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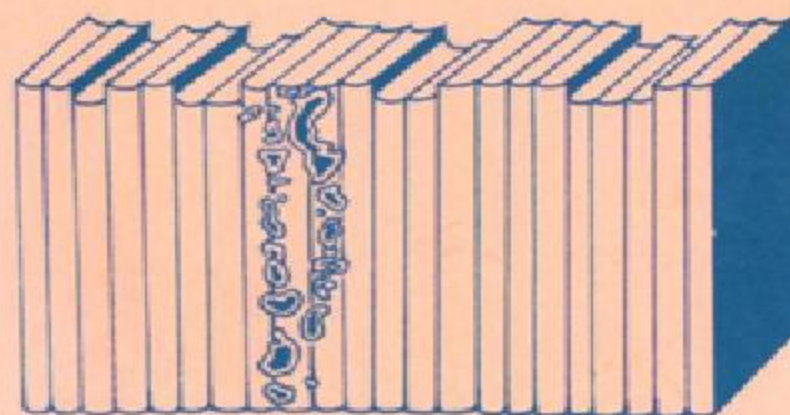
No. 3

## LIBRARY MAGAZINE

The Library Magazine of Maldives Library Association  
(A network for Maldives Library Development)

Vol. 1

No. 3



# Library News

Editor ..... **Habiba Hussain Habib**

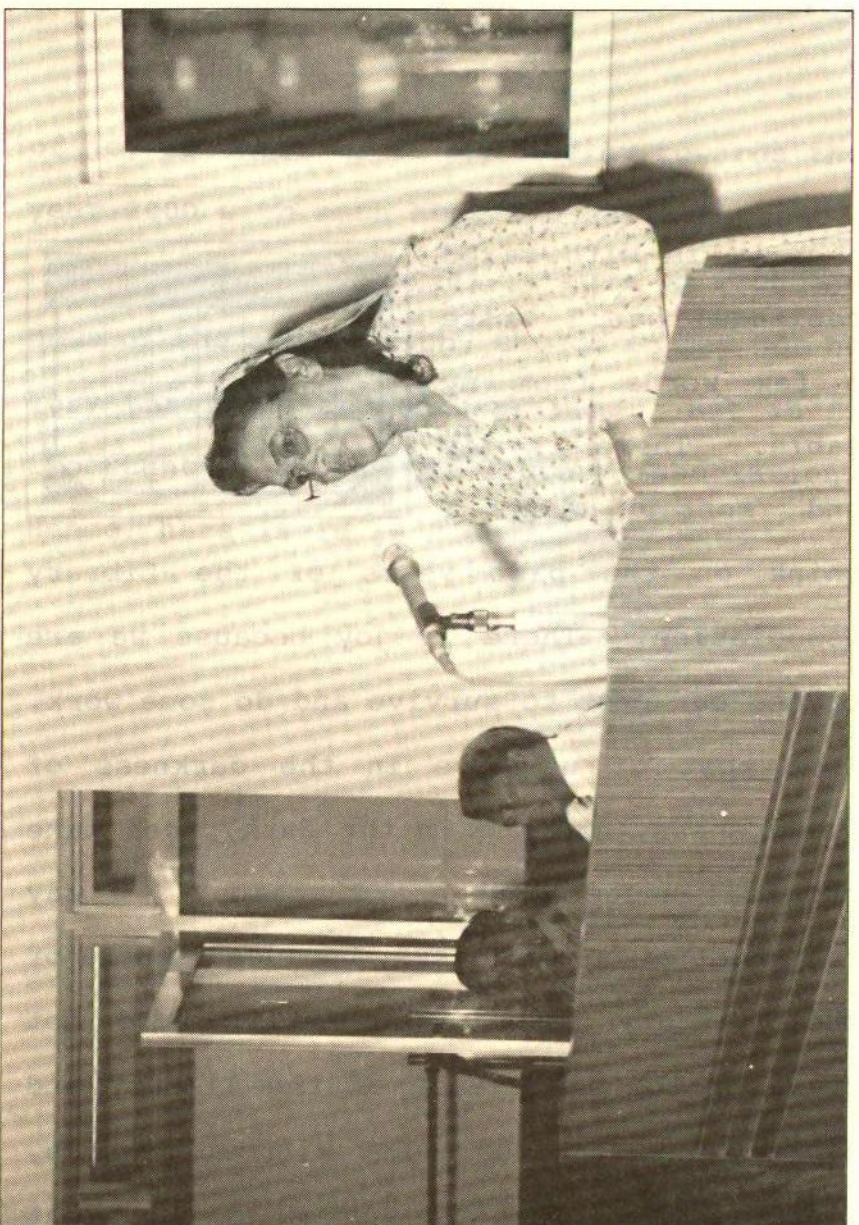
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IN THIS ISSUE:

