



## The impact of the public library as a children's reading resource

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This research was carried out in the Colombo Metropolitan Area of Sri Lanka to evaluate the public library as a reading resource for children in that region.

**Method:** The case study for this research was decided to be the Colombo Public Library in Sri Lanka, and the research was conducted using the survey method. Participants in the study were children younger than 14 years old who were attendees of the Colombo Public Library in Sri Lanka. The population was divided into different strata, and a nonprobability sampling technique was used to choose which samples to take. The survey's data collection was accomplished through the use of a questionnaire in addition to structured interviews.

**Findings:** Based on the results, the children's library should be placed where children can quickly get to it. This children's library was frequented by many seventh- and ninth-graders. It's safe to assume that most school-aged children in the Colombo Metropolitan Area regularly visit the children's library. The children's library does not offer standard services such as interlibrary loans, documentation, government publications, or audiovisual services. An uneven number of Sinhala, Tamil, and English books are available at the library. Although magazines are few and far between, their information, intelligence, and appreciation are too advanced for children under 14. The lack of Tamil and English-language newspapers for readers is one of the collection's most serious flaws. It prevents children from learning to be good people and succeeding in school.

**Implications/Novel Contribution:** The Colombo Public Library, which aims to encourage young people to develop healthy reading habits, can use this analysis to improve the quality of library services they provide to young people. Any library can use the information to serve its patrons better, and new children's library development schemes can be formulated with the information in mind.

*Keywords:* Public library, Juvenile readers, Colombo metropolitan area, Reading habits, Children's library, Information needs

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a publicly funded library is to make books and other reading materials available to the general populace in a given area (Rubin et al., 2017). Public libraries are regarded as vital to improving the population's education and literacy rates and are therefore maintained in the vast majority of countries worldwide. Every public library offers its patrons a wide selection of books and periodicals (Chalfoun & Davidaviciene, 2018; Miller & Zickuhr, 2013). Most public libraries in the modern world not only house books and periodicals but also CDs, videos, DVDs, and even Internet access. Community events, storytimes, homework help, and other services can all find a home in public libraries (Masuo & Cheang, 2017; Bhatt, 2010). Books and videos (fiction and nonfiction) are available for children at public libraries, usually in designated areas. Large print or Braille materials, books for young adults, and other reading materials geared toward this age group are just a few examples of the specialized services that some public libraries provide (Mills, Romeign-Stout, Campbell, & Koester, 2015).

Public information service is the stated goal. A public library may have a book box project consisting of one or more buses outfitted as a small public library, and they may travel to rural areas on a set schedule (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2017). The Public Library Standards and Guidelines were published by the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) and other organizations. The 1985 IFLA General Conference approved the most recent one. Public libraries, as defined by IFLA, are:

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The term "public library" refers to a library that is "established and financed by a local or in some cases central government body, or by some other organization authorized to act on its behalf" ([Public Libraries Magazine, 2011](#)).

Everyone has an equal opportunity to read books and articles geared toward their reading level and areas of particular interest. Reading affects nearly every aspect of existence. A book is a doorway to knowledge, while a musical instrument is a means to an educational end. Literacy is essential to the development of a progressive society. In the beginning, we study reading, but later on, we read to gain knowledge. Reading is essential for success in the workplace, but it's just as important for success in one's free time. Success in one's professional life often results in success in one's personal life. Thus, this contributes to a more fulfilling and satisfying existence.

Reading can help you grow as a person by exposing you to new ideas, and concepts ([Campana, Mills, & Ghoting, 2016](#)). Reading will expand to incorporate the practice of quickly skimming through text to find specific pieces of information, a process now commonly known as information retrieval ([Murison, 1988](#)). When we learn to read, we open ourselves to a world of information that can greatly improve our quality of life. Especially in developing nations where a sizable portion of the population lives in poverty and has limited access to books, public libraries play an important social role in ensuring a functional and integral basic education.

