

## Editorial

Assalaam A'laikum. Welcome to the third issue of meet.learn.acquire for 2010. This is the last issue for the year and I have great satisfaction in writing this editorial, for having succeeded in reviving this newsletter after a long gap of 10 years! – 2010 has been remarkable for MLA on many other fronts as well.

We started the year with a grand general assembly resulting in a compact calendar of events for MLA. Looking at the last four months, making news within the library sector is the introductory library course, the work carried out by MGN in initiating digital library collections, relocation of the National Library, and MLA President's participation in SLLA International Conference held in Colombo.

In this issue, read our LIS professional profile article on Fathmath Shiham, and library feature article on NLM and Hithadhoo public library in Addu Atoll. It is amazing that this public library came into being from a community initiative. Additionally, we have included articles on the effectiveness of reference services provided in the MCHE Central Library – an eye opener for the library management, I say! Fewer articles in local language in this issue compared to the last – but, what we have are two remarkable contributions on library classification and occupational health & safety measures for librarians [I like these!]. Also, given the current political turmoil in the country, it is only appropriate to bring libraries into that picture – read & fascinate yourself. I particularly like the updates on professional development efforts, including feedback from ACLIS.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers, members, & contributors a very happy & prosperous year for 2011. Please do let us know how we are doing by leaving a comment on our blog @ <http://infomalias.wordpress.com>

Thank you.

**Aminath Riyaz (Editor)**



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## 2010 has been a busy year for MLA !

It has been a great year with our MLA workshop and lecture series with guest lecturers delighting us intellectually. Midyear activities such as Library Day Celebration in collaboration with Faculty of Arts and the 'bring a friend' *maahefun* were some of the fun activities of the year. The year was concluded with the MLA basic course on Librarianship with 18 participants. I congratulate those who have completed the course with such enthusiasm.

Throughout the year, being part of the organizing team of these events had made me realize that we still need to step up and shout louder to make ourselves heard nationally and internationally.

This thought, and my team, empowered me to accept the chance to represent MLA and Maldives abroad! As the president of MLA, I was invited to attend the International Conference organized by the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) to mark their 50th Anniversary of existence. The theme of the conference was 'Libraries: Access to information and empowering people'. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the SLLA for giving MLA the opportunity to participate and contribute.

During the very first session of the conference, I had the opportunity to present a paper based on 'Access to Information: experiences in Maldives'. I was also able to chair a very interesting session on "indigenous knowledge" and was able to share some experiences from the Maldives as well.

One of the highlights of the conference was that I was able to meet Dr. Ellen Tise, the president of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and discuss the current situation of Library and

Information Science in our country. We also discussed how Maldives Library Association can become an IFLA member.

This was a conference that created many milestones such as the rejuvenation of the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations (REFSALA). After a 5 year gap, the second council meeting of REFSALA was held and discussions continued on how we are going to move forward with REFSALA. It was decided that Sri Lanka will be the host country holding the chairmanship and the President of Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) will be the President of REFSALA 2010-2014. After that India will hold the post and then Maldives...

It has been a great experience for me, and your thoughts were never far from my mind as we listened, talked and discussed about empowering today's information managers and users. I have always believed in empowering and providing support to fellow information managers like you and me alike...

By sharing my experiences I hope to inspire and empower the librarians and information managers of Maldives.

Year 2010 has come to an end and MLA is concluding one of our most fruitful years in existence. On behalf of the MLA members and me personally, a great big THANK YOU to the wonderful team behind MLA with high spirits who made it all happen despite having had to wear multiple hats at all times. ☺

~ Aishath Shabana, MLA President ~



Maldives Library Association  
meet.learn.acquire

## LIBRARY NEWS

American Corner – rebranded!

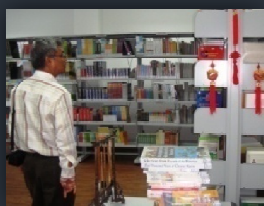


The American Corner of the National Library was established in May 2004, serving as a resource centre for the Maldivian public in American reading and AV material.

The American Corner has been rebranded as American **Centre** with the move of the National Library to a new building in 2010. The United States' Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Patricia Butenis, formally opened the new American Centre in the National Library Building on October 28.

The Centre offers free internet access, information about United States via a large collection of DVDs, an online research database, and DVC facilities. The Centre also offers students the chance to participate in 'Dyn Ed', a computer based English learning program. The Centre further offers events like public readings, films, exhibits, workshops and lectures by various speakers. ■

Chinese Centre – New collection opened at NLM



The Chinese Centre was established at the National Library of Maldives on November 30, 2010.

The Chinese government has already donated 4,800 books for this, and this number will increase in the future. With the opening of the Chinese Centre, services of the National Library have expanded and it is believed that this will enrich people about the fascinating country of China. ■



## LIBRARY PROFILE:

### National Library of Maldives (NLM)

*The Library's combined collection consists of approximately 45,000 volumes. The number of members registered at NLM to date is estimated at 7,000.*

The National Library of the Maldives is an important government institution that has been in existence for 65 years. The key responsibilities of the National Library include encouraging, promoting and developing reading among the general public as well as locating and providing resources for educational purposes. The National Library is one of the organizations that are mandated to carry out these responsibilities under the constitution of the Maldives.