EDITORIAL . . . . .	1
A HISTORICAL CAPSULE . . . . .	3
A LETTER FROM GEOFFREY ALAN JAMES . . .	5
FAREWELL, GEOFFREY ALAN JAMES . . . . .	10
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION .	12
LIBRARY SCIENCE COURSES . . . . .	15
THE WOES OF AN UNTRAINED "LIBRARIAN" .	17
THE PRESENT NATIONAL LIBRARY . . . . .	21
NATIONAL LIBRARY'S BOOK FAIRS . . . . .	25
THOUGHTS FOR LIBRARIANS TO PONDER . . .	26
CDNLAO - REVIEW . . . . .	29
INFORMATION ON THE NEEDS OF LIBRARIES .	32

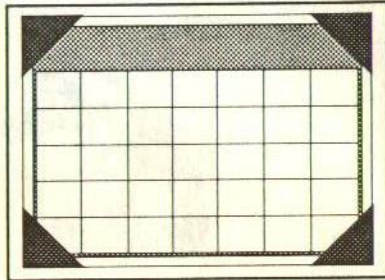






## EDITORIAL

It is with mixed feelings that I write a few words from my table. There is joy and sorrow when I think on the past years of the Library Association. There is joy because we are trying our best to survive and do some work. That most of us live in the darkness of unawareness, groping in the dark, does make one feel uncomfortable and unhappy. I say "darkness of unawareness", because members of the literary associations still have not realized the importance of the library and library associations. Not without reasons, I assure you. Then the streak of the light



of joy is there as we are moving towards the year 2000 with much hope and deliberation.

With this editorial, I move on with the news of the association, though it may not be very thrilling and enterprising. But it is important to us, to the library association. Hence, here it is -- "The Library News".

### A HISTORICAL CAPSULE

The Library Association was formed on the 11th of March, 1987 with a constitution and organizing rule. Its main function is to form a group of people who are interested in libraries and library science, its work and profession.

The Organizing Committee of this association consists of six members with the following designations:

1. President of the Association
2. Vice president of the Association
3. Training officer
4. Editor of the magazine "Library News"
6. Sub-editor of "Library News"

Two types of meetings are held:

1. General meetings. These are held

three times a year, including an annual meeting with elections.

2. Organizing Committee meetings. These are held monthly, preferably on the 15th.

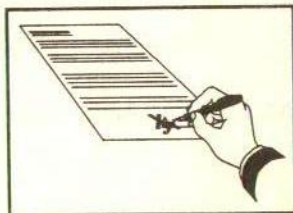


## A LETTER FROM GEOFF

Dear Colleagues,

My name's Geoff James and I'm the new VSO based at the National Library. I arrived in Male' at the very end of January and after my initial orientation period I started work in mid-March. I already feel 'at home' thanks to the friendly staff at the National Library and by everyone I've so far met in Maldives.

So why am I here? Many of you will remember Janet Fleming who was at the NL between 1986-88 and the tremendous work she did here to help with the upgrading of library provision in Male'. My job is to build on that, in my own style, and to see the solid foundations Janet laid





usefully developed.

I have submitted to the Director of the NL a list of priorities for 1991-1993 and I hope you'll be pleased to hear that assisting you in your respective libraries is high on that list. I'll gladly advise on improvements that can be made and see as one of these some practical training in basic library skills, if they are felt to be required.

As for the NL, I hope to see it strengthen its role as the pinnacle of library services in Maldives to the point where it becomes a source of guidance and assistance to the other libraries in the country. A NL should not dictate policy but play a leading role in its execution, so to that end the continued strengthening of the

Maldives Library Association is important. The NL should also sit at the heart of the library network, a network which I am pleased to see contains numerous libraries in Male'. But a 'network' implies common policy, standard practices, shared responsibilities and perhaps even a pooling of sovereignty for the general good.

A weak link in the chain of library provision seems to be library services outside Male'. No country can afford to concentrate its library services to just 1 1/2 square miles of its territory where about one-third of the population live. 'Development' implies narrowing the gulf between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' so tackling the problem of developing library services in the atolls is paramount. To this

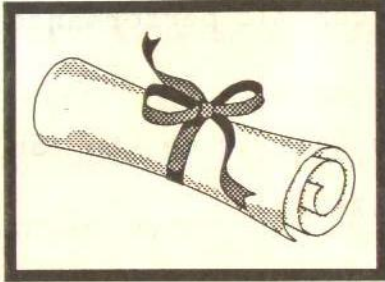
end I hope we can set about training library staff in the atolls and introduce an organised structure which includes the NL, other Male' libraries and small, community libraries in the islands.

