LIBRARY SERVICES IN SRI LANKA DURING COVID-19

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A nationwide curfew was imposed from in Sri Lanka from the 20th March 2020 with occasional relaxations, except for high-risk zones due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The services of public and private institutions including Libraries, Archives and Museums (LAMs) and Library and Information Science (LIS) teaching institutions were affected across Sri Lanka. After 04 months of closure, the country started getting back to the regular life style, amidst the inhibiting mental conditions such as fear, worry, uncertainty, anxiety, sense of loss, isolation, nervousness due to lack of communication etc. do exist. Safety guidelines were published by the National Library and Documentation Services Board of Sri Lanka (NLDSB), in consultation with NILIS, University of Colombo, and the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA). The NILIS published an Exit Strategy from Covid-19 in partnership with the University of Colombo, NLDSB, Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA), and the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) on 27th April 2020. LIS education institutions brought regular teaching-learning practice onto the online platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp. However, poor data signals and non availability of smart devices to access learning materials were the problems reported, specially by students residing in remote areas. NLDSB continued to publish advisories and circulars and created a Web site specially designed for Covid-19 related information for libraries. On 9th May 2020 NLDSB published directions on how to reopen the libraries step-by-step. A series of webinars and workshops were conducted by several parties. The Asia Foundation donated Rs.1 million worth protective instruments and disinfectants for public libraries in the Colombo district.

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