Moreover, the National Library is also assigned with the important task of acquiring newspapers, magazines, books, microform records, video and audio records published in the Maldives and to preserve them for the generations to come. In addition to these, the National Library is also held responsible for authorizing the registration of libraries within the country, maintaining the registration records of those libraries, assisting them with the creation of the rules and regulations and to provide them with professional development aid.

Service Sections of the National Library includes: the frontline where **circulation services** are offered; **English Collection** (books of all genres written in English); **Dhivehi Collection** (all kinds of books, magazines and newspapers written in Dhivehi); **National Collection** (material written about Maldives and by Maldivians – held as reference only); **Chinese Centre** (material on language, culture, history and literature of China; and **American Centre** (consists of books, magazines and CD's about the US. In addition to this, the American Centre also runs awareness and training programs among the public through visits, lectures, workshops and Digital Video Conferencing (DVC). This corner also provides internet services.

The Library's combined collection consists of: approximately 40,000 monographs with an annual addition of about 2,500 books including donations and exchange; 3000 bound serials with an annual subscription of 39 serial titles.

The Reading Area provides adequate seating for users of the library. In addition to reading space, this area is designed to provide users with recent newspapers and magazines.

#### Other Services

All the library sections of the National Library provide photocopy services. The different sections of the library area are also equipped with catalogue terminals that will enable users to browse through the book database of the National Library.

A newly formed Institute of Library and Information Service will run library training programs of different levels. Also, the institute plans to run internationally accredited training programs in collaboration with the Canberra Institute of Technology, Australia. They will also run informative and useful programs aimed at people who use the library.

The library also offers a bimonthly orientation program for the users of the library to inform them of the services and resources available at the National Library. This program will guide them, especially students to use the resources of the library effectively.

#### Library's new location

The National Library was re-opened on October 10, 2010 at 10:10hrs, after a closure of a few months for relocation from its former building on Majeedhee magu.

#### New address:

National Library  
Museum Building A  
Medhuziyaaraiy magu,  
Malé 20158, Rep. of Maldives  
Phone: (+960) 3323943, (+960) 3323944  
Fax: (+960) 3313712  
Website: [www.nlm.gov.mv](http://www.nlm.gov.mv)  
E-mail: [info@nlm.gov.mv](mailto:info@nlm.gov.mv)

The current location at Medhuziyaaraiy magu is ideal for a library setting and will provide customers with a quiet environment to read and research. ■

*The above is an adaptation from NLM information leaflet (2010)*





## LIBRARY PROFILE:

### Hithadhoo Public Library

#### Save the Hithadhoo Public Library – a personal appeal from the President of MLA

A public library is generally a public funded library, serving the general public of a country. Public libraries exist in most countries and are often considered an essential part of having an educated and literate populace. Unlike other types of libraries such as school libraries, national libraries and special libraries, it is mandatory to a public library to serve the general information needs of the population of the country.

Do we have a public library in the Maldives, other than in Malé? Few of us realize that there is another public library in the Maldives, apart from NLM. According to one of the library official, the Hithadhoo Public Library (HPL), Addu Atoll, has been in existence for about 4-5 years and had been previously managed by the Island Development Committee (IDC). However, during the transition of the government, as the IDCs were disintegrated and new administrative infrastructure has been setup, further development plans such as staffing and budget for the HPL are yet to be decided.

The Library is housed on the ground floor of the brand new library building. The size of the collection is approximately 6,000 books. The fiction collection of the library is fairly large as most of them are donated to the library by friends of the library. There is only one librarian with minimal training in this profession and very few registered users.

A recent visit to the Hithadhoo Public Library by members of the Maldives Library Association



revealed that the library has been neglected and in very poor condition. Although the HPL has been moved to a brand new library building recently, the Library lacks proper organization, rules and regulations, resources and facilities, maintenance/care, and trained personnel.

It was saddening to know that the library did not have specific opening hours. This was a service closed for most part of the day and was opened only on demand. A closed library restricts access to information for the general public.

The library had a custom made integrated library system. However, the computer system was not functional. According to the library staff there never was a handwritten inventory of the library and the only record of the items held in the library are on the hard disk of the computer.

There were about 14 shelves of varying heights in the library packed with books. However, a lot more books are piled on almost all the reading tables and on the low shelves, waiting for new shelves. The library has space for more shelves but according to the library staff, there are no funds to buy the necessary shelves.

Hithadhoo Public Library was a place locals of that island were passionate about, but no more it seems. Young upcoming librarians dreams of making it a better library. Stakeholders involved in the development of the island or the province should be doing something about the development and functionality of that library. For, library is one of the most powerful instruments that help reduce poverty and inequality. Access to information will lay the foundation for sustained economic growth and development in any society, community or country. ■

~ Aishath Shabana ~


*Photos:  
from 2010 visit to Hithadhoo Public Library by MLA  
members: Aishath Shabana & Aishath Afra Waheed,*



## LIBRARY NEWS

### National Research Collection, MCHE Library

The library at the former National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research (NCLHR) is now a branch of the MCHE Library. With the changes in the government policy, the NCLHR was disintegrated and the historical and research component of the Centre along with their Library became part of the Maldives College of Higher Education in mid 2010.