One way in which we can act together is to impress upon those with control over budgets that while much can be achieved without massive expenditure, sometimes the purse strings do need to be loosened a little. Books, trained and library-educated staff, expanding services to as many people as possible all cost money. But it is important that it is understood that libraries play a central role in the all-round development of the nation: educationally, culturally and not least the contribution a high-quality library service

can make to the enhanced economic performance of the country.

If you would like to talk to me you can contact me at the NL on 32-3944.



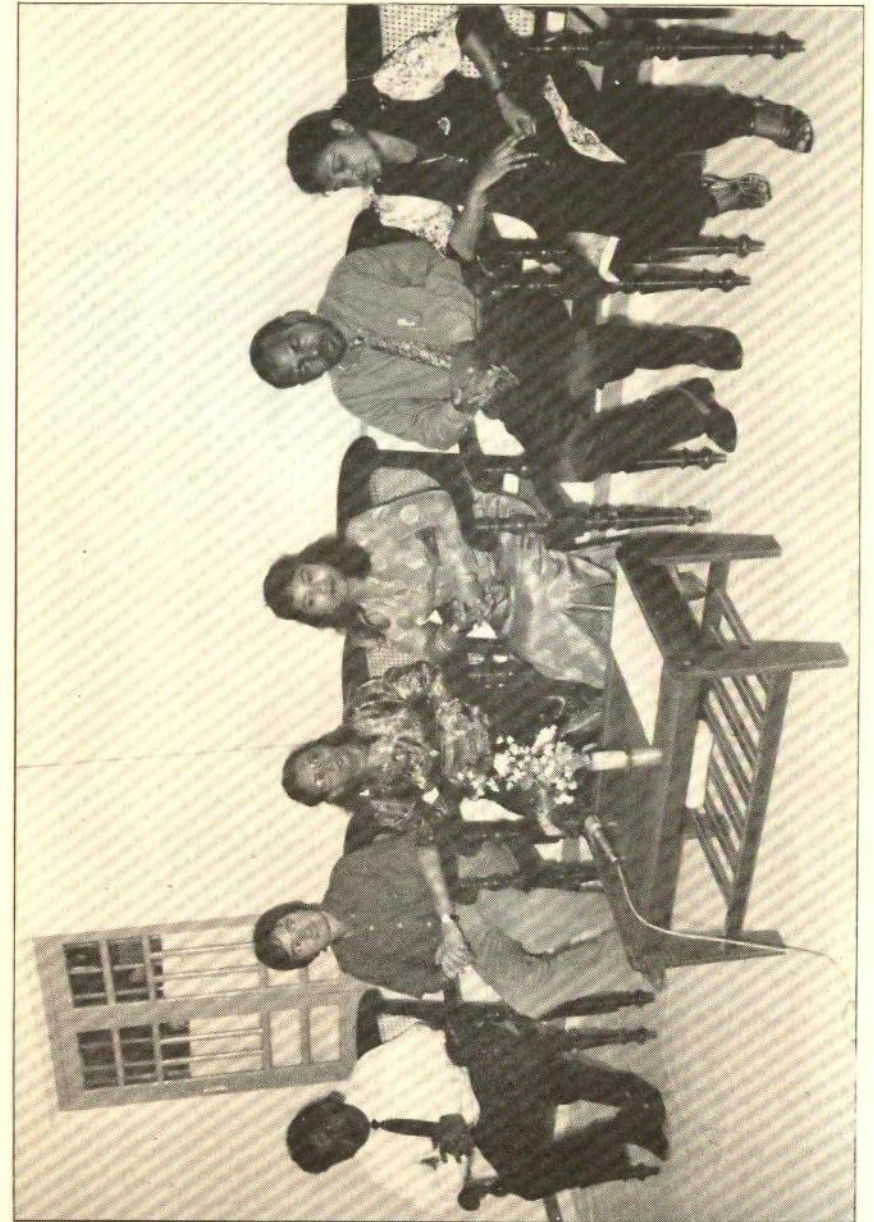


# FAREWELL, GEOFF

The National Library is losing a friend, a tutor, an advisor, and a hard working librarian today. He is Geoffrey James, a V.S.O. teacher-librarian who has done a lot to promote the National Library. He worked in the National Library from 1991-1993.

The readers of "Library News" will know him better when they read his article beginning on page 5 of this issue.

