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Kathmandu University and NLF Form Partnership

By Paul Bird paul@nepallibrary.org

On September 5th 2013 NLF Nepal President Sharad Babu Shrestha and Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) Dean, Professor K C Subas, formalized a collaborative partnership between the two organizations to promote learning and research in the field of library and information management.

The NLF has long been concerned with the issue of skill development in this area, seeing it as a key factor in the development of sustainable and relevant libraries in Nepal. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the organizations points to the opportunity for sharing institutional strengths, experiences and resources to bring about improved library management capacity nationally.

There are currently dozens of libraries planned, or in the process of being commissioned, in Nepal. We know that the long term sustainability of these libraries cannot be taken for granted. Sound management policies are key to ensuring that a library can adjust and adapt to the needs and resources of a community. Initiatives such as the proposed Diploma in Library and Information Management (DipLIM) will provide the educational foundation upon which sound management practices can be evolved and put into practice. KUSOM is dedicated to providing relevant, accessible and practical course



NLF President Sharad Babu Shrestha and KUSOM Dean Prof KC Subas at signing ceremony at Kathmandu University

delivery in modular format based on real-life needs and experiences.

The MOU also anticipates collaboration on research, consulting, resource material sharing, conferences and advocacy. The NLF sees the latter as an opportunity to articulate the case for developing policy at a national level in order to support and develop access to information. We see this as key to economic development and the well-being of the Nepali people.

Feedback from Subudhi Mahanand Academic Library

By Vijay K Jha, PhD, Houston, Texas

Looking back in time to when I was growing up in Nepal, libraries hardly existed and even now they are few and far between.

The Nepal Library Foundation (NLF) was founded specifically to help address this issue. One library it has helped to develop is Subudhi Mahanand Academic Library (SMAL) in Simara village located in Sahali district. NLF provided books and magazines, children's play materials,

See SMAL on p3



SMAL members undergoing training

President's report

Naresh Koirala, President, NLF Canada naresh@nepallibrary.org



There have been significant changes in the last twelve months in the way the NLF is able to carry out its mandate to promote libraries and improve access to information in Nepal. Of prime importance is the establishment of NLF Nepal. As a locally registered entity NLF Nepal now has far greater potential to influence the development and implementation of cohesive and rational policies to provide the people of Nepal with the information resources needed for social and economic development. The partnership between Kathmandu University School of Management and the NLF is an indication of the promise such potential offers.

One of the first issues that we hope to address in the coming year is the implementation of a library and information access sector review. Such a review, variations of which have been carried out in a number of countries as a foundational framework for the articulation of coherent policy and programs, is a vital requirement at this stage of Nepal's social and economic development. Lack of such a framework in Nepal is indicated by the continued delay in the deployment of the funds allocated in 2013 for digital resource deployment in schools despite existing proven solutions such as the NLF funded e-Pustakalaya developed by OLE Nepal. The people of Nepal deserve better than the muddled and incoherent approaches currently prevailing.

The work on the ground that the NLF carries out in helping develop libraries in rural and urban communities gives us a unique view of actual needs and the potential that access to information can bring to the lives of Nepali. We are now in a better position than ever to assist in bringing about significant change.

We cannot do this without your support. We are more than ever grateful for this and look forward to reporting back to you with the results of our endeavors.

Server Installation Training

By Paul Bird, Secretary, NLF Canada paul@nepallibrary.org

The Open Learning Exchange, in collaboration with the NLF, recently carried out a three day training program in Kathmandu to pass on knowledge necessary for setting up and using an e-Pustakalaya server. Concern had been raised over the need to reduce installation costs by transferring the knowledge necessary for server management to a local level.

The three day course provided an overview of the content, basic network functions (including software and hardware components) and administrative functions such as local workstation client installation. Teachers from schools in Lilitpur, Nuwakot, Baglung, Tanahu, and Kritipur participated as well as a number of NLF volunteers and staff.

We see this type of training program to be essential in developing the necessary skill base at a local level to effectively support the running and maintenance of digital resources in libraries and schools.

It is hoped that training of this kind can be included as a component of a library management diploma program referred to on p1 that the NLF and Kathmandu University are developing.



Primary school students in a remote school in Myagdi district take turns to use the e-Pustakalaya. There is an acute shortage of trained personnel to keep such resources functioning.

OLE Nepal Gains Funding for e-Pustakalaya

OLE Nepal announced earlier this year that it has gained funding from a UK based organization to assist in the continuing development and expansion of the e-Pustakalaya, the digital library that the NLF has funded since its inception.

OLE's new partner seeks 'to identify quality charities with strong local management teams who are able to combine successfully their enthusiasm and passion with high levels of integrity and professionalism' and to 'strive to identify charities with good evidence of their results, sound finances, quality staff and resources, and ambition'.

We had also identified these qualities in OLE Nepal at the outset of our partnership five years ago.

