

Digital Image Library for Cultural Heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils - A first step towards preserving the living heritage of Tamils in Sri Lanka

S. Ketheeswaren
Senior Assistant Librarian, University of Jaffna
vskethees@gmail.com

S. Arulanantham
Librarian, University of Jaffna
sriaru91@gmail.com

The investment in cultural preservation of a war torn society is a contribution to the restoration of the civil society. Cultural heritage preservation has traditionally been dominated by the preservation of tangible forms of culture that represent communities' histories. Libraries can play a role in physically preserving some tangible aspects of different cultures in the world. Sri Lanka has a rich and diverse multi-cultural and linguistic heritage. In recent decades alternative approaches led to a re-thinking of the priorities and processes of cultural preservation of this nation particularly cultural, ethnical, linguistic and religious diversity of its people.

Image collections are an essential component of the print and artifact collections of Foundation for Library Awareness (FOLA) both of their artistic and documentary value which have been collected over a period of time since its inception. Digital Image Library (DIL) is one of the pilot project of FOLA and this research is a step forward to preserve the Living Heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils through designing a DIL.

The objective of this research is to design a DIL in a constructive user friendly way with the support of dspace, open source digital library software, to preserve the cultural heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils and to describe a selective approach to cultural heritage conservation and protection.

The images were collected from various sources. The presently existing tangible and intangible heritage have been produced by taking photographs. The heritage replaced by modern way of life

and lost their existence were collected by scanning the pictures available from print resources such as books, journals, newspapers, paintings, and collecting from websites.

Based on descriptive analysis of topic of these images, they were classified as different communities. At present 250 images were added into DIL under different communities and collections. The DIL is bilingual in nature which enable the user to search through Author, Title and subject search. The searching of the images can be made bilingual in Tamil and English where Title is searchable with Tamil and Author & subject are searchable with English. But the browsing can be used irrespective of language to approach the collection.

The DIL has not yet networked online. Networking the DIL through internet will satisfy the second objective of the work further to share the records of living heritage in effective manner.

Finally, this paper emphasizes of designing and updating this kind of digital image libraries and for this purpose explores some selective ways to upgrade the DIL by encouraging the members of Tamil society to preserve their cultural heritage through their active participation.

Key words: Digital Image Library; Living heritage-Sri Lankan Tamils; Cultural Heritage-Sri Lanka; Digitization-Images