries got together and formed a consortium in 2013. We invited experts even from India, who had worked towards successful consortia. We studied different models of consortia. Finally, we came up with a good model and formed Consortium of Sri Lankan Academic Libraries (CONSAL) keeping UGC, Sri Lanka, as the apex body. In 2014, we were able to get access to 5 e-databases through CONSAL and funds were provided through UGC. In order to select e-databases which were best fit for the requirements of all the universities, preliminary surveys were done by each university librarian, and data was compiled by the Librarian, University of Colombo. With hard work done by the working committee of CONSAL by negotiating with vendors, we were able to get reasonable pricing models for each and every e-database we subscribed. Each year renewal of subscription totally depends on usage. I am very proud to announce that my university has the highest Usage of CONSAL provided databases among all the universities in Sri Lanka. The secret behind this is not anything other than marketing.

Marketing of library services is another vital area. In Sri Lankan university libraries, we use formal as well as informal marketing strategies. Word-of-mouth is the most powerful and efficient strategy. Apart from the Library Committee, librarian is a member of the Senate and all faculty boards are represented by the librarian or nominated representative. This gives an opportunity to voicing and submitting memos related to library matters to the members. In addition, Librarian is a member of the university Senate, Research Council, Deans’ Committee, IT Committee, Strategic planning committee and other main committees with slight variations from university to university.

Providing remote access to the library e-resources is another remarkable development achieved by some of university libraries. Remote access facility is very essential in the present scenario as many academics prefer doing their literature searches on their research

staying at home after work. This service is restricted to their university email username and password, which is used to make sure that they do not share it with another person unlike providing common username and password to all customers.

Collaboration with faculties is another important aspect that we give emphasis. Information Literacy sessions, statistical analysis sessions are conducted by librarians in collaboration with the faculties. Collection development is supported by the relevant faculty by recommending required resources. Collaboration work extends to conduct research, joint publications, and librarians serving editorial boards. For example USJP Librarian is the co-editor-in-chief for the tri annual university newsletter and the executive editor of Vidyodaya Journal of Science and Vidyodaya Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences. In addition, librarians serve as reviewers of journal articles, conference proceedings of other faculties.

Another recent development in Sri Lankan university libraries is laptop lending service. Initiated by USJP library, now this is popular among other university libraries as well. Students who cannot afford a laptop on their own are benefitted by this service. Borrowed laptops can be used inside the library, as the whole library is covered with Wi-Fi facility. Providing Wi-Fi facility is another development we saw in the past few years. Customers can connect their own devices to the Internet via this Wi-Fi facility. Our library has also provided a SMS-alert service. Those who want to get connected with this alert service need to register their mobile number with our system. Library notices, upcoming events, new additions are directed through this SMS alert service.

We do have another attractive area in the library called English Learning Zone (ELZ). This area is designed with comfortable eye-catching seating facilities and adjustable revolving racks. This ELZ is designated for learning English and housed with simple English story books and grammar books. We conduct programs for first year students in this section collaborating with the university's English Language Teaching Unit.

Providing security to library properties as well as for library patrons should be introduced in libraries. We are in the process of accompanying books with RFID (Radio frequency Identification) tags and tattle tapes. RFID tags are for storing data and used for circulation purposes. Tattle tapes are used for detecting unauthorized movements of library materials from the library. Security gates set up at the exit point detect and alarm any material containing de-magnetized tattle tape strips if taken through that point. Further inside the library, security surveillance system is in operation to minimize thefts and mutilation of library material, and for the safety of our patrons and library staff. These cameras are located to cover many areas in the library including entry and exit points.

Token operated coffee/tea machines are installed inside the library in common areas to cater refreshments needs of the library customers. This helps us to attract more patrons to the library as some of them visit the library just to have a cup of hot coffee/tea. This was introduced according to the popular and growing concept of „fast-casual’ in restaurants.

Sri Lankan universities have taken up the challenge of fulfilling 100% document delivery requests made by their customers. Extending the existing ILL (Inter Library Loan) service to

CONSAL, libraries have the facility of getting down journal articles through BLDS (British Library Document Services). Cost of BLDS articles is born by a grant provided by UGC, and the service is coordinated by the University of Colombo. This service is very speedy as it takes only the time of sending and receiving emails and the customers, specially university academics are very happy about this service.

Outreach services are another emerging category of library services of Sri Lankan university libraries. This outreach services extend to schools, temples, libraries in other sectors and associations in various forms like storytelling to children, supporting to organize their library collections etc. University of Moratuwa is deeply engaged with outreach services.

Establishing research support units in libraries is another trend in Sri Lanka. As most of the universities work towards enriching the research culture in the universities, libraries need to support in achieving this status. USJP library's research support unit is a very good example for this as it provides one-to-one sessions on literature search, prevention of plagiarism, using referencing software, citation styles and sometime using of statistical software packages. It also extends to providing the service of recommending good journals for academics to do their publications by avoiding predatory journals, obtaining ISSN and ISBN for university publications, supporting those publications to index in relevant indexing services and explaining the advantages of open access publications.

You may wonder why I'm emphasizing on these small changes or developments in a time like this where people talk about delivery of books using drones, creating maker spaces in libraries and I'm sure the above explained services and products may not be new to library professionals like you. What I want to emphasize is that to develop our services we cannot depend only on fund availability. It needs some other dimensions as I mentioned at the very beginning; passion, creativity, thinking differently are a few to mention. As librarians; you need to be the change agents of your organization. We need to make our patrons happy and meaningful. We all want happiness. We all seek for meaning in our lives. They need not be mutually exclusive. Library user pursues both of these being in the library. Therefore, we need to make our library in a way that everyone enjoys their favorite spot!

Thank you very much for listening patiently. Again I would like to express my sincere thanks to the organizing committee for inviting me to this conference and providing all facilities. To conclude, I would like to convey my best wishes to all the paper presenters and participants. Have a fruitful and wonderful session ahead! I wish the deliberations of the conference a grand success.

Thanks a lot

**Dr. (Ms) Nayana Wijayasundara, PhD**

Librarian, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Sri Lanka

President, University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka

President-Elect, Sri Lanka Library Association Member, Board of Management of NILIS,

University of Colombo