This library collection is now considered as the MCHE Library's "National Research Collection". Work is in progress to integrate the collection into the online library catalogue of MCHE. When the work is complete, the public and any interested parties will be able to check online, the details of the resources held in the collection. The MCHE Library catalogue is available online at [www.mche.edu.mv](http://www.mche.edu.mv) 

Prior to the change, there was no computerized record of the books held in the library.

The collection is very comprehensive in its local/national publication coverage and is highly used by scholars and researchers.

The library is managed by one library staff, who has been working at the Centre for a few years now. ■

### MCHE Library - Staff Development Workshop

The MCHE's annual library staff development workshop is scheduled to be conducted from 26 December 2010 to 6 January 2011.

The workshop series was first initiated in 2001 and has been conducted annually from 2006 onwards. This is done mainly in an effort to offset the lack/shortage of training opportunities in the Maldives to educate library staff in technical aspects of library work as well as general competency required to provide an efficient service to the clientele. ■



## National Library of Maldives: Why was the library relocated?

- *Billoorijehige* Building (the former location of the National Library) was constructed over 10 years ago. It was built without concrete floors and instead decked with wooden floors.
- Due to the wooden decked floors, the book shelves could be placed only on the floor areas that had metal beams running under them. This prevented the optimum usage of the floor space of the building.
- The building was old; some of the beams had broken in places, the walls had water leaking through them and what's more, the wooden floors were deteriorating.
- Due to the above said reasons and condition of the *Billoorijehige* Building, there was a fear of having the books in the library infected with termites.
- The English Collection and the Dhivehi Collection which were situated on the first and second floors were open spaced and located at the front end of the building. The users of these sections of the library faced with disturbing levels of noise from the traffic moving along *Majeedhee Magu*.
- The environment was not conducive for a library.
- The government needed the *Billoorijehige* Building for other purposes.

Source: National Library [introductory leaflet] (2010).



## PROFILE: Maldives ILS Professionals –

Fathmath Shiham is the Chief Librarian of the National Library of Maldives, and is the MLA Vice President for the current term

Fathmath Shiham started her library career at the National Library of Maldives in 2000 as a Librarian Trainee, moving onto Deputy Librarian in 2006.

Fathmath is among the first few people in the Maldives who has a professional qualification in the area of library and information work. She studied for her Bachelor of Information Science (specializing in Library Science) at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, completing her studies in the year 2005.

According to Fathmath, the initial few months of settling into the role of Deputy Librarian was somewhat daunting at times. Fresh out of University and joining a workforce with a team of people with years and years of experience in the field was a challenge she had to go through. Back then, her main responsibilities were in strengthening the information technology backbone of the National Library and its service provision. The initiation of an official website and identifying an appropriate library software for the library are among the first major activities she undertook in her role. When asked whether she always aspired to be a librarian, Fathmath's short and sweet answer was: "not really".

This is not unexpected! Library profession is still in its infancy in the Maldives and hardly anyone in

the Maldives sees it even as a profession. The defining moment that made this profession her career was the actual work experience she got at her first library post in 2000.

Her career aspirations lead her to an International Masters in Digital Library Learning at Oslo University College, Norway. She graduated in 2009 and became the second Maldivian to have completed a post graduate qualification in the area of library and information studies, to serve the country & the profession.

Fathmath was appointed Chief Librarian of the National Library of Maldives in 2009 and has been continuously upgrading the National Library to meet the demands of modern day library users. Continuous efforts are also being placed on finding training opportunities for the library staff.

Having completed higher education in this field and "applying lessons learnt" to improve the National Library of Maldives is among her greatest achievements. Fathmath has great pride in what she has been able to do so far in this endeavor.

Her long term goal for her professional life is "to help in developing a service ethic in the library workforce of the country".

The main challenges faced are keeping the spirit up and trying to

develop successful programs in the face of budget cuts for basic services. Her next biggest challenge is "reaching out to the islands in providing library services" as the majority of the population does not have adequate access to information resources.

Fathmath strongly believes library & information work to be of great importance for us in our nation building efforts. "This is a field which helps the general public in developing information literacy skills and the love of lifelong learning."

In this respect, her message for the wanna be librarians and generally those involved in information handling is:

**"A systematic information system is a must for every organization. The right information is a key ingredient for every success. This field is great!"**

Fathmath's initiation in forming the Maldives Greenstone support Network with the aim of introducing Digital Library creation is praiseworthy and commendable. "Be ready to take the extra mile!!!" is the last and the most important piece of advice she gives out to one and all. ■

**Profiled by Aminath Riyaz**



# Evaluation of Reference Services at MCHE Central Library

## Introduction

Reference service is one of library's primary practices besides acquisition, classification, cataloguing, and collection maintenance. The term reference services can be defined as personal assistance provided by trained personnel to library users seeking information (Dollah & Singh, 2005). The importance of reference services grew over time with the introduction of new technologies in libraries.

According to Bunge (1999) reference services can be categorized into three broad groups: 1. information services that involve either finding the required information on behalf of the users, or assisting users in finding information; 2. instruction in the use of library resources and services (broadly defined as information literacy skills); and 3. user guidance, in which users are guided in selecting the most appropriate information sources and services (p. 185).