The United Nations Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) Manifesto for the Public Library establishes libraries as democratic centers of learning, culture, and information. The importance of the public library maintaining a relationship with children is also emphasized ([United Nations Education, Science and Culture Public Library Manifesto, 1972](#)). Therefore, it falls squarely on his shoulders to provide a relaxed and personalized selection of books and other reading materials for children. They need access to specialized libraries, ideally with designated areas for their reading needs. Consequently, the children's library can serve as a dynamic hub where many culturally enriching activities can be found in ([Diamant-Cohen, Prendergast, Estrovitz, Banks, & Van Der Veen, 2012](#)). Children will benefit from this setting because it encourages them to think for themselves and fosters their growth as artists, thinkers, and appreciators. Young people should have access to public library resources to help them develop their literacy and academic skills, as recommended by UNESCO ([United Nations Education, Science and Culture Public Library Manifesto, 1972](#)).

### **Significance of the Study**

Over the past few years, UNESCO has continually emphasized the significance of children as library patrons. It also states that ease of access and convenience is even more crucial for children than adults ([Society of Chief Librarians, 2016](#)). It's reasonable to assume that adults will make an effort to travel and wait to get what they want. However, the child requires more urgent assistance ([Justice, Piasta, Capps, Levitt, & Library, 2013](#)). If he lives alone, he shouldn't be expected to know what he needs and ask for it; instead, those things should be brought to him so that he doesn't have to search for them through busy city streets. As a result, providing for children usually necessitates keeping open more service points than are necessary for adults.

The Colombo Public Library Service runs numerous projects and programs to pique children's interest in learning and reading. Youth in the Colombo Metropolitan Area will benefit from these services because they will enhance their reading and learning abilities. However, no one in Colombo Metropolitan Area has conducted any feasibility research on the public library as a learning resource for teenagers. The available search data show that most studies on public libraries have been conducted on various approaches but not from the perspective of children's sources.

Reading enriches a man's life, as has been said many times before. Providing children with reading opportunities is the best way to help them develop their literacy skills and broaden their horizons. Libraries have the potential to play a pivotal role in this regard. But now it's fair to wonder if public libraries are doing enough to meet these goals. This survey aims to evaluate public libraries' contribution to providing services for children in the Greater Colombo Area. Information gleaned from this research will aid in developing reading and education programs for children, as well as creating brand-new types of assistance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a significant amount of research and other types of literature produced on a global scale regarding the public library's role as a learning agency, most of which originated in the UK. Children's perspectives are explored in several published studies. Alan Bandy conducted a study in 2006 on how public libraries in Australia helped students with their education. A questionnaire was used to collect information for this study. Questions were designed to elucidate the extent to which students use local public libraries, the services, and facilities available to them, and the obstacles to improving support, as well as to gauge the policy commitment of local government authorities and libraries to supporting local learners (Bundy et al., 2006; Paulino, Gatpandan., & Shaneth, 2017).

Moreover, the purpose of this survey was to demonstrate the extent to which students in formal education, particularly in schools, have a resource to the services and resources of public libraries as a result of preference, the inadequate provision within their schools, or a lack of resources and support at home. According to the findings of the research, it was found that many public libraries in Australia offer a wide variety of services and resources to support students. These services and resources include professional reference assistance, Internet access, online homework tutoring, special collections study spaces, homework centers, and clubs (Taskforce, 2016). There are references to Taskforce throughout the libraries. The research findings indicate that the researcher has identified some obstacles that must be overcome to improve student support. Specific ones included a lack of space for individual and group study and information technology, a lack of specialist library staff, restricted evening and weekend opening hours, slow Internet speeds in rural areas, and a lack of cooperation or interest from schools. According to the findings of this research, public libraries are the "umbrella institution of the learning society" (Hill, Proffitt, & Streams, 2016). Increasing one's education level to live better and more satisfying lives is the goal. This kind of education typically takes place in very manageable increments. In addition to this, the public library in Colombo is one of a kind because it gives children the opportunity to participate in learning activities that can subtly transform their lives.

