

Formulation of a model Provincial Library Statute

Provincial Library Group (2016/17);

Convener:

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Objectives: Due to the devolution of power to Provincial Councils through the 13th amendment to the constitution of Sri Lanka and the Provincial Council Act 42 of 1987, Provincial Councils started dominating the provincial administration of the country. To suit the new administrative mechanism the NLDSB initiated the movement to enact the Provincial Library statutes at provincial level in order to establish Provincial Library Services Boards (PLSBs) and Provincial Central Libraries (PCLs). As a result five Provincial Library statutes were enacted in North-Western, Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa and North-Central provinces. Due to abrogation of the library statute of North-Western province, only four library statutes are in operation at present.

The PLSBs established under the library statutes helped the Provincial Councils to improve the library services of these four provinces substantially. Three provinces, Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa have established Provincial Central Libraries. Both PLSBs and PCLs conduct a range of activities to improve the library and information services in the provinces at present. Due to certain shortcomings of the library statutes, all PLSBs are encountering difficulties at present. These problems are ranging from the inability to appoint a Director as the Head of the professional staff of the PLSB to it becoming a part of the line ministry rather than a statutory board with certain degree of autonomy with adequate powers to improve library services in the province. In addition the composition of the board of management of PLSBs, its financial strength, the library structure of the province need improvement through revision of the present library statutes. The SLLA Provincial Library group has selected the project from the SLLA Strategic Plan to formulate a model provincial library statute as a remedial measure to the present situation. Once the model library statute is formulated solving the above mentioned problems, it can replace the present library statutes in those provinces strengthening the whole provincial library structure. This new model library statute can be enacted in the other five provinces where library statutes are not in operation.

Mechanism: The Committee examined all four Provincial Library statutes to understand their deficiencies. In addition it conducted a survey through a questionnaire sent to all four PLSBs. All PLSBs have responded to the questionnaire and pointed out the problems and difficulties they face at present. In addition they indicated their opinion on the library statute and their shortcomings. Committee also studied the original model provincial library statute prepared by the NLDSB in late 1980s and the reasons for altering it by some Provincial Councils which caused most of the present problems. Committee discovered certain limitations of the original model library statute, specially its attempt to introduce three layers including library structures at District and Pradeshiya levels in addition to the Provincial level. Studying the Annual Reports of the PLSBs which indicate their activities, perusing the

annual action plans and strategic plans where available, attending to the annual symposium of the PLSBs and studying the available research literature on the subject are the other methods used by the committee to gather information. Committee also studied the experiences in other countries with provincial administration and their library structures.

Major deficiencies in the present Provincial Library Statutes

- Too much of power assign to the line Ministry of the Provincial Council sacrificing the independence of the PLSB
- Poor composition of the Board of Management by not representing important stakeholders
- Trying to create District and Pradeshiya level library boards in addition to PLSB,
- Non uniformity of Library statutes in different Provincial Councils
- Non-recognition of the Director as the head of the professional staff
- Non indication of functions of the Chairperson and Director
- Inadequate financial autonomy
- Inadequate financial resources
- Role and functions of the Provincial Central Libraries have not been indicated
- The statutes have not been drawn in a scientific manner in certain instances
- Other

Other General weaknesses of PLSBs

- Inability to attract professional staff
- Dependency on Non-Professional staff
- Insufficient interaction with NLDSB, SLLA, NILIS
- Priority for non-professional projects
- Lack of resources
- Lack of planning
- Other

The action proposed by the group

- Formulate a model Provincial Library Statute
- SLLA and NLDSB to take the initiative of introducing it to PLSBs
- Revision or repeal of all four Provincial Library Statutes
- Work closely with the four PLSBs and the respective Provincial Councils in the exercise
- Close monitoring the procedure of enactment of the statute

Main emphasis of the proposed model library statute

- Appointing a balance BoM representing all major stakeholders
- Strengthening the representations of the LIS field
- Provide a substantial autonomy for the PLSBs

- Introduce advisory committees covering major professional areas
 - Improve the power and functions of PLSBs
 - Make compulsory to have professional staff with a Director
 - Indicate the role of the Chairperson and the Director
 - Indicate the functions and responsibilities of the Provincial Central Libraries
 - Remove the library boards at District and Pradeshiya levels
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- Strengthen the financial stability of the PLSBs
 - Improve interaction with NLDSB, SLLA, ICTA, NSF and other national level LIS organizations
 - Encourage to link with IFLA, IASL and other international, regional professional forums
 - Other necessary steps to strengthen the PLSB and the PCL

Expected outcome

- Healthy and strong PLSBs
 - High quality Provincial Central Libraries
 - Better library services at grass root level
 - More facilities and opportunities for library personals at grass root level
 - Introducing Provincial Library statutes to other 5 Provincial Councils
 - Improve the professional status of SLLA as the prime mover of the revisions of provincial library statutes
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