## The study<sup>1</sup>

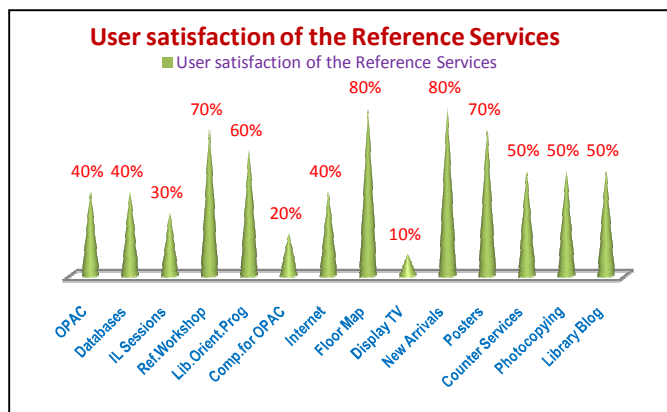
This evaluation is conducted in an effort to understand the reference services provided by MCHE Central Library. MCHE Central Library is the main library of Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE). It is the primary academic information resource for the MCHE, therefore contributes directly to the college's commitment to teaching, research and development of new knowledge.

This evaluation was carried out by analyzing information collected from a survey conducted among visiting library students, an interview with a former student of the college, and interviews with library staff. The purpose of the survey was to identify the current information resources provided and the usefulness of these services to the students. The purpose of the interview was to understand the difference in service provision and to evaluate the satisfactory level from then and now.

According to the information provided by the interviewed library staff and also available on the library blog (Blog@MCHELlibrary, 2010) the reference services provided by MCHE Library at present includes Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), databases (EBSCO, HINARI, Lexis.Com), user education, orientation programs, information literacy (IL) sessions, reference skills workshops, the provision of computers in every floor to access OPAC, Internet Service, photocopying services, and many more.

## Findings

Half of the respondents were daily visitors to the library while the other 50% of the users visit the library weekly. The following graph shows the survey participants' satisfactory level with the reference services on offer at MCHE Central Library.

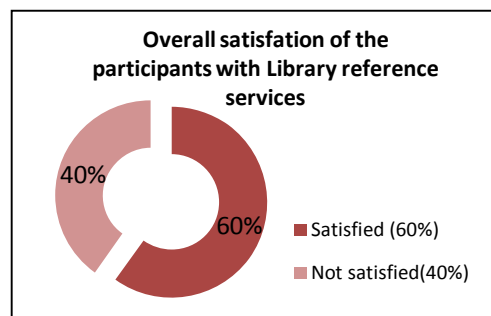


The former student of MCHE, who was interviewed, is now a respected lecturer at MCHE. She said she is still a regular user of the library. When she was asked about the reference services provided earlier, she said the only service she could remember was the Internet service. She said there were no orientation programs; no OPAC; no databases; and also she cannot remember taking photocopies in the library too. She said the collection then was very well maintained and she thinks the staff of the library were very dedicated to their work

and were very willing to help the users even when there was no OPAC service available. When she was asked about the reference resources available earlier, she said unlike the present collection of the library, there were only very few reference resources then. She was also asked about her overall satisfaction of the library services, and she said she was happy and satisfied with the reference services provided in the early days.

The staff interviews highlighted the challenges MCHE Central Library faces in providing effective reference services. These include budget issues, not having enough trained staff, high staff turnover, & lack of facilities. These challenges are also associated with the overall functioning and service provision of the library (Riyaz, 2010).

The result of this study shows that 60 percent of the survey participants were overall satisfied with the reference services the MCHE Library is providing. This is shown in the figure below.



## Conclusion & Recommendations

The main conclusions that can be drawn from this evaluation are that the MCHE Central Library is providing its users with very needed and useful services even though the services are not used very often. The reference services provided by the library are being accepted by most of the users of the library.

In the light of the findings of the survey and interviews, it is recommended to put in extra effort to make the users more aware of the library services, by carrying on more orientation programs. Many participants of the survey do not even know about most of the reference services provided by the library. None of the participants have participated in the Information literacy program, even though many of them find the service useful and satisfying.

Another significant finding is that sixty percent of the survey participants have never used the databases, for which the library pays a great deal of money as subscription fees. Therefore, it is recommended to the library management, to identify why the users are not using the expensive services of the library; this could be achieved by doing a wider survey among the users from all the faculties of the college. ■

~ Nasheeda Mohamed ~

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<sup>1</sup> This study was conducted as an assessment component for Library Resources & Services offered in the second semester of Advanced Certificate in Library Services at the Faculty of Arts, MCHE. The report has been modified for publication here.

## Commentary from MLA blog

[Re. MLA newsletter issue 02, 2010] Love this issue ... very impressive.

– 1info5tudies.wordpress.com  
great work. i love the part on library thah ufedhunu goi.

– Anonymous  
while reading this I've just got a idea about u guys being the focal point for all the libraries. and all the other libraries have to be registered at MLA. ALL THE LIBRARIES HAVE TO BE REGISTERED. it could b done on this website itself. its just an idea. so all the libraries could be connected here in Maldives. & i think libraries all around Maldives could be as one and help each other. also MLA could keep a count on all the libraries and what is happening there.

