

LIBRARY NEWS

CEYLON NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES BOARD

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**SPEECH BY MR. AHMAD MATTAR, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION) AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRD ANNUAL
CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL
LIBRARIANSHIP, ON SATURDAY, 27 JULY 1974 AT 10.30 A.M.
IN THE MERCURY ROOM, APOLLO HOTEL, SINGAPORE**

For the next two weeks, a large number of educationalists, education administrators and planners, experts in teacher training and language teaching, teachers, librarians and others from all over the world, will be meeting in Singapore. The conference which opens today is part of this series of conferences to be held in the Republic and we are particularly happy that Singapore is the venue for these meetings because all of them have a strong emphasis on the development of human resources. This emphasis is something which we Singaporeans have all along believed in, since, as you know, Singapore lacks natural resources and is therefore largely dependent on the development of its human resources, particularly in terms of our young and growing population.

2 We especially welcome all participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand as our fellow members of Asian and participants who have come from still further afield, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and the United States of America.

3 Much has been said about the crucial role of education in social and economic development today. All developing countries share great aspirations and hopes that education will be the magic key to the eradication of poverty, hunger, sickness, unemployment, misery and oppression, hence the overwhelming demand for education in all developing countries. While this demand reflects positive support for education, it also creates enormous problems which arise from trying to satisfy that demand.

4 These problems are, without doubt, familiar to many of you who have first-hand experience of them. The basic factor of large school enrolments, particularly at the primary level, is reflected in overcrowded classrooms, insufficient numbers of trained teachers or poor quality teachers and inadequate facilities, including buildings, playing fields, laboratories, libraries and workshops. The development of appropriate curricula which will serve the needs of developing societies struggling to modernise and fit themselves into the twentieth century world and the limited availability of suitable teaching materials appropriate to the needs of the school-going population are additional problems.

5 These massive and complex problems are further compounded by the common error of regarding the school as the only educational institution, thus leading to the demand for teachers to teach students everything from A to Z in the syllabuses to matters of civic and national concern such as road safety, ecology, consumer education, population education, drug and health education. Over and over again, the cry is heard that these important subjects must be taught in schools, adding to what is frequently an already overburdened and overcrowded syllabus. The new concept of Education for Living introduced recently by my Ministry helps to integrate these various elements into a harmonious whole and help everyone to realise that education is not a process that ends on leaving school.

6 Adam Curle, amongst others, has pointed out that "the whole of life, in fact, educates us - our families, community, religion, our particular experiences, the values, traditions, and customs of our parents, tribe, and nation; the more directly instructive impact of what we read, hear or see through the mass media; our society's approach to originality, effort, creativity, manual dexterity, money making, the arts, and a host of other things". Thus, education is something that should be shared not only by schools and the teachers who work in schools but also by society at large which cannot abdicate its responsibility for education in all forms.

7 Singapore presents a microcosm of many of these educational problems for examination by those concerned with the ferment of educational experiment and revaluation that is going on today. It has a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual mix of population and is in the throes of a rapid transition to a technological society and a drift away from the few rural and agricultural areas we possess to a new way of life in high-rise apartments in urban concentrations.

8 About one-quarter of the total population of just over two million people are attending schools or institutions of higher learning. The enormous expansion of the school-going population over the last ten years and the accompanying crash programmes in teacher training have inevitably led to some dilution of quality and it is the pursuit of quality in education that is now our major objective. While all children now have a free place in school for the first six years of their school-going life, only about 60 per cent achieve entry to the secondary school. The rest, at the age of fourteen, acquire technical and vocational skills while the needs of handicapped children are jointly provided by the Government and voluntary organisations.

9 School libraries in Singapore have, in the past, suffered from being accorded lower priority than many other educational concerns. The Library Association of Singapore was a pioneer in working for the development of school libraries in a variety of ways, including the provision of courses for teacher-librarians. In 1969, the Association formed a School Library Section, whose membership now includes nearly a hundred and twenty teacher-librarians and schools. In 1970, a Seminar on School Libraries, organised jointly by the Ministry of Education, the Library Association of Singapore and the British Council, made a number of key recommendations which are gradually being implemented.

