

The Contribution of Public Libraries to Fulfil Information Needs of Rural People (Balangoda Area)

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Public library is a main gateway of a country, which renders a great service to urban and rural community in providing information for developing the society and personal development. The main objective of this research is to identify the contribution of public libraries to fulfil rural information needs of people. Other objective of this research is to identify the information needs of rural community, to understand how people utilize the services provided by the public libraries and identify the issues faced by rural community. The population of this study represents the public libraries in Ratnapura district. Only four public libraries located in Balangoda area were selected as study sample. This study used mixed methodology. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaire and qualitative data were collected through in-depth-interviews. Data analysis was done using Excel and presented by using table, graphical notes and percentages. This study identified that the information needs of rural community are extended in a great range and those necessities vary from person to person. There are factors found affecting the peoples' perception and utilization of information such as age, educational level and occupational status. This study further revealed that rural people face various problems in fulfilling their information needs. Study also revealed that poor mechanism in providing effective services has been a problem in public libraries. On the other hand, lack of information literacy and digital literacy among rural people has also affected them badly to retrieve relevant information from particular information sources. Therefore, this study strongly recommends that proper system to be established in Public libraries of Balangoda area with the support of government authorities for the betterment of the community.

Keywords: Public libraries, Rural areas, Information needs, Rural information needs, Users