

EXPLORING THE USAGE AND DEVELOPMENTS OF THE COLLECTION OF THE CEYLON ROOM AT THE LIBRARY IN UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA


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ABSTRACT

Presently, being one of the largest universities in Sri Lanka in terms of student number, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJ) is a leading higher education institution with diverse courses, research and inventions. The main library of USJ exceeds fifteen thousand members in its user community, including 862 permanent academic staff. The Ceylon Room (CR) Collection is considered one of the most valuable collections in the library of USJ. CR Collection consists of various printed materials significant to Sri Lankan literature. The first objective is to assist the user community in their academic endeavors and to observe the Ceylon Room usage and development needs. The other objective of this study was to find out whether the users are satisfied with the existing CR Collection. Data was gathered from the library usage records, structured interviews and through questionnaires distributed among students and academics who visited the Ceylon Room from May to August 2021. The purposive sampling method was applied, and the sample for this study was taken from three faculties out of ten faculties of the university which directly have access to the main library, i.e., Humanities and Social Sciences, Applied Sciences and Management Studies and Commerce. The available library statistics were used as primary data obtained from the records in the CR collection from 2015 to 2019. Results revealed that, most students and academic staff were satisfied with the CR Collection, and the satisfaction rates were 80% and 53%, respectively. The highest usage of the CR Collection by students is from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) (78%), and the least usage of the CR Collection is from the students of the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) (1%). Most of the academic staff of FHSS (65%) have indicated that they used the CR Collection during 2015-2019. During that period, the least number of academic staff members that have used the Ceylon Room belonged to the FAS, which is 6%. Results showed that academic staff and students of FHSS using the existing CR Collection are 65%. Therefore, the library should give more attention to the faculties of the Applied Sciences and Management Studies and Commerce to make their students and academic staff aware of the availability and new additions of the CR Collection. Furthermore, the collection should be continuously re-evaluated to meet user requirements to support their academic activities.

KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries, Ceylon Room Collection, Sri Lanka, Univ. of Sri Jayewardenepura, User Survey

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Sri Jayewardenepura library, which was established in 1979, has a long history. The library was established in 1959 as the Sri Lanka Vidyodaya University Library. It started with a small collection of books in the Vidyodaya Pirivena and a private collection of the most Venerable Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero.

Presently, being one of the largest universities in Sri Lanka in terms of the student number, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJ) has become the third-best university in Sri Lanka according to the THE World University Rankings 2024 (2023), with its diversity of courses, research and inventions. USJ library exceeds fifteen thousand users in its community, including 862 permanent academic staff. USJ library caters to a large user community associated with ten faculties. It supports the three main pillars of the university; teaching, learning and research with its vast resource collection. It is a fully-fledged library with nearly three hundred thousand books, reputed journals, and access to many electronic books, journals and databases.

At the beginning of the library, there were two collections, namely, the Lending and Reference. The CR Collection, which currently has a valuable collection of books, is considered one of the best sections of the library. It was started during 1966/1967 to preserve Sri Lankan publications authored by Sri Lankans and other cooperative bodies. It also houses materials written about Sri Lanka. The Ceylon Room collection also considered as a rare collection of the USJ library comprises of various printed materials related to history of Sri Lanka and with local significance. Apart from that, the collection consists of publications of scholars of USJ, important government publications such as acts, bills, administrative reports, bank reports, reports of corporations, boards, and authorities and a collection of palm-leaf manuscripts. Postgraduate theses submitted to the USJ and theses submitted by academic staff members of USJ to other universities are also housed in the CR collection. In addition, the

publications written about the university's history from 1959 onwards are stored in the CR collection. Furthermore, the collection of newspaper articles about the USJ has added historical value to the CR collection. The existing collection in the Ceylon Room is open only for reference purposes.

The book with accession number 2, the second book acquired by the library has also been kept in the Ceylon Room securely because it is the most suitable place to preserve the original copies from dilapidation. Thus, the CR collection holds a special place in the library and was also established to preserve rare and unique reference materials to provide an efficient service to the user community of the university.