10 One of the first results of that Seminar was the setting up in 1970, of a Standing Committee on School Libraries by the Ministry of Education as one of the Standing Committees of a larger Advisory Committee on Curriculum Development. The Standing Committee on School Libraries includes representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Library and the School Library Section of the Library Association of Singapore. It has conducted a survey of school libraries, organised workshops for school principals and teacher-librarians, drawn up standards for secondary school libraries, recommended a basic list of periodicals for secondary school libraries, completed a syllabus for library skills in the primary school and undertaken in-service courses for teacher-librarians in cooperation with the National Library, the Institute of Education and the Library Association of Singapore. It has also successfully launched two pilot projects for the bulk ordering and centralised processing of picture books for primary schools and of fiction for secondary schools. The Standing Committee is currently

finalising standards for primary school libraries while the Ministry of Education now has a full-time School Library Development Officer. Most secondary schools now have a central library but hardly any have been able to provide full-time librarians. However, an encouraging development has been the creation of librarian posts at the new junior colleges which provide two further years post-secondary education.

11 While much has been achieved, much more still remains to be done. This Conference, dealing as it will with both the theoretical and the practical issues in school librarianship, will therefore be of great value to all in Singapore and elsewhere who are working in this field.

12 The school library is often considered an educational "frill", largely irrelevant to education. Sometimes, it is the teacher himself who clings to his central position on the classroom stage, preferring to rely on the projection of his strong personality rather than encouraging the child's self-discovery or self-learning through the use of a variety of materials. The school teacher, the school principal, the educational administrator must themselves be strongly convinced of the active role of libraries and books in education, and be able to demonstrate the correlation between libraries and education if they are to ensure wholehearted support for the library in the school.

13 Trained librarians tend to know more about books than about children and may turn their clients against the library by over-enthusiasm or lack of subtlety, or may make the library appear unfriendly and intimidating by over-formality, harsh rules of silence and behaviour, and preoccupation with such matters as untidiness, dirty hands, exact placement of books and general technical efficiency.

14 The child's first encounter with libraries and librarians is one that will affect his attitude to and use of libraries not only during his school years but his adult life. In Singapore, because of the limited facilities of school libraries, the child's first library is likely to be the National Library, which is also the public library of Singapore.

15 About 60% of the library's total membership consists of children under the age of fifteen, a reflection also of the youthful nature of our population, half of which is under twenty-one years of age. This good response of children to the library is made possible by friendly, informal and inviting service and is a most encouraging augury for the future. The child whose casual visit to the library becomes part of his everyday life, is one who will imperceptibly find books and libraries relevant to his needs as he grows older.

16 Perhaps the greatest challenge that school librarians face is that of making the reading of books and the use of libraries a joyful and pleasant experience dissociated from the textbook and the strains of formal learning. Librarians must have the enthusiasm, the imagination and the skills required to spark off curiosity, interest, a sense of wonder and a lively concern for human beings and human problems - it is these qualities that will provide the strongest motives for learning and for continuing to learn and to adapt in the face of continual change.

17. I now have great pleasure in declaring open this third Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP

3rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN SINGAPORE

There were 121 registered participants representing 13 countries-- Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United States. This was another opportunity to make new friends, to renew friendships, and for IASL to gain wider recognition in the Asian area.

PROGRAM--"Developing School Library Programs to meet the Education Needs of Students"

The conference was opened by the Honorable Ahmad Mattar, Parliamentary Secretary. The keynote address was given by Dr. Ursula Picache, Dean of the Institute of Library Science, University of the Philippines. In her topic, "Educational Change and Its Implication for Library Service", Dr. Picache highlighted many educational changes and discussed the role of the school library/learning resource center as an agent for change within the school program.

The second day was devoted to the theme, "Resources for Implementing the Program" with the position papers on related topics. Topic One considered teacher development in the use of library materials, emphasizing programs for pre-service and in-service education for teachers. Case studies from Australia were included with workshop materials and slides. Topic Two stressed the selection of materials for student use and the speakers described selection policies and problems in developed and developing countries. Topic Three presented the concept of developing administrative support for effective library programs.

The discussion groups examined school library services on three levels: (1) the establishment stage, (2) the development stage, and (3) the expansion stage. Out of these discussions came the following resolutions making specific recommendations for IASL to support.