(Hart, 2000a) conducted research at public libraries in South Africa. This study aimed to investigate the extent to which schoolchildren in a township on the outskirts of Cape Town make use of the city's two public libraries. Interviews with more than 800 school students were carried out to determine how their reading and information requirements were being met. The most important consequence of this is that the education process, both in and outside the classroom, depends heavily on the participation of public libraries. Most respondents came to the library to work on school assignments and homework. On the other hand, some came to finish an assignment using library resources, returned books they had borrowed, and borrowed new books (Hart, 2000b).

The researcher conducted follow-up interviews with educators and library staff after their observations within the libraries revealed that a significant amount of work remains to be done to implement effective information literacy education (Howard, 2011). In addition, the research investigates the effects of the educational revolution on public libraries in South Africa.

The pressures of educational change might lead to new library models that are more appropriate to their communities' needs than the services inherited from the Western tradition. Specifically, it suggests that these new models might include the following: This researcher contends that the shifts in ethos and teaching styles that have occurred since 1994 present the opportunity for the library profession to play a more prominent role in education and, consequently, in the overall process of societal advancement. The researcher explains how the new educational program has allowed libraries to evolve due to its recognition of the requirement for knowledge literacy and its transition to learning based on resource utilization. The report's findings at the time suggested that children and young librarians working in Cape Town's public libraries experienced a sense of victimization due to the new program.

The members of the Standing Committee of the Libraries for Children and Young Adults Section have drafted the recommendations in the form of an outline as a tool for implementation that can be utilized by libraries of any size or economic level, regardless of size or resources. The publication of IFLA, the manifesto of the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library (Hand Book of Comparative Librarianship, 1986), is complemented by these guidelines, which can be found here. This guidance aims to assist public libraries in various countries worldwide in their efforts to implement children's programs of a high standard. In addition, the guidelines state that the most

important responsibility of the members of the Standing Committee who work in the library is to:

Children have the opportunity to experience the joy of reading and the excitement of discovering new knowledge and works of imagination at public libraries because these institutions provide a diverse collection of reading materials and various activities. It is essential to instruct children and their parents on how to develop expertise in the use of printed and electronic media, as well as how to make the most effective use of a library's resources. The Public Library has a unique obligation to encourage children to read and learn to read, in addition to promoting children's books and other forms of children's literature. The library must organize special events for children, such as storytelling and other activities connected to the library's library collection of books and other resources ([Hand Book of Comparative Librarianship, 1986](#)).

According to this guideline, children's libraries should have aims such as:

- To promote every child's right to information
- Functional literacy, visual, digital, and media
- Cultural growth
- Development of readers
- Lifelong learning
- Creative leisure time programs
- Providing open access to all resources and media for children
- Empowering children and campaigning for their liberty and protection
- To encourage children to become trusting and competent individuals "[Hand Book of Comparative Librarianship, 1986](#)).

Further, it has mentioned the materials children's libraries should provide. It says libraries should choose materials that are:

- High quality
- Age-appropriate
- Present and precise
- A representation of a range of products and views
- A representation of the culture of local communities
- An introduction to the global community

The preceding guidelines presented by the IFLA make it abundantly clear that the responsibility of public libraries lies toward children who are members of society. The provision of access to children's literature that enables patrons to develop an understanding of the world around them and the global society in which they participate is the primary objective of the library's section devoted to young people. In any case, in its capacity as a Metropolitan Public Library, the Colombo Public Library bears a significant obligation to cater to the requirements of children. Therefore, for librarians to be successful in the children's library, they should adhere to the guidelines that were discussed earlier when they are developing materials for children.

Public Library Services for Children is a book that UNESCO commissioned [Colvin and Lionel \(1957\)](#). Its purpose is to provide librarians, teachers, local and national government officials, and others worldwide concerned with developing Public Library services for children with practical guidance and encouragement. The title of the book is "Public Library Services for Children." The author has explained this using various facts about the services provided by public libraries for children. Specifically, the patterns and principles of the services; the rules, regulations, and routines; the arrangements, guidance, and advice; the extension work, the buildings and equipment; the staff; and the book selection, improving the supply of books, the book collections, and other related topics.