We, the National Library's staff, thank him immensely and bid farewell with heavy hearts for we all will miss him and his informative workshops. He conducted three courses in his short stay with us, and almost

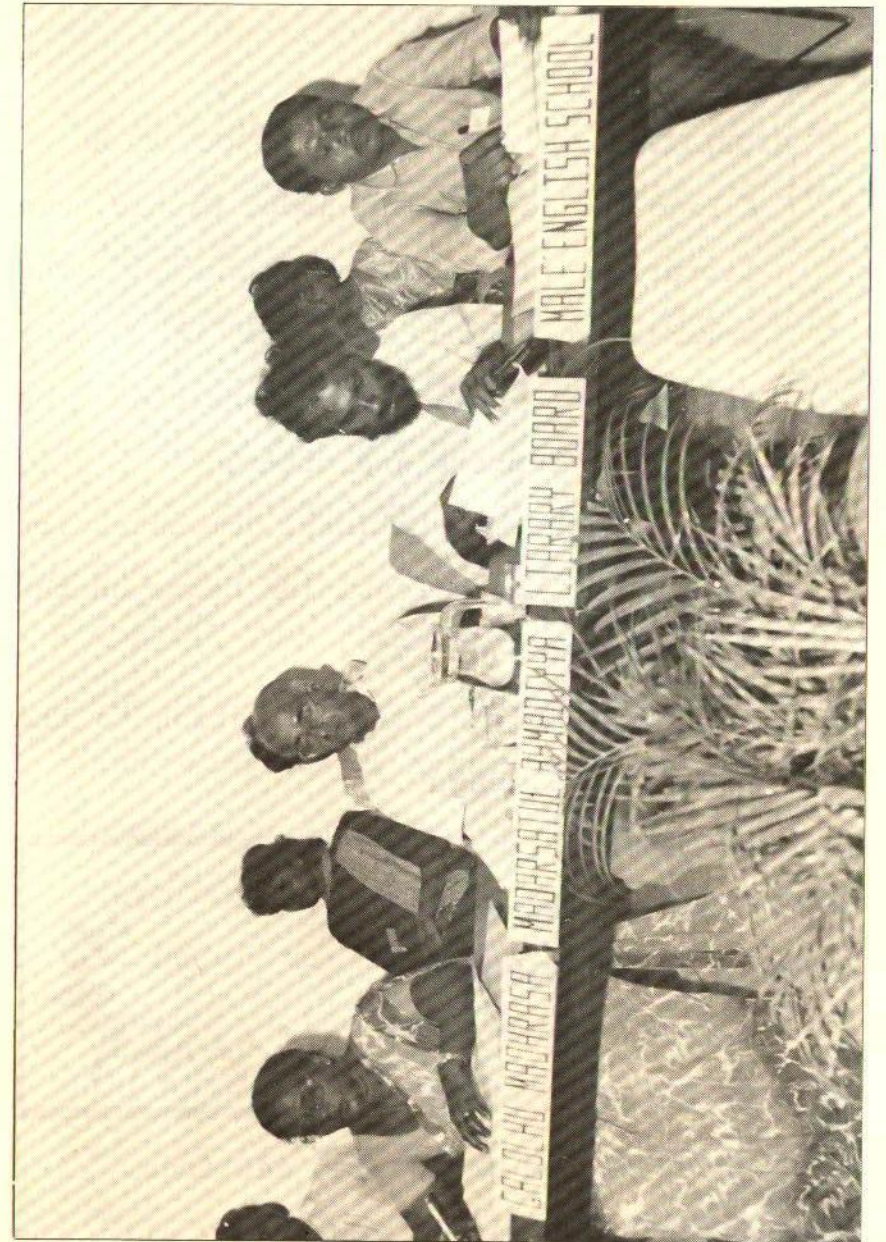




all who sat under his teaching passed and have been promoted to better assignments.

Goodbye to our friend and teacher, Geoff. We wish you all the best and a bright future in your life and work.

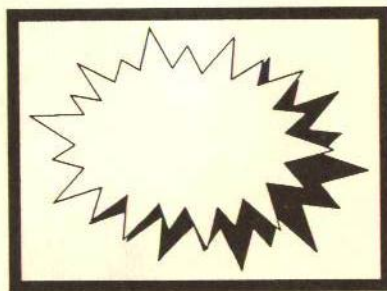
The Director and Staff  
of the National Library





## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

- A logo was designed by Abdul Rashid, the librarian of Mageediya School. The Organizing Committee chose it from a number of sketches submitted by committee members and others.
- Participated in a national demonstration supporting the Palestinian cause on the 11th of March, 1988.
- Introduction of the Association to the public by means of mass media.
- Library service in the Atolls was introduced and promoted in talks given at the organizing meetings.
- Circulars were sent to all the