I. This conference recognizes the importance of the preparation of administrators, principals, teachers and school library personnel if the school library is to become an effective force in education and therefore recommends:

- A. That school library personnel should have full professional preparation;
- B. That national authorities concerned with education should provide expanded and continuing opportunities for the education of school librarians;
- C. That opportunities be developed to enable school administrators, principals and teachers to understand the goals and objectives of library services as they relate to curriculum development, instructional design and student's learning experiences.

II. This conference recognizes that to enable school library services to develop at local, regional and national levels, education authorities are urged to:

- A. Establish centralized facilities for the evaluation, acquisition and processing of all types of materials for local schools.
- B. Provide adequate budgets on a continuing basis to support the establishment and expansion of school library services;
- C. Establish patterns of staffing to ensure a continuous development to eventual full time professional school library services and
- D. Encourage the support of lay groups in furthering school library services.

III. This conference recognizes that a broad provision of materials and resources through the school library is essential in the educational process and urges that:

- A. Educational authorities establish opportunities for the development of cooperation among school librarians, teachers, administrators and students in the evaluation of materials.
- B. School librarians involve teachers, students and principals in the selection, production and utilization of materials.

IV. This conference recognizes that the opportunities for continuing education and the exchange of ideas are essential for professional development and urges educational authorities to sponsor school librarian's attendance at local, national and international conferences on school library services.

V. This conference recognizes that the establishment of dialogue between administrators, principals, teachers and librarians is essential for the development of effective school library service at all levels and directs the Board of IASL to develop and support plans for the involvement of administrators, principals, teachers and librarians in conferences on school library services.

VI. This conference urges school librarians as individual members of professional organizations to participate in those organizations which:

- A. Serve as channels for the development of strategies in planning goals and objectives for school library services;
- B. Support development of school libraries and
- C. Create public and governmental awareness of the needs of school library services.

VII. This conference directs the IASL Board to make a concerted effort to alert publishers to become more aware of the relevancy of user needs in determining publications for children and young adults.

UNESCO REGIONAL SEMINAR
ON BOOK DISTRIBUTION METHODS IN ASIA

Colombo, 23-29 October 1974

Inaugural Address

by

Al Haj. Dr. Badi-ud-din Mahmud
Minister of Education, Sri Lanka

Two years ago, during the International Book Year, the Unesco held a seminar in Colombo on General Book Publishing and Distribution in Asia. Today, you have gathered here in Sri Lanka once again to consider a very specific topic. Nevertheless, it is a topic that is most relevant and perhaps the most difficult of solution in the context of the developmental situation obtaining in our countries. It is indeed a great pleasure for me today, as Minister in charge of the subjects of Books and Education to welcome you to my country on behalf of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka.

Many things have happened between the International Book Year, and now. The context of the World situation had considerably changed from what it was then, as we all know. For us in Asia, these changes have led to severe stresses on our way of life. Therefore, your task today is weighed with greater difficulties. Yet, the urgency and importance of the task remains unmitigated.

To my mind, book distribution, which is said to be the weakest link in the book production chain, cannot improve unless the climate for the demand for books in our region also improves. This leads us to the fact that we have to do everything to create book hunger in our peoples. Hand in hand goes the great effort to improve literacy.

When all this is achieved, we may still be behind in our race, for, our book production itself may lag behind. If that is going to happen, it is patently clear that people will lose their interest in reading.

So, we have a difficult problem on our hands. A problem that has to be tackled from many angles. In fact, nothing short of a concerted multi-pronged attack can bring about the desired result.

Authorship must be made to flourish. Not only must it flourish but also it must be directed to help realize the real goals of a country. World knowledge has to be brought to the door-steps of our people: Inasmuch as authors should flourish, translators must be helped to discharge their due responsibility.

The physical production of books in our region leaves much to be desired. Just as a book must be pleasing to the eye and a temptation to read, it must also contain matter that is presented to the reader while keeping the reader himself in mind. That will mean that it must be a well edited book.

Quality apart, are we producing sufficient books in our region, quantity wise? The number of titles and the number of copies fall far

short of the actual needs. And I doubt very much if by 1980, any of the developing countries of our region will reach even the modest target of 160 pages per person set in 1966. In most of the developing Asian countries, book production has not reached the expected targets. No doubt, it is the economic difficulties that our countries have continued to experience, that have stood in our way.

What about the readers themselves and the literacy of our people? You are more familiar with the situation in your countries than I am. I need only say that unless the people develop the love of reading, no effort at book production will achieve the desired goal. You may distribute books, but if people do not read them, it will have no meaning. You may have created the book hunger; but if you have not distributed the books properly, once again the effort will be in vain.