The author has explained what a children's library offers to its users as follows:

- Books which are to be borrowed for home reading.
- Books are to be read on the library premises, with the requisite reading facilities, including similar ones borrowed above and even relevant periodicals.
- Reference materials to provide answers to questions for those seeking relevant knowledge to assist them with research and homework and to instruct them on the use of information sources.
- To organize and manage the library, to assist and direct, inspire and inform young readers, and to organize all

those events intended to extend the library's influences (Colvin & Lionel, 1957).

Further Mc Colvin has mentioned certain essential elements, but any standard Public Library service should have:

- The community must provide it for full and free use by all and at the expense of the community. The Public Library service must afford the full opportunity of access to all user types of material without bias or limitations for the equal benefit of all sections of the community, regardless of race, religion, or other differences.
- It must be the ultimate objective to offer the best possible services to everybody, whether they live in large cities or isolated rural homesteads.
- Provision for children is an integral part of a library. Provision for readers of all ages should associate it with adult services, as regards sources of supply, methods, objectives administration, and basis of support (Colvin & Lionel, 1957).

In addition, the author has explained that the success or failure of a children's library ultimately depends on the employees who operate it. According to him, the librarian of children must be technically trained, knowledgeable, well-informed about her material, and know a lot about children's likes and dislikes and their ways of thinking and behavior (Colvin & Lionel, 1957). Further, he has emphasized that training is very important for children librarians. In this sense, every librarian must be technically qualified, experienced, and well-informed about their materials to succeed in children's library services in Sri Lanka. Under his "Book Selection" points, he described:

"Selection of the books for children's library should, in any Public Library service, be the responsibility of the children's librarian (Colvin & Lionel, 1957)."

However, in some institutions, the chief librarian, the acquisitions department, or other staff members who do not work exclusively with children make the selections for the children's section of the library (Sanchez, 2014). Children's librarians in Sri Lanka face similar challenges.

The primary focus of this book is on how libraries can serve all children within their age range who live in their service area, regardless of their background, culture, religion, or socioeconomic status. Colombo Public Library is the Metropolitan Library for the city of Colombo and also features a children's library. It should ensure that all of the children in the community are treated equally.

McKeney (1983) spoke at a seminar hosted by the Camden Public Library User Group (CPLUG). She described her work with a wide range of people, from 14-year-old dropouts interested in the poverty of WH Auden to members of the University of the Third Age who attend her courses on reader development with great enthusiasm. She argues that CPLUG, in addition to prioritizing the common good, should recognize the importance of public libraries to the growth of individual readers. Furthermore, she argues that such people may have been deprived of exposure to alternative pedagogical models. Therefore, the public library's role should be akin to an "educational safety net" (Public Libraries Magazine, 2011). There have been several investigations into the role of public libraries in providing user education for school-aged children. A book entitled "User Education in Libraries" was authored by Prendergast (2011). Specifically, the sixth chapter of this book focuses on public library patron instruction. The authors argue that public libraries continue to have ties to discrete communities, such as students whose library and informational needs are not always met in a classroom setting.

They also noted that public libraries and school education have historically shared a common administrative structure and funding model in many countries. The authors debated this issue concerning the library and schools in the UK. They stressed how "the Public Library can and still does offer a useful user education service to school children," giving the example of libraries in the United Kingdom. The majority of schools do not have, and may never have, sufficient stock to meet the information needs of students (Prendergast, 2011). The library programs for school-aged children reflect this need, which is why many public libraries widely recognize it.

To enhance the education of children in the Colombo Metropolitan Area, the Colombo Public Library has initiated a wide variety of programs, including exhibitions, lectures, discussions, etc. Public libraries in Sri Lanka can play a part in sharing this knowledge with more people.