- librarians of Male' and the Atolls, urging them to become members of the Association.
- Circulars were sent to all the Atoll libraries to inform them about the training and encourage them to attend.
  - A Sri Lankan librarian was brought to the National Library from the British Council for one week. She lectured on the preservation and mending of books and also on library matters to the members of the Library Association.
  - Circulars were sent to all the libraries of Male' to encourage them to become members of the association.
  - The initial work to finalize the matter of the Library Association becoming a member of the SAARC Library Association



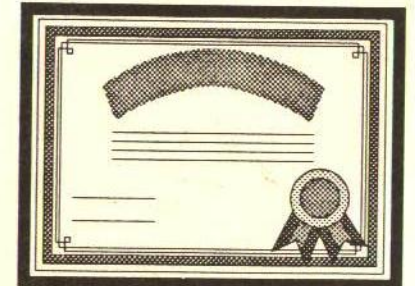
was started.

- A request has been made to Library Association members and other libraries to collect articles for the library magazine, "Library News".
- A circular was sent to all the members and fees were collected from them.

#### LIBRARY SCIENCE COURSES

The National Library organized library science courses at three levels: Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced or high level course. These courses were carried out by the V.S.O. library-teacher, Geoffrey James, at the National Library.

The basic course was conducted for the National Library's staff as well as the staff of other libraries. The intermediate course, conducted for the National Library staff, was joined by some of the institutions' library staff and school librarians. The high level course was planned for those students who passed the Intermediate Course with high marks. One or





two other librarians joined the National Library staff in this class. All of them passed, and two of the National Library's staff passed with a commended report.

These three courses were held at the National Library from March 1991 to December 1992. Certificates for the Advanced Course were awarded at a meeting by Abdulla Rasheed, Director General of the Department of Information and Broadcasting, who was the chief guest. High appreciation was also expressed by the respective students.

#### THE WOES OF AN UNTRAINED "LIBRARIAN"

I would like to bring to light the true picture of small libraries with untrained staff. I write this article based on my experience when I worked in a library as an untrained staff, and also from information I got from libraries in the same category. First and foremost, let me tell you of the library where I worked and the frustrations I had and the misgivings I experienced.

I was working in a library though I knew nothing of library science or the procedures of processing books. The library was in a small building with cupboards and shelves with books written in two or three languages, about different subjects, with many titles, by multiple authors. To bring that library into shape, I tried to categorize the books



according to their subjects. Then I separated these books and kept them on different shelves. I had very few resources available. Though the books were very valuable and of great knowledge, the library had no current information coming in. I tried to get to know the sorts of books I had in my library. And when people wanted information, I worked hard to get it by doing research, reading books, and magazines which I found outside. There was not enough money to buy magazines at the prices the bookseller were demanding at that time.

The funds, the budget, was a big problem. Very little amount was given to the library as the government had the idea that there were enough books for the people to read. Also, they thought there was no

necessity to buy books as the reading audience was very small. Ordering books was as much a problem as it was to get approval to buy a book.

The truth remains that this particular library in which I worked was by no means a library, but merely a collection of old books. These books did not respond to the actual needs and interests of the users. Also, people who wanted current news and other potential users, were not motivated to use this library's collection.

The most depressing fact of that library was that, though the cupboards and shelves were stocked with books, the whole place had a shabby appearance. Shelves were full of dust and the walls needed paint, and the roof was leaking. Any trained librarian will



emphasize that a library needs cleanliness, orderliness, and safety from rain and fire. While I was the only librarian, nevertheless a peon and a labourer were there who did the sweeping and dusting. But their work was inefficient as they thought it was not important. Though I was trying to make these rooms full of books stuffed in dusty cupboards and shelves presentable to the readers, it was impossible for an untrained person to cope with such major problems.

I write this article, not to discourage the few librarians who still exist in similar libraries without adequate funding and insufficient training. This is to urge the organizers of libraries to recognize the basic necessities when they organise a library.

## THE PRESENT NATIONAL LIBRARY

The present National Library of Maldives came into existence on June 1, 1982 by President Maumoon Abdul Qayoom's Decree # 55/1982. Though it was initially opened by Amir Mohammed Amin Didi in 1945, under the name of "Government's Library", it had gone through three phases of name changing. As late as 1990 it came under Constitutional Act No. 2/90 on 2 April 1990 and began functioning directly under the President's Office.

The newly designed library flag bearing the logo was hoisted with the National flag in front of the library in 1991.

The library's administration is led by a Director, Habiba Hussain Habib. Of the 20 staff members, Zulfa Mohammed is the only



fully trained librarian. Eight are assistant librarians, two are trainees, one is a special assistant librarian, and one is an assistant to the librarian. There is one senior administrative officer and six staff members to provide administrative support.