– Anonymous  
That's a great idea. We should start up a directory of libraries on this blog. Will get a tab up there soon 😊

– AnthuR  
Yes, this is such a fabulous idea!!! Should we get them on the blog as they register or should we let the libraries send us their information or should we get the profile from National Library? sounds very exciting!! Cheers  
– Shaba 😊

i am very much looking forward for basic course in library service. i hope i get the chance to participate in the course.

– Afra  
[Re Basic Course...] i very much enjoy every class..got to learn new things in the course..

– Afra  
[Re Basic Course...] Dhen kondhuhukun mi course ohnaany.

– Mariyam  
Dear Mariyam, We will be offering the course again next year, insha Allah. Probably around the same time frame. Keep following the blog – we will be posting news about our activities & events.

– infomalias

...continued on p. 7



**The Maldives Library Association** is a representative of the Maldives Greenstone support Network (MGN), along with the National Library of Maldives and other institutes.

### Koha & GSDL software

The MGN is working in partnership with Digital Library Network of South Asia (DLNetSA), in an effort to promote the creation of digital libraries (DL) to promote access to information resources in the country. Digital Library is particularly essential to the Maldives given its dispersed geographic nature.

In this respect, the software packages designated to be promoted in the South Asia Region by DLNetSA are Greenstone Digital Library software and Koha [Integrated Library System (ILS)].

**Koha** is a full- featured modern ILS. Initially developed in New Zealand by Katipo Communications Ltd and first deployed in January of 2000 for Horowhenua Library Trust. It is now used worldwide. Its development is steered by a growing community of libraries collaborating to achieve their technology goals in library operation.

The advantages of Koha include: savings on finance that would otherwise be used up buying proprietary software; convenience in managing all the functions of different modules; users' searches performed on one central database; and friendly user interface.

**GSDL** (Greenstone Digital Library) is a suite of software for building and distributing digital library collections. Greenstone empowers users, particularly in universities, libraries, and other public service institutions,

to build their own digital libraries.

The software is particularly useful in developing countries, mainly due to its free availability [as it is open source], and also its multilingual features.

### Learning outcomes of the workshop

The objectives of the workshop was to empower the library and information service staff and IT staff of different institutes in the Maldives in implementing GSDL and Koha ILS software package in their organizations.

Koha ILS workshop was conducted from 28-30 November and the GSDL workshop from 1-6 December 2010, at the National Centre for Information Technology.

The specific learning outcomes of the KOHA ILS workshop include:

- Understanding the scope of library automation,
- Creating awareness of factors that must be considered in planning and implementing ICT applications in libraries and information centres,
- Implementing KOHA ILS software package (with Cataloguing, OPAC, and Circulation system modules),
- Creating awareness of MARC 21 and Z39.50 standards, and
- Data conversion through MARC Edit.



## Koha & GSDL Training of Trainers Workshop

Organized by the Maldives  
Greenstone support Network  
28 Nov to 6 Dec 2010

The specific learning outcomes of the GSDL workshop include:

- Installation and configuration of the Greenstone software and its associated software,
- Creation of simple DL collections,
- Designing and creating standard metadata sets and editing them as required, and
- Exploration and understanding of the Dhivehi language interface in GSDL.

A total of 26 participants completed the training. Participants were invited from Centre for Dhivehi Language and History, Department of Heritage, Maldives College of Higher Education, Maldives National Defense Force, Ministry of Education (Schools), National Centre for Information Technology, National Library of Maldives, North Province Office, South Province Office, and private institutions including Billabong International School, Lale International School, Villa College, and Mandhu College.

### Resource Persons

The main resource persons for the workshop were Dr. Mohan Raj Pradhan and Mr. Shiva Ram Shrestha, of HealthNet Nepal. This workshop was facilitated by a financial grant from the University of Waikato to the MGN. ■

~ Aminath Riyaz ~





# My experience...as a first batch student of ACLIS

Ever since I started working in libraries I have been hearing comments like 'what do you do in libraries, stack books?' or 'it must be a very boring job, there must not be much to do except shelve books, right?'

These kinds of comments always make me a little frustrated. I know for a fact that it is not only about shelving items. Therefore, I was very happy when I heard a course related to library was starting. And I was not disappointed even a little bit with the outcome of the ACLIS [Advanced Certificate in Library & Information Services] course.

We did learn how to stack or arrange books; however, in addition to this we also learned a lot of new things from this course. Our first semester included subjects like:

- Cataloguing and classification: where we had to actually classify and catalogue items,
- Introduction to library services: where we were taught about the basics and history of the library foundation, including the different types of libraries and different locations where useful information can be found,
- English for advance study: where we learned different types of writing skills etc,
- Computer applications: where along with other IT stuff, we were taught to build a website in Dreamweaver.