So, we have so many highly inter-connected problems. Each one of these problems becomes a limiting factor for the others. That is why I said that the attack should be a multi-pronged attack. I am sure you will agree with me.

We, in Sri Lanka, have taken several meaningful steps in this regard. We have done a lot to reduce illiteracy. We have done this even at the expense of being frowned upon by others for disregarding the modern sophisticated notion called 'Economic Growth'. But I must stress that we had a set purpose and we are glad at what we have achieved. We have opened roadways and we maintain them. We have helped our people in ameliorating their difficulties in respect of their basic food, rice and of health services. We have set in motion a project to establish libraries all over the Island. We are developing our community centres. We have developed our co-operative marketing system that every remote village has its own co-operative shop. They are fed by centrally placed wholesale depots which are not too far away from the village stores.

We are now gearing the distribution of state-produced textbooks to this co-operative system. We started the scheme on a trial basis and it was a tremendous success. We will therefore, be extending it very soon. The Book Development Council has taken several effective measures to help the author and the publisher regarding the distribution of books. The publishers are now being brought together by the Council which helps them to distribute their books through the co-operative system. A successful start has been made, and already the Co-operative Wholesale Establishment is planning to expand the activities in this direction.

But against all this effort, there looms large two major obstacles. As you are aware, we are one with the many of you when I say that we are economically hard-pressed. Next, Asia is suffering from a severe shortage of book-production materials, the chief of which is paper.

Developed countries have been accused of retaining a lion's share of the paper supplies of the world and for doling out a mere pittance to the Asian countries. I am afraid, I am unable to echo such a view-point, when I realize that we have done hardly anything to produce more paper. In many areas of our region we have abundant rain coupled with a fertile soil. They say we do not have long-staple-fibre

plants. Scientists have discovered such plants which will grow with profusion in our regions. What we have to do is to think of ourselves as one Asian family. Let's develop our paper-pulp material by cultivating these on a large scale wherever possible. The Green Revolution is on already. Let's now begin the paper revolution. Let's also establish many more pulp mills and paper mills in our region. Let's produce what we want in our region. Let's share our efforts, our know-how and our production.

As I said, most of our countries are economically hard-pressed. If so, must we relegate all what I have said before to the realms of our imagination? Certainly not! By common effort we can overcome our problems. Our common effort is sure to have the support of the Developed countries, particularly through the United Nations' system. Therefore, I suggest that, when you have completed your deliberations, you will give serious thought to recommending the establishment of a Regional Book Development Fund for Asia. This Fund will have to be managed by a central body representing the nations of our region. Of course, the Fund will have to get substantial assistance from the International and National Monetary Institutions of the world. And certainly of course, we all will have to contribute our mite as best as we can. While I commend the idea to you, I must say that it must be left to the bodies concerned to iron out details. The ramifications of the activities to be generated by the Fund may vary from research projects to projects for supplying men, material and money for book development.

I am sure that this seminar, its results, the conclusions you arrive at and the recommendations you are going to make, are going to be a fruitful contribution to this important facet of development in our region. I have no doubt that you will find your job rewarding enough at the end, however exacting it is going to be.

It is my sincere wish that your short sojourn here in Sri Lanka will be full of pleasant experiences; and that you will return home with happy memories of this little island of ours.

In conclusion, both on behalf of the Government, and on my personal behalf, I thank you for taking your time off from your various valuable duties at home to attend this Seminar; I thank the UNESCO Book Development Centre for Asia for organising the Seminar in Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lanka Foundation for the unstinted support it has given us in order to make the seminar a success. I wish the Seminar all success! Thank you.

Unesco Regional Centre for Book Development in Asia, Karachi

Unesco Regional Seminar
on Book Distribution Methods in Asia
Colombo, 23-29 October 1974

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Regional.

- (1) Unesco and its Asian Member States should give serious consideration to the establishment of a Regional Book Development Fund for Asia as a common effort towards overcoming the problems encountered in the field of books particularly with regard to the supply of paper and other allied materials.
- (2) International financial institutions like the Asian Development Bank should be urged to assist countries of the region in their book development efforts.
- (3) A regional training programme to train the book sellers abroad should be instituted with assistance of UNESCO.
- (4) Paper producing countries of the region should be urged to enhance their production of paper particularly low cost printing paper for books.