The library's collection of 25,743 books is comprised of publications in four languages: Dhivehi (Maldivian), Arabic, Urdu (an Indian language), and English. There are 21,000 books in English, 3,028 in Dhivehi, 1,108 in Arabic, and 607 in Urdu.

Regular subscriptions are held for 38 English periodicals, 14 English newspapers, and two Maldivian dailies.

The present Children's section, which will be called "The Children's Library" in the future, has a collection of 1,528 books

with additional titles being processed. Recently it was expanded and redecorated. On the 15th of December it was opened with a new Kiddies' Corner.

The two main divisions, the Oriental Division and the Occidental Division, have nine sections.

#### Oriental Division

Dhivehi Section  
Arabic Section  
Urdu Section

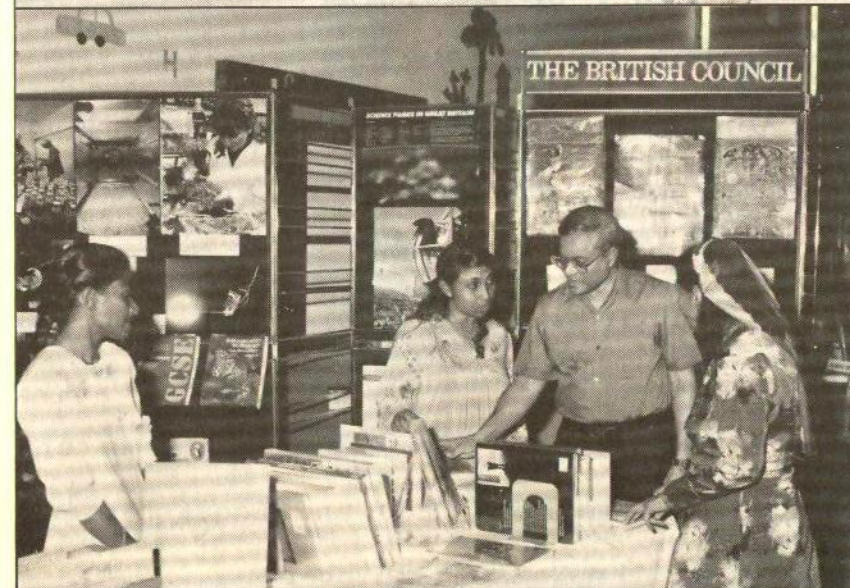
#### Occidental Division

Fiction Section  
Non-fiction Section  
Reference Section  
Children's Section  
Academic Section  
Environmental Section

Various services provided include: lending to members; reference; consulting services for institutes, ministries, and school libraries; the training of library personnel; reprography; audio-visual services for children; children's club.



Library services are being extended to Male' school libraries as well as the atolls' resource centres and school libraries.