It is vital to examine the usage of this valuable collection of information sources and implement strategies to increase the usage. Therefore, this study contributes to the improvement of the CR Collection of the USJ Library to provide quality service and describes the information needs of the users of the CR Collection. Furthermore, this research explores the views of the users about the CR Collection. Thus, the usage and development requirement of the Ceylon Room is essential to assist in providing the best possible service to the user community for their academic activities.

Objectives

This study aims to determine usage and development of the information resources of the CR Collection of the Library University of Sri Jayewardenepura. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were stated.

- To identify the user satisfaction of the CR Collection.
- To make suggestions to enhance the CR Collection and its usage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most researchers have identified the changing needs of users with the advancement of technology as users' information needs (Kebede, 2002). Like many other

sectors, academic libraries also have to focus on changing information needs of users, especially in an electronic information environment. According to Nawarathna and Singh (2013) university libraries in Sri Lanka face many challenges in the global digital environment. This shows that digitalization has a significant impact on fulfilling the information needs of the users. To meet the information needs of users in the modern era, librarians must be able to recognize and categorize different users and their diverse information needs. Nawarathna and Singh (2013) suggest that the library management should answer the right questions, 'who are the customers? what do they want?', and what can the organization provide?'. However, when it comes to user satisfaction, attention must be given to various factors, other than satisfying information needs.

According to the library user survey conducted at the University of Jaffna, Hoole (2017), points out that the development of library systems has not been uniform all around the world. Even though developed countries have been able to expand the services incorporating technology abruptly, in developing countries, adaptation to new technologies has happened at a much slower pace. Further, when it comes to the availability of resources and user satisfaction, Hoole (2017) states that the students of the university feel that more e-resources in Tamil medium should be available. By e-resources they mean access to online full-text journals, databases, e-books, online indexes, dictionaries, encyclopedias and newspapers. This finding shows that the medium of study also matters when it comes to the information needs of library users. Furthermore, students feel that the availability of recent publications needs to be improved. This stresses that the accessibility of timely information is of much value over the quantity of information available in a library. The library management can conduct user surveys and collection reviews to make more relevant information resources available.

According to Leupp (1924), "the library is the heart of the university". Also, in a study conducted at the main library, the University of Peradeniya, Gunasekara (2010) gives the idea that the academic

library is the "heart" of the learning community. This idea stresses the vitality of library services in enriching users with new knowledge. The purpose of the study by Gunasekara (2010) is to help improving library services by identifying the level of existing resources and the overall satisfaction of library users. To gather data for fulfilling the goals she mentioned, a survey method was used with a questionnaire that included both open-ended and close-ended questions linked to a five-point Likert scale. According to Gunasekera (2010), most users are satisfied with the available resources. Most of the satisfied users have visited the library on daily basis. However, the users have commented that there should be more copies of textbooks on various subject disciplines. They stress the need for more comprehensive user awareness through library orientation for the productive use of the library. Also Gunasekera (2010) stresses that underutilization of available resources is considered a pressing issue and it should be addressed vigilantly.

According to Vijeyaluxmy (2015), a vital role of an academic library is to provide information and knowledge to students from multi-dimensions. Further, the study of Vijeyaluxmy (2015) proposes that the library is an entity to provide teaching, learning and research support activities in a university. In the study of student satisfaction with the library services of the Trincomalee campus, Vijeyaluxmy (2015) states that the library services of the campus have a moderate level of agreement for the overall services. Most of the users visit the premises frequently. They come to satisfy the needs of studying various subject disciplines and also for recreational reading. Vijeyaluxmy (2015) has discussed the areas which need continuous improvement in library services. Based on user surveys, she emphasizes that efforts must be taken to add the latest editions of available textbooks and ample copies for the users to use without any hindrance. Further, this study stresses the importance of having a sufficient number of computer terminals to access OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) to assist the users in locating resources enabling proper utilization of resources.