2. National.

- (1) Every Member State of the UNESCO in the Asian region should establish a high level effective and widely represented National Book Development Council preferably as a statutory body to co-ordinate and implement the planning of the production of books as part of an overall national plan.
- (2) Authors and publishers should produce more suitable books to readers of rural areas.
- (3) Exchanges of reading materials based on oral traditions of the various countries of the Asian Region should be encouraged in order to provide materials for rural reading public.
- (4) National Book Development Councils of each Asian country is urged to publish book news bulletins in co-operation with the book publishers and book sellers association, as an effort to provide information on existing books.
- (5) Government sponsored mass medias should be fully utilised to propagate books in order to bring about book consciousness and to develop reading habits.
- (6) Regular National programmes like the book weeks and national book festivals should be held to expose books to the masses.

- (7) National newspapers and advertising agencies in each of the Asian countries should be urged to assist in the distribution of books by prescribing advertising rates.
- (8) Schools should be encouraged to conduct regular book reading programmes through reading assignments and book review contests and other similar methods.
- (9) At village level publicity on books should also be conducted in conjunction with other programmes like religious and cultural activities.
- (10) Non-traditional distribution outlets like local bodies, educational and religious institutions, community centres etc. should be utilised in order that the book may penetrate effectively into rural areas.
- (11) Non-traditional methods of book selling like house to house selling, selling at village fairs, peddling by vendors should be encouraged as methods of book selling in rural areas.
- (12) Book distribution and book selling should be customer oriented and not product oriented.
- (13) In order to find out the real needs of the readers of books, countries of the region that have not done any survey should make an attempt to do it as soon as possible.
- (14) There should be a code of ethics in book selling in order to ensure that distribution of books be done through the book trade.
- (15) Library movement should be intensified in each country, particularly in the rural areas. The mini village library of Korea was sited as a good model for the Asian Region.
- (16) People should be encouraged to set up private libraries for public use in their communities as a public service, or to donate personal collections to public libraries.
- (17) Heads of schools should be encouraged to work out plans for enhancing school library collections through donations by the parents of students.
- (18) National incentives should be provided to distributors of books by the Government of each Asian country through the provision of low postal rates, tax reliefs and low import tariffs.
- (19) Governments of the countries of the Asian Region where surcharges are levied on importation of cultural paper should be strongly urged to dispense with such practice.
- (20) Banks should be urged to provide long term and low interest bearing credit to booksellers and to accept book stocks as collateral.

- (21) Unesco member states of the region should accept the suggestion that the IBY symbol be the common symbol to identify book activities and that it should also be used to identify bookstalls.

Special

In view of the increase of both Asian membership of Unesco and the need to expand book activities in the Asian region the Unesco Regional Centre for Book Development in Asia should be strengthened both financially and by way of increased staff, particularly those of the professional category.

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NATIONAL BOOK DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA

The objects of the Council shall be -

- (a) to promote and encourage the habit of reading and the use of books and other reading materials among the people,
- (b) to promote writing, production, export, import, sale and distribution of books and other reading materials,
- (c) to import and export books and other reading materials,
- (d) to promote, co-operate and integrate governmental, private, professional and other organizations related to the printing and publishing industry in Sri Lanka,
- (e) to encourage co-operation and integration with international agencies and other institutions or bodies abroad,
- (f) to integrate book development with overall national planning and development; and
- (g) any other matters connected with or incidental to the objects (a) to (f) above.

Extract from the Draft Bill.

**LIBRARIES IN THE BOOK DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RURAL AREAS**

By

Mrs. K. L. Panditaratne

The topic selected for this morning's general discussion is "Libraries in the Book Distribution System with Special reference to rural areas".

Book distribution has two aspects the sales aspect and the library aspect. As the title of this morning's discussion suggests what we are concerned with at the moment is the library aspect of book distribution. But these two aspects of book distribution have such a close affinity towards each other that it would be incorrect to speak on the library aspect without reference to the sales aspect. Hence let us have a very quick glance at the book trade aspect before embarking on the general discussion on "Libraries in the book distribution system".