## LIBRARY Classification

Library is a mine of treasure  
Where you can spend your leisure  
Your benefits are beyond measure  
If you use it with great pleasure

Reading takes you to a land of your own  
Whether it is night day or morn.  
You can see the spines are so visible  
Making the subject-identification possible

Dewey saw the knowledge explosion  
And devised a decimal classification  
Knowledge is divided into ten main division  
Decimals are used for more specification

For your pleasure there is fiction  
And to your knowledge various non-fiction  
Handle the books with love and affection  
For they give you great satisfaction

By Mrs. Arasarathnam  
(written in 1997) E.P.S School

And our second semester included subjects like:

- Library resources and services: in this subject we were introduced to different services provided by the library such as the circulation service and reference services, and to the different types of library resources. In addition to this we were also exposed to book mending techniques, writing collection development policies, how to maintain the library collection, and also acquisition of library materials.
- Office administration: we did not think that there were many administrative works to be done in a library. However, in this subject we learned about the importance of paperwork maintenance, no matter how tedious the work is. We were briefed about the responsibilities of both the employer and the employee to make an office a successful organization.
- Information literacy skills: where we were actually asked to prepare and present a lesson plan to the fellow students
- Industry placement: where we got the chance to see and work at real and successful libraries such as the College [MCHE] library and the National Library of the Maldives.

In addition to studying, we also got a chance to participate in extra curricula activities and events such as "Maadharee dhuvaa", Journalism day and the Library day.

Today I can, and I am sure all the other students of ACLIS, also say that the library is not only about stacking library items. It is also about maintaining the library collection in such a way that its users will want to come to the library again and again. It is about providing the information from the library and from other places to the library users.

To conclude, I would say what we learned during the ACLIS course was more than enough for us to start and run a small library on our own. The hands on experience we got in our last semester during Industry placement was the highlight of the whole course as we got the chance to work with professionals within this field. ■

~ Fathimath Nashfa ~



*"The Image of a Library" –  
through the creative & observant eyes of a 5-year old boy*

...continued from p.6

## Commentary from MLA blog

[Re. News from SLLA

Conference] Thanks Shaba, for the kind words about me 😊

The conference sounds very interesting and I have all the confidence in you that you did a great job representing the Association for the international audience. Taking the time out of your holiday and also making travel arrangements and associated costs on your own, is commendable. The association should in the future try to cater for such expenses – and this requires us to do more in terms of fund raising.

The piece of news about REFSALA is also very interesting. 2014 and 2015 will be exciting years for MLA – we need to move things faster and achieve big to live up to the expectations. 2010 so far has been a busy year for MLA – it should be busier the following years!

– AnthuRiyaz

[Re.: Visit to Hithadhoo Public Library]

i agree with you..this library is really special...if we all (librarians) work together we can save the library..when we are together we will be stronger – @fr@

Are we loosing this library :( Count me in. I'm with you guys. – Shiu

Can we please have a map of Maldives on the website somewhere so that we can map the libraries we've visited and confirmed 😊

– Shaba

why is the basic course not accredited? If the MLA is working at its best i think the basic course should be accredited here in Maldives. i hope i get see the basic certificate being accredited.

– Anonymous

...continued on p. 8

...continued from p. 7

## Commentary from MLA blog

[Re. MLA Calendar of events]

looking forward for the workshop  
on media archival, preservation &  
conservation.

– Soodha

Unfortunately the workshop on  
media archival, preservation &  
conservation is delayed. Will let  
you know as soon as we can  
arrange it.

– infomalias

So blogging is on the rise again,  
eh ? Nice !!!

– subcorpus

## SLLA International Conference, Colombo, Oct 2010



SLLA International Conference 2010



Members of REFSALA meeting 2010  
Seated front row: [left to right]  
Prof Russell Bowden (Hon Adviser),  
Prakash Thapa (Nepal), Dr Ellen Tise  
(IFLA), Upali Amarasingi (Sri Lanka),  
Prof Malahat Sherwani (Pakistan).  
Standing back row: Dr Nazim Uddin  
(Bangladesh), Aishath Shabana  
(Maldives), Anton Nallathamby (Sri  
Lanka), Dr Dharam Veer Singh (India).



Shaba with  
Prof Russell Bowden,  
Founder of REFSALA



Shaba with  
Dr. Ellen Tise, President of IFLA

# Library as a Political Institution

## Introduction

In a democracy free flow of information is necessary and essential; libraries are important institutions that have a significant role in the dispersal of this information, in turn enabling informed discourse among the public. According to former American president Franklin D. Roosevelt, libraries are essential to the functioning of a democratic society (Stielow, 2001). Libraries are safe places where everyone without any restrictions should have access to information and knowledge. Libraries also provide access to information published by the government so the public could monitor the activities of their elected representatives to ensure they are making policies and decisions in the interest of the public, which in turn allows them to participate in the process of governance. If a free society is to survive, it must ensure the preservation of its records and provide free and open access to this information to all its citizens (Kranich, 2001). Libraries in their work ensure the freedom to read, to view, to speak and to participate. Therefore indeed, they are the cornerstone of democracy.

In this essay I will be taking a historical look at the role public library played in democracy/governance.