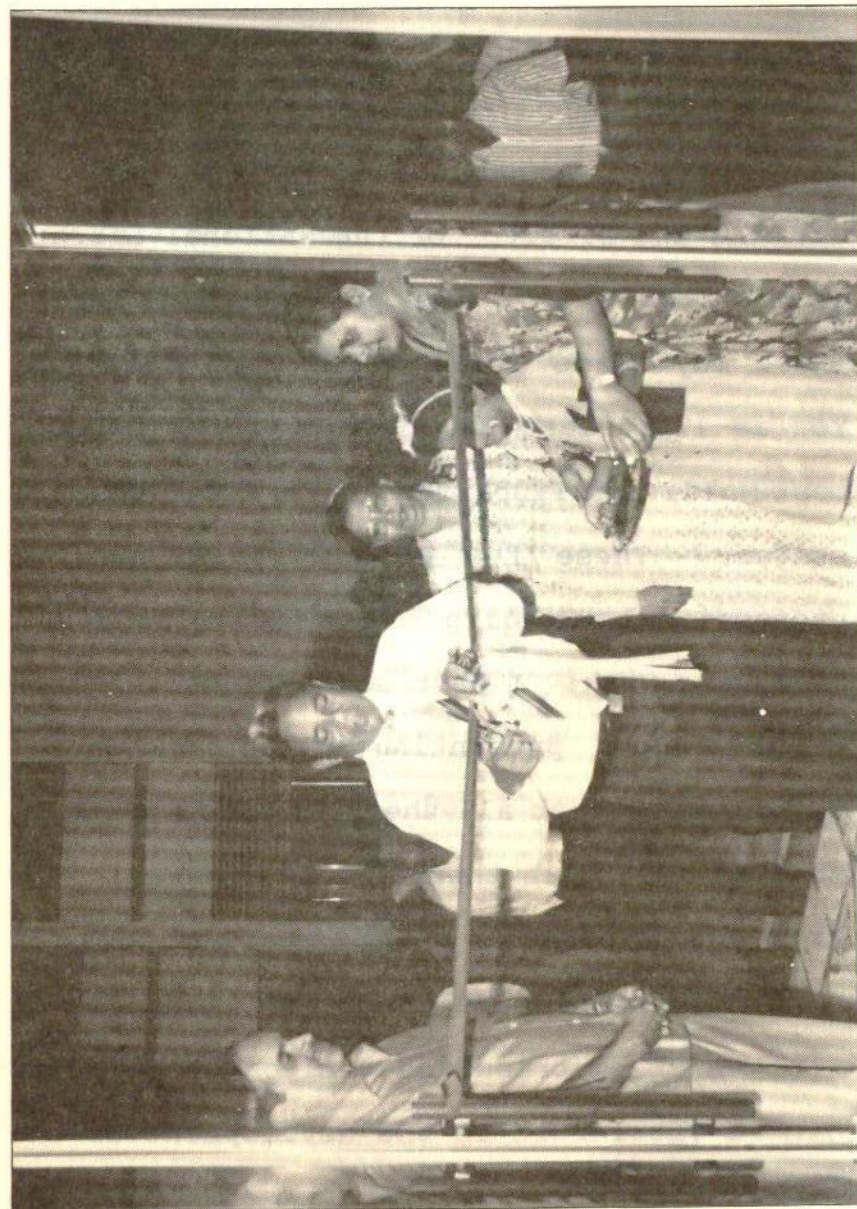




## NATIONAL LIBRARY'S BOOK FAIRS

A three day book fair was organized at Iskander School by the British Council, the Asia Foundation, and the National Library. Dr. Mohammed Wahid, then Director of Educational Services in the Ministry of Education opened it. President Maumoon and Madame Maumoon Abdul Qayoom were special guests. Many of the books displayed were later donated to the National Library.

Under the cultural programme between the governments of India and Maldives, a book fair was held at Kalafaanu School. The hall was filled with books displayed by the Indian High Commission and the National Library. The book fair lasted for three days. Later, these books in both Urdu and English, were donated to the National Library.





## THOUGHTS FOR LIBRARIANS TO PONDER

by Habeeba H. H.

As the Director of the National Library of Maldives, I have some points to set forth. These may serve as food for your thoughts. You as librarians may have problems because most Maldivian libraries are in their initial stages. These few points really need a professional to direct the organizing and also hard work. I have selected some points which I am presenting from a general viewpoint so that all the librarians would be able to deal with them.

1. The libraries under the Ministry of Education and the special libraries of the ministries and offices should play a vital role in the development of the country by their contributions to the

educational, cultural and leisure opportunities of the citizens, regardless of age, sex, educational attainment, or financial status.

2. Library service could contribute its share parallel to the services of other sectors. This may seem a very far-fetched idea to some who are not aware of the importance services a library could offer. The school children as well as teachers could be provided backup resources for them. This could only be done effectively if the library has been provided with a good standard of library stock and trained staff.
3. Each library should be staffed by at least one trained and qualified individual, keeping in mind the needs



of the patrons, members, and readers of that particular library.

4. The book stock of a library should be relevant to its users' needs.
5. The various types of library services in any nation are usually linked together in a network or organized structure.
6. The quality of library resources should aim to be consistent throughout the country. Variation should only occur in terms of scale, reflecting the size and the needs of the communities served.

These ideas were discussed on a professional level between me and a teacher-librarian, Mr. Geoffrey James, who was working in the National Library.

# CDNLAO<sup>1</sup> - REVIEW

Abstracts from the paper of  
National Library of Malaysia

Under the broad umbrella of IFLA, the Conference of Directors of National Libraries meets every year. This has now become the forum for national librarians who attend the IFLA General Conference to discuss problems and projects common to national libraries. The majority of attendance at CDNL however have been drawn mostly from developed countries, and lately some developing countries from Asia and America. Hence it seemed desirable in 1979 to hold a special international Conference for Directors of National Libraries on Resources sharing in

