

Colombo Museum Library Palm Leaf Manuscripts Collection: A Glance from Intangible Cultural Heritage and Library and Information Management Perspectives

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Abstract

Palm leaf manuscripts are very rare and treasure library material, which contain vivid knowledge, art and culture in the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) particularly in Sri Lanka. This paper focuses the Colombo Museum library Palm Leaf Manuscripts Collection (PLMC). The principal purpose of the study is to examine the Palm leaf manuscript collection in Intangible Cultural Heritage and Library and Information Management Perspectives. The other objectives are to explore how the collection is organized, to examine how they preserve, conserve their collection and to identify the way they provide user services using this important collection.

Method of the study is an explorative survey of the Palm leaf collection and the data collected through site visit, discussion followed by the observation both participatory and non-participatory. It was realized that very significant and diversified imbedded knowledge contained in the PLMC. The knowledge variations are particularly the religion and the art, craft, tradition, culture, science, medicine, agriculture, myths and mythologies. The collection is related to indigenous knowledge too. The collection is arranged separately and when analyzing in ICH perspective it can conclude that, there are entities that were found to be related ICH domain. When peruse the collection in Library and Information Science perspective, it was revealed that preservation and conservation is a prime requirement and therefore digitization has to be done with a help of an organization like National Science Foundation. Some entities are available in printed book forms too. User serves provided on request basis and they are able to use at the Museum library premises. The vision of the library “ As an illustrious nation, the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage Inherited from the past, and its presentation in a more fruitful fashion for future Generations in a manner that successfully addresses the challenges of globalization” and therefore the policy makers, planners and the top management including the Ministry concerned should realize the importance of this collection and take immediate steps for policy decisions for preservation and conservation of the collection. The time has come to stress and pay much attention to the area of ICH and how libraries could be used in managing these important collections for the use of future generations.

Keywords: *Intangible Cultural Heritage, Indigenous knowledge, Museum libraries, Palm Leaf Manuscripts, Information Management*