

# Noolaham Foundation

## Project Report



<b>Project Title</b>	Digitization and Dissemination of Contemporary Magazines Pilot Project
<b>Project Number</b>	NF/PG/2008/0002
<b>Project Location</b>	Colombo and Jaffna
<b>Sector</b>	Digital Library, Collection Development and Print Publications Archive
<b>Implementing agency and contribution</b>	Noolaham Foundation
<b>Grant Agency and Contribution</b>	Noolaham Foundation
<b>Total Budget and Expenditure</b>	Phase 1 – LKR28,116.00
<b>Project Period</b>	2008
<b>Responsible Stakeholders</b>	Mr. Shaseevan Ganeshanathan (Team Leader), Local Magazine publishers

### Summary

The **Digitization and Dissemination of Contemporary Magazines Pilot Project** was carried out by Noolaham Foundation in 2008 to digitize the current issues of contemporary Tamil magazines that focus on Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities. It was a collaborative project undertaken by Noolaham Foundation in coordination with various publishers. The project aimed at collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of printed magazines. The main objectives of this project were to provide open access of contemporary magazines, preserve and create wide global visibility of the valuable information in these magazines. The project was implemented as a pilot project to evaluate feasibility, time, cost, adverse events, and effect size (statistical variability) prior to a full-scale project.

This project was successful in digitizing 76 issues of 13 titles of periodicals. All of them are available online through Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library at [www.noolaham.org](http://www.noolaham.org). The table of contents was manually inputted to enhance the search-ability of the content. The digitized magazine was also categorized at the digital library so that users could identify and access the issues easily.

### Introduction and Background

The periodical magazines are primary sources of information, but if they are not systematically archived, finding past issues and information are not that easy. Only a few libraries such as the National Archives keep past issues of magazines but accessing them from various geographical locations is not possible as they are usually not available through interlibrary loan and they are not going to be reprinted. Even with access to a magazine, unless it has been indexed, searching for the desired information can be a tiresome quest.

These magazines, typically published monthly, or as a quarterly, contain articles and fiction about society, culture, history and literature of different periods. They also contain news articles and feature articles on national and international issues as well as local issues. The

articles include political events and personalities, business and finance, crime, and natural disasters, health and medicine, science and technology, sports, and entertainment, society, food and cooking, clothing and home fashion, and the arts. Furthermore magazines still greatly influence the formation or the expression of public opinion by providing the necessary space for writers to express their personal views and to analyze political, economic, business or cultural events.

Digitization makes such primary information sources available for all and the search-ability of digital libraries makes it even easier to access the desired information. However, the status of preservation of Sri Lankan related published materials in general also leaves much to be desired. A combination of lack of resources, expertise and proper housekeeping has resulted in unfavorable conditions for the materials in Sri Lanka. Noolaham Foundation has been digitizing all publications related to Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities since 2005. It has given special attention to digitizing periodicals archived by only a few other institutions. These periodicals are harder to access in the long run. Digitization of periodicals enables long term preservation and enhanced access.

### **Objectives and Achievements or Results**

The main objective of the 'Digitization and Dissemination of Contemporary Magazines Pilot Project' was to evaluate the feasibility to run a full-scale project where all current magazines will be continuously digitized and made available on line as soon as they are published in collaboration with the publishers.

High quality digital images of 300dpi in 24bit color were scanned using Mustek A3 and Canon A4 flatbed scanners and master copies were archived. Derivative images were converted to the pdf format and made available via the Digital Library. During the project NF followed guidelines based on digital library standards and best practices.

Totally 76 valuable past issues and contemporary magazines under 13 titles were digitized through this project and made available online through Noolaham Foundation's Digital Library at [www.noolaham.org](http://www.noolaham.org). Digitization initiatives will allow users to search collections rapidly and comprehensively from anywhere at any time. These precious collections are related to the Tamil speaking communities of Sri Lanka. It is a great cost effective opportunity to bring and link quality information and reading resources to the Tamil speaking community. These collections will function as a repository for information seekers of all kinds all over the world

### **Constraints / Challenges and Lesson Learned**

During this digitization project NF was confronted by a number of challenges

- Offering scanned images without any fully searchable text would only partially fulfill users' needs, as many (if not all) desire to search all of the texts available to them. It is necessary to consider providing navigation within the digital data through the use of indexing software even though NF provided metadata and content as well.

- Only a small amount of funds were allocated towards this project. Thus a number of magazines could not be scanned and had to be moved to another project
- Due to the unstable political situation in Sri Lanka some of publications are not available at the publishers' and at the community level and an enormous amount of valuable information in published formats remains uncollected and risks being permanently lost. The recollection of rare publications seemed to be a hard task during this project period.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

- Once the digital image is created they need to be made searchable and accessible. The images are processed with optical character recognition software to make the Magazine text searchable. But there is no such software available in the market to satisfactorily offer the required results in Tamil. Still a better solution needs to be discussed and metadata must be created for each title, issue, image, and possibly article to help the users find what they are looking for.
- Noolaham Foundation should acquire adequate resources to expand the projects, if needed.
- The publications that have been left out should be digitized and made available to the Tamil speaking community when resources are available and Noolaham Foundation should find those documents from the Tamil community and community based libraries with the help of its volunteers.
- Noolaham Foundation should collaborate more and more with other publishers and groups in creating digital content to share information and resources.

### **Acknowledgements**

Noolaham Foundation would like to thank everyone for their support to implement this project successfully. These contributors participated in various activities such as making contact with publishers and repositories, provide their newspaper collections to NF for digitization, finding any missing newspapers, participating in scanning, providing technical support and launching the digital copies on the digital library.

### **Annexure**

#### ***The list of documents digitized***

1779 - 1808, 1889 - 1892, 1956 – 1997

#### ***Magazines digitized***

Mallikai (மல்லிகை), Jeevanathy (ஜீவநதி), Ahavizhi (அகவிழி), Naan (நான்), Nathi (நதி), Nishdai (நிஷ்டை), Vedikkai (வேடிக்கை), Suvaitthirai (சுவைத்திரள்), Thaayaham (தாயகம்), Olai (ஓலை), Peruveli (பெருவெளி), Koodam (கூடம்)