## Historical Overview of the Role of Libraries in Democracy

Nature, purpose and characteristics of the libraries have varied throughout the history of librarianship since the first library was established in Egypt in 1250BC (Chowdhury et al., 2008). However the core objective of a library such as collection, organization and processing of information resources for easier and better access has remained the core of librarianship. Libraries have been established in many different societies throughout history, but their holdings were usually limited to a privileged few and also usually censored by a higher authority. Thus the restricted access was directly related to the totalitarianism and the ruler's dependence on censorship (Chowdhury et al., 2008).

Free access to knowledge and ideas has political and economic costs to totalitarian systems that centralize decision making power in the hands of the selected few. Given the connection between knowledge and power, this type of restrictions regarding access to knowledge only seems natural. Access to ideas encourages independent thought, which often has been equated with open rebellion and revolution. Independent thought prevents those with power from manipulating the minds and attitudes of populace to their own ends. According to a Chinese emperor when men become too wise they become worthless; which illustrates the animosity totalitarian rulers have against knowledge (Hafner & Sterling-Folker, 1993).

Censorship of information was not only restricted to totalitarian regimes, even in places such as ancient Greece or Rome where democratic ideals took foothold, libraries were censored to suppress undesirable political thought. This type of censorship has continued to this day as a means to control personal and political freedom.

The library, like the press and broadcast media, is controlled and manipulated as a propaganda tool of a totalitarian government (Hafner, 1993). Sometimes the library is open to all the citizens, but it is the collection that is censored. As a social agency that reflects the society's attitude towards knowledge, library's function in authoritative political systems was to propagate the government's philosophy. Likewise library collections are maintained to reflect the government sanctioned philosophy, to ensure that undesired information is not available for the public.

After looking at the undesired impacts of suppression of freedom and lack of democracy on the library, it is also equally important to look at how libraries functions to further the values of democracy. The first notable departure from the traditional norm of library censorship and control was seen in the Anglo-Saxon library tradition. Until their creation in America and Great Britain in the mid-nineteenth century the type of library defined by George Chandler as public library "which is freely open to all irrespective of age, profession, race, color and in which there is free access to any literature required" (Hafner, 1993, p.13), the concept of public library was virtually unknown. But this type of library made perfect sense for these countries because of the democratic nature of the political and economic systems that were being established in these countries.

Democratic theory argues that a democratic government and society must enable individuals to achieve their fullest potential of development. It assumes that individuals who reach their fullest potential will contribute to the society better in general. In order to achieve such development, an individual needs knowledge and access to ideas, this is where the library fits the whole scheme of democracy (Hafner, 1993).

The library in the modern context as we know it today was in-part created to uphold, strengthen and realize some of the most fundamental democratic ideals of our society. These ideals remain as important to us today as they were back then. A free society, if it is to remain free, must ensure the preservation and provision of accessible knowledge to all of its citizens (Hafner, 1993, p.19). This is a requirement of any free society and democratic government. These reasons provide adequate justification for the continued existence of a democratic purpose for the public library in our society today. ■

~ Amman Adam ~

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دستورالعمل‌های ایمنی - سرفصل‌ها:

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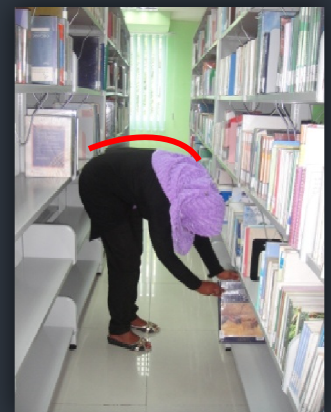
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## MLA members 2010

Abdulla Nahid  
Abdulla Nashid  
Adheela Mubaarak  
Ahmed Niyaz  
Ahmeema Mohamed  
Aishath Aroosha  
Aishath Rayya  
Aishath Shabana  
Aishath Shifaza  
Aishath Zaha  
Aminath Faruzana  
Aminath Fazeela Mohamed  
Aminath Fazna  
Aminath Leena  
Aminath Nasiha  
Aminath Riyaz  
Aminath Shiuna  
Amman Adam  
Asima Adam  
Athiyya Shakeel  
Azhar Abdulla Saeed  
Azlifa Ali fulhu  
Badhruhnisa Abdulla  
Dunya Zahid  
Fathimath Nashfa  
Fathimath Shiham  
Fathmath Hishma  
Gulaifa Mohamed  
Habeeba Hussain Habeeb  
Hassan Ahmed  
Ibrahim Shiyam  
Lahma Abbas  
Majidha Ali  
Mariyam Basheera  
Mariyam Saeedha  
Mariyam Shiuza  
Mariyam Soodha  
Mohamed Aslam  
Muneeza Afeef  
Nafha Mohamed Ahmed  
Nasheedha Abdul Rasheed  
Nasheedha Mohamed  
Nasih Jamal  
Rishfa Ibrahim  
Riyaza Mohamed  
Shaheeba Mohamed  
Shahuzana Mohamed  
Shamoonah Mohamed  
Thuzuhath Ahmed  
Wadheefa Hassan

## MLA Institutional Members 2010

Arabiyya School  
Laamu Atoll Thaulaemee Marukazu  
Maldives College of Higher  
Education  
Mandhu College  
National Library of Maldives

## Library Basic Course: Introduction to Librarianship

Maldives Library Association (MLA) organized and conducted a library basic course, from 19 September to 7 October 2010.