Book distribution through sales can take place in numerous ways, the most important of them being through the wholesale and the retail trade, when publishers offer their publication to wholesalers as well as retailers on a discount basis. Sales representatives visiting bookshops, libraries, schools, offices etc. are able to canvass sales of books as well as of forthcoming publications. Sales by means of vans are a very profitable and effective method of book distribution. Book sales conducted at fairs like the village fairs held weekly, and in schools by prior arrangement also contribute a great deal towards book distribution. Pedlars often travelling on bicycles to remote areas too undertake book sales on a commission basis. House-to-house sale of books too form an interesting form of book distribution. Sales of books at drug stores and departmental stores are a novel feature of book distribution in Sri Lanka. Direct mailing of books on special requests made by customers though not very common, is yet another method of book distribution. Last but not least book sales at exhibitions are a very effective and popular form of book distribution.

But none of these methods of book distribution can be a match to the part played by libraries in the task of book distribution. The task of bringing the book to the reader by effective methods of book distribution is perhaps the most significant role that libraries can play in their service to society. This is especially so in the case of rural society. The rural folk engaged in various types of activity for their livelihood, find little or no time after a hard day's work to spend in libraries. This fact then makes it imperative for libraries to organize effective methods of book distribution throughout the rural areas in the Asian Region.

2/3rds of the world's population and 85% of the people of Sri Lanka live in rural areas. Unlike in the urban areas in the rural areas the population is scattered among the numerous villages situated amidst hills and villages. Very often the bulk of the rural folk live miles away from the rural public libraries which are centred in the scene of activity of the area, i.e. the bus-stand, the post-office, the rural hospital, schools, Government offices and the market. This situation offers the rural libraries their dynamic role of providing books and other reading material

to those living in these isolated and scattered areas. This task can best be fulfilled by such methods of book distribution as the book-box method, the book carts, the book bicycles, the book boats, the book-mobiles, the book-ponies etc. etc. In other words if the readers living in these areas are unable to come to the libraries seeking after books, then the libraries must take the books to the readers.

Let us at this stage examine the methods of book - distribution prevailing in the Kandy District in Sri Lanka, where a Unesco sponsored Pilot Project in Documentation and Library Services was inaugurated in 1972. This Pilot Project was the outcome of the meeting of experts held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1967, when a scheme for the establishment of a net work of rural library services for Sri Lanka was originally planned out. The Kandy District has a population of 1 million 187 thousand 170 people living in an area of 914 square miles. 85% of these people live in the rural areas of the Kandy District. The Kandy District Rural Library Services Pilot Project was therefore launched for the special benefit of these rural folk. A total of 21 rural public libraries and 22 rural school libraries were included in this Pilot Project. These 43 rural libraries serve their rural readers through a book distribution system which has been found to be very satisfactory, and also very popular among the readers.

To each public library has been attached a minimum of five community centres in the villages coming within the local authority area which is served by rural public library. At the community centre level, people who desire to benefit by the book distribution system form themselves into a readers' club on the payment of a very nominal deposit fee of Rs. 1/= per member. The money thus collected is deposited in the local public library which entitles the community centres concerned to a set of books at regular intervals. These books are conveyed from the public library to the community centre reader's clubs by means of book boxes, thus giving this scheme of book distribution its name the book box method. At the community centre readers club the book box is handed over to two voluntary workers who are in charge of the distribution of the books to the members of the readers' club. At end of the specified period which is generally two weeks the books thus distributed are collected from the members which are exchanged for another set of books. A minimum of 40 books are exchanged at a time and each set includes a selection of adults fiction adult non-fiction and children's books. A complete list of the books available in the local public library both for lending and reference purposes is made available to members of the readers clubs so that they can request for any books of their choice, which would be supplied to them when the next set of books are exchanged. The voluntary workers at the community centre level are responsible for the safe return of the books to the public library at the end of the specified period. An employee attached to the public library transports the book boxes from the public library to the community centre and vice versa. This system of book distribution works extremely well in rural areas where the majority of the villages are inaccessible by other means of book transport such as book mobiles and book vans. This system is also very economical because the expenses amount to payment of the employee who transports the book boxes and the cost of the container that is the trunk in which the books are transported. By this method of book distribution the readers living in the remotest areas of the public library area are able to have access to the books who would have otherwise been denied the use of the books they require and wish to read.