The case study on "Library services and user

satisfaction in developing countries: Punjab Institute of Cardiology” by Mairaj and Naseer (2013) states that library management should pay attention to strengthening the services which the users are already satisfied with. This research dives deeper into all the supporting factors essential to make the library environment user-friendly, namely library hours, space, furniture, lighting, heating, noise level, adequacy and organization of library collection, circulation system, reference service and attitude of library staff. Overall ratings for all the concerned factors are satisfactory. However, some respondents have stressed the need to develop ICT facilities. Further, Mairaj and Naseer (2013) discuss the need to train the supporting staff on various available resources to guide library users.

A study on factors affecting user satisfaction by Kaushamalika and Weerakoon (2020) suggests that there is equal importance to all complementary services, just as the quality of the content available in the library. These factors include seating capacity, lighting, cleanliness and also photocopy services. This study emphasizes the positive attitudes of library users about the library setting, which affects the usage of library resources. With the improvements in technologies, better internet access is also considered an important service available within the library premises.

Tiemo and Ateboh (2016) consider that extensive internet accessibility and renewals of regular library services are essential elements of library user satisfaction. Similarly, Hindagolla (2021) points out the significance of online resources is of the greatest importance in today's digitalized environment. However, factors including lack of adequate computer access, poor WiFi connectivity, and users' inexperience with the library website have resulted in their displeasure. These results suggest that if consideration is given to online resources and dependable, easily accessible library technology infrastructure, the satisfaction of library users can be raised.

Idiegbeyan-Ose and Esse (2013) assert that Covenant University's library must continue to provide the best

resources and services to the university's students since these factors will increase customer satisfaction. In addition, photocopying, scanning, and binding services must be improved. The library needs to capitalize on its advantages while also addressing its weaknesses. In conclusion, a library or information centre's ability to satisfy users is its hallmark as it increases user happiness. Therefore, managers of libraries and information centres should pay more attention to the quality and quantity of library content and services.

Considering the results of similar studies done on academic libraries, it is apparent that the traditional notion of a library system is no longer valid in this new era which has intermingled with digitalized content and digital infrastructure (Hindagolla, 2021). Moreover, changes in library systems in the past few decades and upcoming changes in every field with accelerated technological progress suggest that library management must maintain library services to meet the needs of its users. Therefore, continuous improvement is a much-needed aspect of maintaining and strengthening existing library resources to cater to every conceivable need of library users, predominantly the need for sources of information.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a survey. Respondents were the users of the Ceylon Room Collection of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. The purposive sampling method was applied. The data used in this study were collected from library usage records. The sample was selected from the users to the CR who belong to the three faculties of the university for which the main library mainly caters, i.e. the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) and the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce (FMSC). The usage statistics available at the Ceylon Room from 2015 – 2019 were observed and analysed as primary data to study the user needs and requirements. Students (1139) and academics (121) of the university who visited the Ceylon Room between May and August 2021 were used for this study. Discussions with the Ceylon Room staff of the library were also important for the researchers to clarify the

usage of Ceylon Room materials by the user community. Structured interviews were conducted and online questionnaires were distributed among students and academic staff to monitor user needs and satisfaction with the CR collection. For this, 64 students and 58 academics responded. In addition, an open-ended question was included in the questionnaire to obtain users suggestions, comments and recommendations to explore the usage of the CR Collection. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis, and the results were presented in tabulated and graphical forms.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the required information and data were collected by interviewing and distributing a questionnaire to both students and academics of the selected three faculties of the university who visited the Ceylon Room during the period from May to August in the year 2021. Additional data were taken from the existing library annual records. The questionnaire was used to gather data to get users' satisfaction about the CR Collection and its service.