Library and information workers from a variety of institutions, people from the general service sector, and from among the general public participated in this course.

The institutions represented include Billabong International High School, Maldives National Broadcasting Corporation (MNBC), National Library, Children's Multimedia Library, Mandhu College, and Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE). A total of 18 people participated, with 13 of them completing the course successfully.

The topics covered in the course were:

- Introduction, purpose and identifying library needs
- Book selection and book ordering
- Accessioning
- Library catalogues
- Searching using library online catalogues
- Classification
- Cataloguing
- Processing
- Shelf arrangement
- Weeding
- Damage & repair
- Circulation
- Statistics in libraries
- Information resources
- Reference services

The theoretical and in-class activities were supplemented by a visit to Children's Multimedia Library.

The topics were taught by members of the MLA, made up of library staff from MCHE Library, National Library, and students from the Faculty of Arts studying in Advanced Certificate in Library and Information Services course.

The basic certificate course was conducted in the American Center of the National library of Maldives. All classes were held from 16.00 to 19.00hrs so as to facilitate a flexible time for participants in fulltime employment.

The MLA basic course was last conducted in 2006. Compared to the previous courses conducted by MLA, the topics taught in this current course were slightly changed. Topics such as 'searching using library online catalogues' were totally new; this includes searching other library catalogues such as Library of Congress, British Library catalogue and Libraries Australia. The other topic taught was 'Information resources' which highlighted the effective use of print and electronic reference materials.

It is heartening that a fair number from the public showed interest, including library staff and school managers from other islands of the Maldives. However, the shortage of actual participation was due to the fact that the basic course has so far not been accredited by Maldives Qualification Authority. The Library Association is



currently working towards accreditation of the course for next year.

Budget constraints, lack of training facilities and resources persons were the main obstacles faced by MLA in organizing short-term training programs. The support of the National Library of Maldives (American Center) and Mandhu College in providing a training venue and a computer laboratory is much appreciated by the organizers and participants of this training program.

As for the resource people (including the students of the ACLIS course conducted by MCHE), time was a sacrifice that had to be made. Therefore the basic course schedule was planned out in a flexible way to the convenience of all parties involved. It would be an injustice not to mention all the people who put in their valuable private time voluntarily as resource persons for the program. Some topics were conducted by ACLIS students Nasheedha Mohamed, Thuzuhath Ahmed, Aishath Shiuna, Naseema Anees, Fathimath Visala, Fathimath Nashfa and Shahuzana Mohamed. Other sessions were conducted by MCHE staff Aishath Shabana, Aminath Riyaz, Aminath Shiuna, Athiyya Shakeel; and Fathimath Shiham and Fathimath Nashath from the National library taught two topics. Thank you all for the contribution!

The feedback received from the participants was very positive. All participants agreed that this course was important to understand the main works in a library. According to the MNBC staff who participated in this course, the course was very useful, especially because they deal with different formats of audiovisual materials.

To improve future similar programs, MLA intends to advertise the time and duration of the basic course for 2011 with enough time in advance so that those interested from other islands could make the arrangements to come to Male' to participate in the course. The MLA is also looking at options of conducting the Basic course at province level.■

~ Athiyya Shakeel, MLA Training Officer~





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## Professional Development

The MCHE has announced for a new intake for the Advanced Certificate in Library & Information Services offered at the Faculty of Arts. The course was launched for the first time in 2010. The Faculty of Arts (FA) informs that 17 students successfully completed the course requirements from this first intake in 2010. FA believes the course to have been a successful one and is looking forward to educate more people capable to serve in library and information centers of the Maldives.

## Update on MLA activities 2010

### • Basic course in Librarianship

A short-term course in basic library skills was conducted from September to October 2010.

### • SLLA International Conference

MLA President participated and presented a paper at the Sri Lanka Library Association's International Conference, October 6-7, 2010.

### • SLLA International Conference

MLA was represented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations, held in Colombo on 7 October 2010.

### • Koha & GSDL Workshop

MLA coordinated with the MGN Network in organizing and conducting the GSDL & Koha ILS Training of Trainers Workshop, from 27 November to 6 December 2010.

## Upcoming Events

### • MLA General Meeting

The MLA first general meeting for 2011 is scheduled to be held in January.

### • Special meeting to give away Basic course certificates

To be held in January 2011.

### • MLA Library Workshop Series

Sessions of the series will be continued in 2011.

The topics will be decided at the forthcoming General Meeting.

### • Basic Course in Library Services

To be held in September 2011.

### • MLA newsletter

The next issue of this newsletter will be coming out in April 2011.

Send us your news, feedback/comments, articles relevant to the library association, libraries, and information gathering & dissemination activities in the Maldives.

### • MLA Silver Jubilee Publication

We are collecting information to prepare a book to be titled "Quarter of a Century of MLA". We need your support in collecting any available information from the past years. Photos, letters, adverts etc. Write to us at: [info.malias@gmail.com](mailto:info.malias@gmail.com) or leave a comment on <http://infomalias.wordpress.com> or call us at 7765181.

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## From the MLA Photo Archive



Certificate awarding ceremony – Basic Course 2005



From MLA dinner night - 1996