At the school library level too a scheme of book distribution operates which is of great benefit to the students studying in schools without any library facilities. Each of the rural school libraries which formed part of the rural library services pilot project were organized as a circuit central library. To each of these circuit libraries are attached a minimum of five feeder schools which have no library facilities. A set of books usually about 60 are supplied at a time to each of feeder schools. The books are transported from the circuit library to the feeder schools by the students themselves and are carried in book boxes once again. Unlike in the case of the public library book distribution system here no deposit fee is charged from the students, the principals of the feeder schools being responsible for the return of the books thus borrowed. This system enables the teachers and the pupils of the feeder school to come to the circuit library and select the books they would wish to take to their respective schools. The books are normally exchanged after a fortnight. This is only one way by which the feeder schools are supplied books by circuit libraries.

Students studying in feeder schools also enroll themselves as external members of the circuit library and borrow two books at a time, on the normal issue pattern operative in the circuit library. This facility is very often made use of by students studying in examinations classes of the feeder schools because this method affords them the opportunity of selecting the books they wish to borrow. Both methods of distributing books from the circuit library to the feeder schools are equally popular in the school library system.

To reinforce this system of book distribution by public and school libraries in the pilot project area arrangements would be made in the future to exchange books on a rotation basis to these rural libraries once every two months or so, when book exchanges will take place by means of a book mobile or delivery van. Such a system would enable more books to be exchanged at a time, at shorter intervals to public and school libraries, thus giving the rural readers a wider selection of books.

Book mobiles on the other hand may not be so effective a method of book distribution unless, (1) the population is static and expects the book mobiles to come to them, (2) that the mobile vans spend more time in distributing books to the readers than in travelling to their various stops, (3) and that the roads and climate are suited to run book mobiles in the rural areas without upsetting the time schedules. In any case with the high cost of petrol today the economy of running a book mobile in the rural areas must be worked out before embarking on a book mobile service.

Considering these factors we can say that the most effective and economical method of book distribution for rural areas in the Asian Region today is the book box method which while satisfactorily fulfilling the task of taking the books to the readers and satisfying their needs and interests costs so little to operate. The important factor to bear in mind here is that the voluntary workers at the community centre level, and the teachers at the school level realizing the usefulness of the book box method must strive to work for the achievement of the objective - which is to make books and other reading materials available to the rural readers both at the village and the school levels.

Though the literacy standard of the rural people living in the Asian Region is generally high they suffer from the lack of information relevant to their daily life. It is in this respect that public libraries in particular play a vital role in providing the rural folk with the information they need.

No library will be used by its readers unless it caters to the needs and interests of the particular community which it serves. This is particularly so in the case of rural areas where the reading habit and the habit to use libraries hardly exist at all. Therefore in the matter of book distribution rural public libraries must be very alert to this situation and must make every effort to distribute among their communities such literature that will be of use and of interest to them.

In the words of Dr. G. Chandler, "the public libraries" newest role in the educational sphere is providing the new literates with easy to read books in the national languages". As we all know there is a dearth of literature in the national languages not only for the new literates but for the children and the adults as well. The general standard of living in countries in the Eastern Region being comparatively low, they cannot afford to spend money purchasing books. The public library then has to be the link in the channel of book distribution between the author and the reader.

This brings us to another vital problem which is very common in most of the developing countries in the Asian Region, that of providing and distributing reading material in the national languages. This is not merely a problem for the writer, the publisher, and the book seller alone but for the librarian as well. Because while there is a dearth of books in the national languages being written, published, and sold, even the little material available in the national languages will not be available to rural readers unless there is a very effective system of book distribution operated by these libraries. In establishing an effective rural library service not only must the material the rural communities need be available, but they must also be able to read that material. That then is the material in the national languages.

A well-balanced collection of books in a library with a regular system of book distribution among its readers would not only accelerate their circulation, but would also speed up sales in the bookshops themselves, because in the words of one of the members of the International Book Committee held in September 1973, "frequent borrowers are frequent buyers as well." Such a step would speed up book distribution at the level of the library as well as at the level of the bookshop.

A well organized library system is an essential pre-requisite for book distribution. It is also the most economical and effective means by which books and other reading material can be made available to the people of any country.