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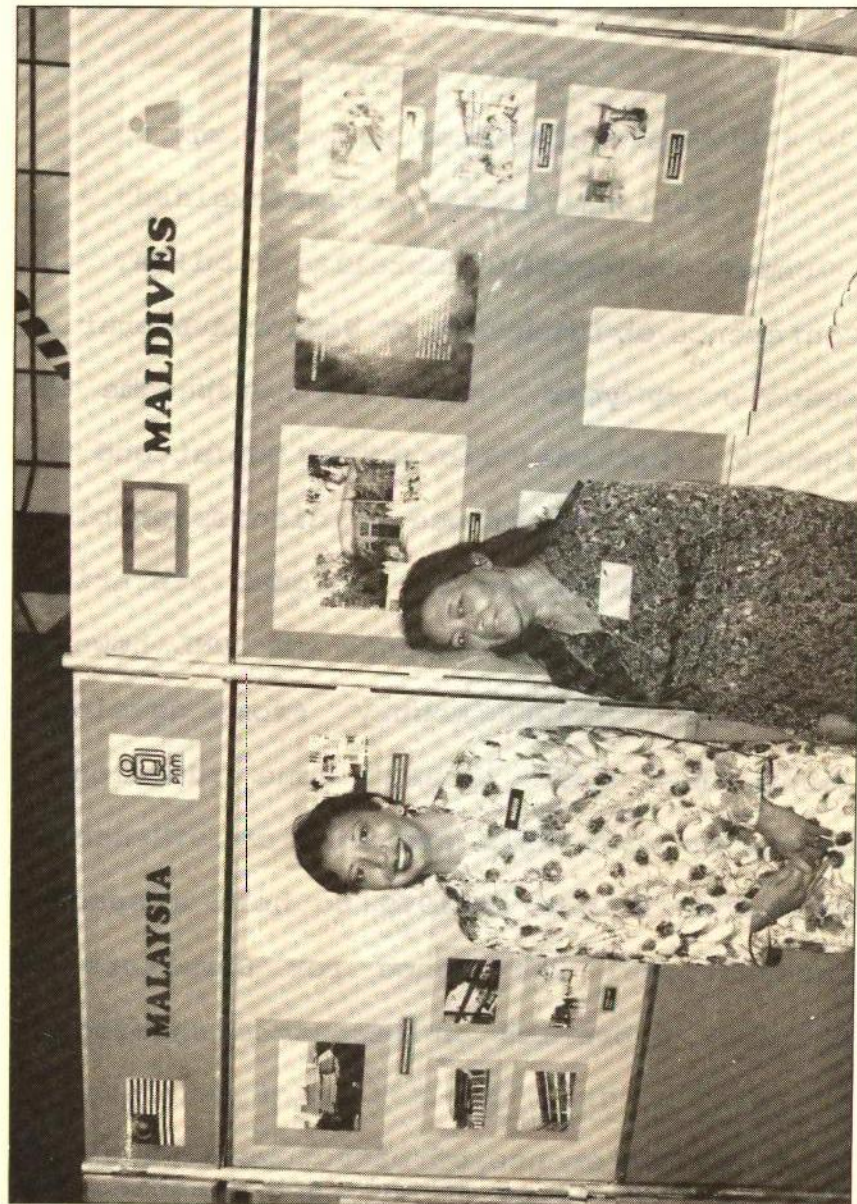
<sup>1</sup> Conference of Directors of National Libraries of Asia and Oceania.



Asia and Oceania.

Considered overall, the Conference of Directors of national libraries in Asia and Oceania has succeeded in bringing together National Librarians from Asia and Oceania. This periodic conference must continue and funds from regional and international organisations be sought by future host countries to ensure that all countries are able to attend.

As we move along into the 21st Century, we must be conscious of the new realities that the times have brought along and of the new responsibilities hurled upon libraries in the region. The forecasts for the future of libraries range from optimum to gloom as well as to exciting possibilities with new technologies. CDNLAO will have to move into





the future with a clear vision of its objectives and overall goals for the region.

#### INFORMATION ON THE NEEDS OF LIBRARIES

Today's libraries are faced with many problems which the librarians, directors, and ministries and private sources also interested in opening libraries, are finding difficult to solve. These problems did not emerge suddenly, nor have they occurred suddenly. The fact is that people are becoming more aware of the needs of libraries, so when they try to organize them with professional facilities, they realize the difficulties and barriers they have to cross. It is not that these did not exist before. It is that now they are seeing libraries in a new light.

Libraries are centres where information is stored and distributed. Information is becoming more and more essential for



everything we do in our daily lives. Every decision a person makes must be based on reliable information. People are moving into an information society. In order to be more informed, they have to do research. Thus, the demand for more information has increased. This does not mean that we have to flood people with whatever information we get. But we need to obtain the correct information for those who need it. We have to provide information that they really need. Libraries exist for this purpose. But when we do not organize them properly, we face many problems with the existing facilities which one likes to call a library, but is in reality just a centre with books. The main purpose of some libraries remains to serve their main centre's staff. It may be a





school, or it may be a research centre, or even a ministry. Though the institutional libraries would be expected to meet the basic requirements of its research, staff, teachers, or even trainees, one is faced with the lack of up-to-date information needed by these people. Libraries today have to change from the "book centres" of by-gone days. The most important aspect that needs to be considered in obtaining the required information within us is to have a database system, and a network which links all the informative centres.

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