We are very pleased that the investment that the NLF has made in the e-Pustakalaya is being capitalized on. A significant portion of our resources have been directed towards developing the e-Pustakalaya over the last five years. Its widening deployment in schools as well as libraries and acceptance as the only significant standalone digital educational knowledge repository in Nepal is proof that this investment has paid off handsomely. We will continue to promote the widespread deployment of server-based installations of the e-Pustakalaya in the absence of affordable and accessible broadband internet access in Nepal. This will provide community access to information and literature as well as being a pivotal catalyst in promoting educational change.

Einstein and Fairy Stories

By Paul Bird paul@nepallibrary.org



Albert Einstein was once asked by an interviewer how children could be made more intelligent. "If you want your children to be intelligent," he said, "Read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales."

The unprecedented success of the Harry Potter series underscores that the market for updated fairy stories is extremely healthy and the demand for fantasy literature is alive and well. Parents stood by in amazement as their children forsook their televisions and computers for the next installment of that addictive saga. Their children were reading books *and loving it*.

The writer Neil Gaiman tells how he was invited, in 2007, to the first Communist Party-approved science fiction and fantasy convention held in China. Bemused, he took one of the organisers aside and asked him why the party leaders, who had disapproved of such writing for so long, had suddenly changed their minds. The answer was simple: the Chinese were brilliant at making things if the idea was brought to them, the official said, but they did not innovate and invent. A delegation was sent to seek an understanding of what kind of person drove the creative powerhouses of the likes of Microsoft, Google and Apple. One of the commonalities was that all the people working there had read science fiction as children. Encouraging people to read fantasy and science fiction could provide a background for creative thinking.

Another point that Gaiman has made about reading fantasy is that it is a "gateway drug" to reading of all kinds. Public libraries provide the access points to the potential wealth of fantasy fiction in a wide variety of genres. It is a challenge to keep library catalogs changing and evolving to meet demand. J.K. Rowling showed the potential of that demand with Harry Potter. Libraries can never be static entities. They must constantly evolve and change. Although, for many of us, digital text is a poor substitute for the physical comfort of an actual book, a memory stick can contain thousands of books, as does the e-Pustakalaya.

Whether the form of the book is of the traditional kind or as a digital file displayed on a screen, there will still be the need for the physical place where advice can be sought and time taken to read the words in whatever form. The library and librarian can still be a key part of children's introduction to the world of fantasy and reading for the sheer enjoyment of it.

Subudhi Mahanand Academic Library (SMAL) from p1

training and management expertise. Because affordable internet access is non-existent NLF has also provided access to the e-Pustakalaya e-Library, installing a local server to get access to thousands of electronic books as well as multimedia resources. The students, farmers, women, teachers and other groups now have access to these resources as well as the services of trained librarians who provide invaluable assistance to the library users. As well, the library has sponsored reader groups for women, youth, farmers and others. I would like to urge as many individuals and institutions as possible to help the NLF by providing even a small contribution to establish many more such libraries in Nepal. The difference a well run and managed library can make to a community is inestimable.

Dharachaur Reading Clubs

By Alison Bird alison@nepallibrary.org

Members of the community served by the Shree Vishwamitra Samudayik Pustakalaya recently celebrated the Hindu festival honouring Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of wisdom and learning, by inaugurating a bi-monthly wall magazine sponsored by two of the library's reading clubs, Happy Readers and Spandan.



Reading club members contribute to the Shree Vishwamitra Samudayik Pustakalaya wall magazine

The NLF actively encourages libraries to initiate reading clubs as a strategy to promote reading for recreation as well as education and learning. A third group, the Bright Future Reading Club, is made up of young women in years 10+2 and college level. The coordinator of the readers clubs, Ms. Roshana Acharya, said, "The main objectives are to ensure easy access by its members to the library and for them to interact among each other for more effective learning and sharing of useful information".



Shree Vishwamitra Samudayik Pustakalaya reading club in session

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Sutherland School Visits Prakash Library

For several years now students at Sutherland High School in North Vancouver, BC, have been raising money to support the rebuilding of a derelict library in Shreekhandapur, a farming community about an hour North of Kathmandu, near Dhulikhel, Nepal. This March members of Ms. Cynthia Bunbury's Social Justice class visited the Prakash Community Library to see what they had helped to put into place.

Escorted to the school from Kathmandu by NLF Nepal Board members Sharad Babu Shrestha and Mrs Agatha Thapa the students were welcomed to a celebration put on by community members including teachers and students from the local school.



Sutherland School students and friends in the reading room of Prakash Library



Residents of Shreekhandapur welcome visitors from Canada

The community also provided overnight homestay accommodation.

While short, it was, as the students described it, the opportunity of a lifetime, to stay in someone's home, to bond with young people their own age, to discover we are so alike in so many ways, to share simple, everyday activities and try some new and different ones.

Ms Bunbury aptly described the visit as the sort of experience that she and her students will treasure and be influenced by for their whole lives.

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About the NLF

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