Readership surveys conducted by libraries provide very valuable information regarding the readers' tastes and the reading habits of the people the libraries serve. This information must be communicated to authors, publishers, and book sellers as they indicate very clearly the needs of the various categories of readers both adult and juvenile. Hence the effectiveness of a sound book distribution system depends to a very large extent on the effectiveness of the library service. This fact then serves to indicate the vast responsibility thrust on librarians serving in the libraries of the Asian Region, to organize their libraries in such a manner so as to provide a very efficient book distribution system among their readers, the vast majority of whom live in the rural areas.

The dynamic role libraries play in promoting the reading habit and the book buying habit in turn stimulates the writer, the publisher and the book seller all of whom are vital links in the chain of book distribution. But in the countries of the Asian Region where due to low purchasing power and books being considered a luxury commodity the general public do not indulge in book purchasing, the role played by libraries in effective book distribution becomes all the more important and significant, without which books would be lost to the majority of those readers who are in need of them. What is required is that books must reach the readers who need them and for whom they are meant.

Libraries in their present context can be considered as "fountains" where knowledge would be ever flowing all the time, rather than as "reservoirs" where knowledge would be stored in. It is in this context that we have to view libraries when discussing the role played by them in effective book distribution systems.

Unesco Regional Seminar on Book Distribution Methods in Asia - Colombo,
23-29 October 1974

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UNESCO - UNISIST

First Meeting of Experts on Regional Information

Policy Development in South Asia

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 13-15 December 1974

Address by

Dr. V.G. Podoinitsin

On behalf of the Director-General of Unesco, it is my pleasant duty to welcome you on this occasion of the opening of the First Meeting of Experts on Regional Information Policy Development in South Asia Organized by Unesco within the framework of the UNISIST Programme.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka for their kind hospitality and generous assistance towards the organization of this meeting in this beautiful and friendly country of yours. My appreciation is tendered to our distinguished guest, Mr. T.B. Subasinghe, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Sri Lanka who is kind enough to spare his most precious time to inaugurate this function.

We are grateful to those Member States of South and Central Asian region who established UNISIST National Committees and designated national focal points or are in the process of doing so and who have nominated experts to attend this meeting here in Colombo. My cordial greetings go to the specialists and observers who have come here.

At its seventeenth session in 1972, the General Conference of Unesco decided to launch a long-term international programme on transfer of scientific and technical information, to be known as the UNISIST Programme with the objectives; to advance and co-ordinate the world trends towards information sharing and co-operative agreements among governments, inter-

-national organizations and operating information services; to provide guidance and catalytic action for the necessary development in the field of scientific and technical information; to facilitate the access of scientists, engineers and technologists to published information; to help the developing countries meet their needs for scientific and technical information; and to take the necessary measures for the establishment of a flexible world network of information systems and services based on voluntary co-operation. The eighteenth General Conference of Unesco, which first came to an end in Paris last month, reaffirmed these objectives in strong terms, increased the UNISIST budget by some 9%, and added as one of the priorities of the programme the establishment of regional and sub-regional scientific and technological documentation centres in the developing countries.

There is growing evidence that co-operation between Member States in information activities within a geographical or otherwise defined region strongly supports and stimulates the development of information policies, structures and infrastructures at the national level, if such co-operation is based on factors that are common to the Member States within that region. The identification of such common factors, on which future technical co-operation can be fruitfully based is a prerequisite for a successful implementation of any regional programme. Such common factors may vary widely in nature, such as common language, geographical position, communication facilities, comparable or complementary information structures, services and/or infrastructures, economic and social interaction, existing agreements at conceptual and/or operation level, etc.

In the framework of the UNISIST Programme it was decided to convene a first meeting in South Asia with a view to exploring the feasibility and desirability of the development of regional co-operation. This meeting it is hoped, will review the information provided by the Member States in answer to the "list of questions for a comparative review of national information policy and management". It is hoped to identify common factors for regional co-operation and to provide guidelines on the planning of national scientific and technological information systems. For its part, Unesco will continue to encourage and assist the Member States in the creation and development of their infrastructure in the field of scientific and technical information. As a final remark, I should like to assure you that the Unesco Regional Office of Science and Technology for South and Central Asia in New Delhi will extend its full support for implementation of the decisions taken and conclusions arrived at this meeting.

With your co-operation, I wish the meeting every success.

Thank you.

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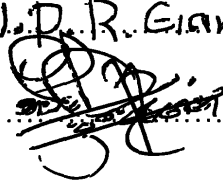
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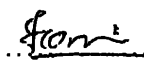
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