4.1 Visiting Rate of the CR according to the Faculty

The students and academic staff of the three faculties who visited the Ceylon Room within three months were considered in this study. Table 01 demonstrates the total number of visitors, 53% for students and 47% for academics, respectively. All the responses were in a usable form for data analysis.

Table 01: Visiting Rate (As per the Faculty and User category)

User Category	No. of Visited Users			Total
	FHSS	FAS	FMSC	
Students	30 (25%)	12 (10%)	22 (18%)	64 (53%)
Academic Staff	27 (22%)	11 (9%)	20 (16%)	58 (47%)

According to Table 01, 25% of students and 22% of academics from the FHSS visited the Ceylon Room. Apart from that, the lowest visit rate was from FAS,

at 10% and 9%, by students and academics, respectively. In the FMSC, the rate of visiting students was 18%, and for academics, it was 16%.

4.2 Student Satisfaction with Ceylon Room Collection

Most of the rare collections in the libraries are considered 'closed access', meaning that the access is provided upon request. This is practiced as a security measure of the materials housed in those collections as sometimes, they contain scarce and valuable materials. Therefore, library staff who work in the Ceylon Room should be highly responsible and have an overall knowledge of the contents of the CR. It will also be helpful to increase user satisfaction by giving a better service.

Table 02: Student Satisfaction with Ceylon Room Collection

	No. of Students (Percentage)
Yes	51 (80%)
No	13 (20%)

The majority of the students (80%) mentioned that they were satisfied with the CR collection (Table 02). In addition, students stated that the library should acquire the latest resources in the relevant field more and increase the number of copies of the same title.

When data are analyzed faculty-wise, students of FHSS are marked with the highest rate of satisfaction with the CR Collection, and it is 39%. Meanwhile, 8% of FHSS students were dissatisfied with the CR Collection of the USJ library. The reason for this is that the collection of books related to certain subjects is not up-to-date. The rates of satisfaction and dissatisfaction against each faculty are shown in Figure 01.

Only 14% of students from the FAS have shown satisfaction towards the CR collection. On the other hand, the same faculty reported the least amount of dissatisfaction (3%). This shows that if more students were made aware of the existing resources in CR

Collection, the rate of satisfaction would be high.

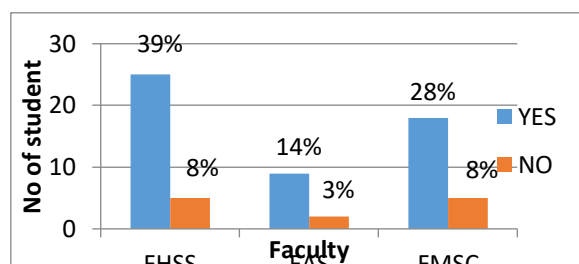


Figure 01 - Satisfaction of the Students towards Ceylon Room Collection by – Faculty

When considering the responses from students of three faculties, it can be seen that most students are satisfied with CR Collection. Also, the students who were dissatisfied with CR Collection had stated that CR Collection should be updated and students should be made better aware of the CR Collection.

4.3 Satisfaction of the Academic Staff with Ceylon Room Collection

Academic staff needs to support the process of selecting books for the CR collection since they are aware of new publications in their subject field. Moreover, they know about new publications by Sri Lankan authors in their particular subject area. It will help to maintain a rich updated collection to fulfill the user’s needs and requirements. Table 03 demonstrates the satisfaction of academic staff who visited the CR collection in the library of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Table 03: Satisfaction of the Academic Staff towards Ceylon Room Collection

Responses	No. of Academic Staff	Response Percentage
Yes	31	53%
No	27	47%

Table 03 shows that 53% of academic staff members are satisfied with the existing CR Collection in the library, and 47% are dissatisfied. Observing these results, it can be seen that the gap is low between the number of satisfied and not satisfied academic staff members of the faculties.

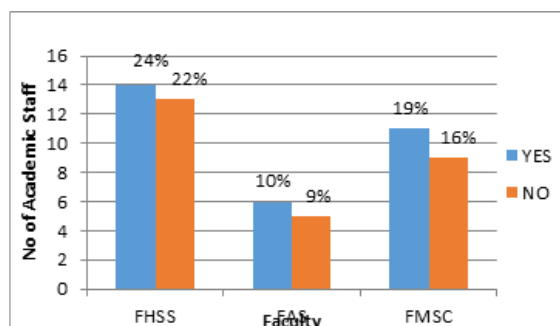


Figure 02 - Satisfaction of the Academic Staff with Ceylon Room Collection – by Faculty

When considering faculties, as shown in Figure 2, the gap is very low between the number of satisfied academic staff members and that of dissatisfied. Academic staff members who are satisfied with the CR Collection in FHSS, FAS and FMSC are 24%, 10% and 19%, respectively. Since a vast amount of publications contained in the Ceylon Room are more relevant to the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, there is a tendency for the readers of the FHSS to use the CR collection more. Therefore, the students and academic staff of the FHSS have a better satisfaction than the others with the CR collection. According to Figure 02, only 10% of academic staff members of FAS have shown satisfaction with the CR Collection. Implementation of FAS academic staff awareness programme should be ensured.

The CR Collection contains an extensive collection of locally published scientific research and conference papers. Therefore it is the responsibility of the library staff to raise awareness about the availability of science-based materials in the CR collection among staff and students of the FAS.

4.4 Ceylon Room Usage by Academic Staff 2015-2019

The CR collection is considered the heart of a library and one of the primary sources that to meet users’ specific information needs related to Sri Lanka. Therefore existing collections must be rich, updated, balanced, and relevant to the curricula of all faculties of the university. In addition, academic staff commented that the existing CR Collection would help them more effectively in their teaching, learning

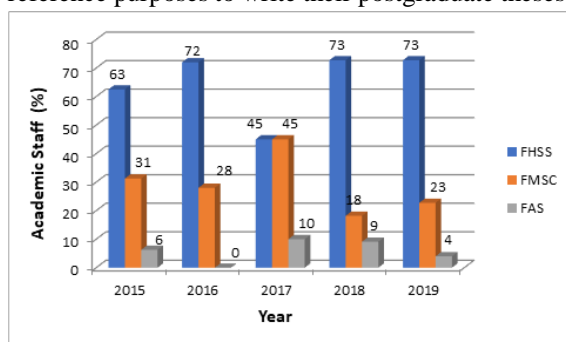
and research activities.

Table 04: Ceylon Room Usage by Academic Staff 2015-2019

Year	FHSS		FMSC		FAS	
	No of Academic Staff	Percentage	No of Academic Staff	Percentage	No of Academic Staff	Percentage
2015	20	63%	10	31%	2	6%
2016	18	72%	7	28%	0	0%
2017	9	45%	9	45%	2	10%
2018	16	73%	4	18%	2	9%
2019	16	73%	5	23%	1	5%
Total	79	65%	35	29%	7	6%

Source: Library Usage Records, 2021

According to Table 4, most of the academic staff members who used the CR Collection during 2015-2019 belonged to the FHSS. It is 65%. During that period, the least number of academic staff members who have used the Ceylon Room is from the FAS, and it is only 6%. Furthermore, the available statistics of the Ceylon Room shows that academic staff members of FAS have used CR Collection mainly for reference purposes to write their postgraduate theses.



Source: Library Usage Records, 2021

Figure 03 - Ceylon Room Usage by Academic Staff Members 2015-2019

The highest usage (63%) is by the academic staff members in FHSS in 2015, and in 2017, and the use of the CR collection by the academic staff of FHSS and FMSC has taken a similar value. It is 45%. During 2015-2019, the usage of the

CR Collection by the academic staff of FAS has shown a meagre value. During the year 2016, no academic staff member of FAS used the CR Collection. Only one academic staff member used it during 2019. In FMSC, The highest number (45%) was indicated in 2017, and the lowest 18% was in 2018.

According to Figure 03, the usage of CR Collection by FAS and FMSC also decreased because the library has subscribed to online full-text databases such as JSTOR, Research for life and citation database Scopus. Therefore the usage of printed materials by the above two faculties has reduced.

4.5 Ceylon Room Usage by Students 2015-2019

Most students come to the library to gain information about various subjects for their learning for research activities and to read books for entertainment. According to the theory of Rangnathan, "Books are for use." It means that readers must meet their needs in the library, and the library resources must meet the appropriate readers. Therefore, by having librarians perform both of these functions, the library can increase the use of the CR collection.

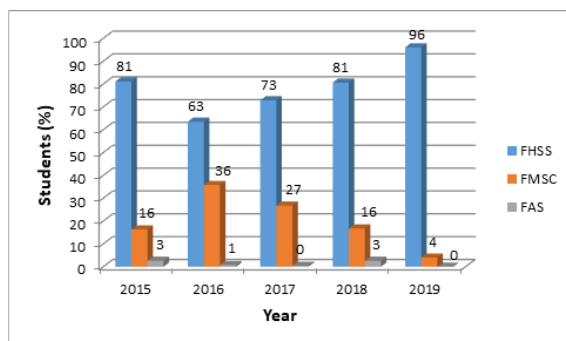
Table 05: Student Usage of Ceylon Room Collection

Year	FHSS		FMSC		FAS	
	No of Students	Percentage	No of Students	Percentage	No of Students	Percentage
2015	154	81.1%	31	16.3%	5	2.6%
2016	174	63.5%	98	35.8%	2	0.7%
2017	188	72.9%	69	26.7%	1	0.4%
2018	154	80.6%	32	16.8%	5	2.6%
2019	217	96%	9	4%	0	0%
Total	887	78%	239	21%	13	1%

Source: Library Usage Records, 2021

Table 05 shows that the highest usage of the CR Collection by students is from the FHSS, 78%. Whereas the least usage of the CR Collection by

students is from the FAS (1%). This may be because most of them are local publications related to Sri Lanka and do not directly match the subject disciplines of the FAS. In 2019, the highest usage can be seen from the students of FHSS. It is 96%, and table 05 shows that, none of the students in FAS have used the CR Collection during the same period.



Source: Library Usage Records, 2021

Figure 04 - Student Usage of Ceylon Room Collection

In 2015, the use of the CR collection by students of the FAS and FMSC was 16% and 3%, respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the resources and services available in the CR collection to the students of the above two faculties. Also, this study found that the students of these two faculties did not have enough knowledge about the CR Collection. Accordingly, it seems important to market the CR collection to the students of FAS and FMSC. Also it is necessary to improve on the staff’s approach towards customers at the library, overall willingness to support, assistance to expose required resources in the library and support with queries related to their research component.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study show that the academic staff and the students of the FHSS are comprehensively using the existing CR Collection of the library, and there is a low usage among the academics and students of the FMSC and the FAS. They use the CR Collection to refer to the theses and dissertations relevant to their subject disciplines in the Ceylon Room. Furthermore, the unawareness of the students

and academic staff of the FAS and FMSC about the existing resources in the CR Collection has been the reason for under-utilization. Hence, there is a need to promote the optimum use of the existing resources and services as some of the users are less aware of them.

Apart from that, inadequate time, limited infrastructural facilities, closed access and restrictions to the CR Collection and staff attitudes are indicated by respondents as problems. Therefore the library has a vital role in designing more efficient awareness and publicity programmes. Furthermore, students feel that recent publications of books are not adequately available in the collection.

According to the above findings, it can be recommended that the administrators should take steps to strengthen the services with which the users are satisfied, and concentrate on services that should be developed according to user requirements. To enrich user satisfaction, steps must be taken to resolve the identified problems. Also, the CR Collection should be continually re-evaluated to meet user requirements to support their academic activities.

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