## METHODOLOGY

A survey method was used for this study. In the context of libraries, surveys are used for a wide variety of user research. After completing the literature review, the research strategy was developed to accomplish the study's aims. This study included participants of all ages, including those younger than 14. Given the size of the population, which necessitates close monitoring of every user, care was taken to select a representative sample. The children were selected using a non-probabilistic, a priori sampling strategy. Children made up 506.3 percent of the library's patronage. A mere 2% (101) were chosen. It was gathered through a combination of a questionnaire and physical evidence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Background Information on the Children's Section

The Children's Section is open every day of the week from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, except for Wednesdays. Therefore, library patrons are permitted an extended stay. That's about where it should be. Given that most library visitors are under 14, children should have plenty of free time to get their school work done and participate in extracurricular activities. Three employees are tasked with attending to the young readers every day of the week. There are 164 seats in the children's area but only 41 desks. Every patron receives two library cards from the Lending Section, but no tickets are required to use the Reference Section. In 1972, the first children's section was opened. The Children's Section was on the ground floor at the time. The Children's Section can be found on the second floor of the main library at present. It has become clear from this study and other research on library placement that children's libraries should be established conveniently for children to access easily. Data from this analysis shows that the current location of the Children's Section is inconvenient for many patrons.

### Resources Available to Children

#### *Book collection*

In this research, attention was paid to examining children's "book collection". It was possible to explore how valuable a book collection is for them by studying the number of books available in three different media, Sinhala, Tamil, and English. Data on children's library resources were obtained through question 2. Information was gathered from books in the three languages (Sinhala, Tamil, and English), titles of periodicals, newspapers, government publications, and Audio Visual material. Table 1 shows the number of books available in the Children's Section in the three languages.

Table 1: Book collections in the children's section

Categories	Number	%
Books in Sinhala	67000	61
Books in Tamil	7390	7
Books in English	34950	32
Total	109340	100

Some of the observations made based on the table are as follows.

- Sinhala books in the Children's Section accounted for 61% of the collection.
- Although both Tamil and Muslim schools can be found in the metropolitan Colombo area, only 7% of the Children's Section comprises Tamil titles. Disparities in the availability of Tamil language materials in Sri Lank libraries reflect a broader problem. In addition to Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim schools, the greater Colombo area is home to several international institutions of higher learning. The Children's Section needs a larger selection of Tamil and English books to meet the demands of the students at those schools.

### Collection of Periodicals

Periodicals have a remarkable impact on children's development and learning. Consequently, care was taken to monitor the content of periodicals available to children. The reading level assessment for a given periodical is

intrinsically linked to the content of said periodical. More people will start reading periodicals if they are good for their brains. Table 2 breaks down the magazines in the Children’s Section according to their various formats.

Table 2: Titles of the periodicals

Sinhala Titles	Tamil Titles	English Titles
Buddha Lamaa	Gokulum	Goculum
Udana		Ambuli Mama
Chandana Mama		Wisdom

The above analysis indicates that the Children’s Section only offers a small selection of periodicals in three languages. Even though there aren’t many periodicals in the Children’s Section, it’s helping children under 14 become better readers, thinkers, and appreciators of the arts. If it wants to foster a lifelong love of reading in the young people it serves, the library should stock up on more copies of popular periodicals. The lack of local and international journals and periodicals suitable for children means that the current collection needs to be supplemented. Moreover, periodicals in the three languages (Sinhala, Tamil, and English) must be provided.

### Collection of Newspapers

The review shows that regular, weekly, mid-weekly, and periodic publications are the Sinhala newspapers in the Children’s Section. The Children’s Section maintains a list of 12 Sinhala newspapers that belong to these categories. Following are the Sinhala newspaper titles available in the Children’s Section.

Table 3: Sinhala newspaper titles

Vijaya	Ugatha
Mihira	Shishyawa
Jagatha	Bindu
Sadhana	Punchi
Vidusara	Samatha
Hapana	Rusiya

Newspapers are available for children as young as 14 years old. Additional pedagogical content can be found in newspapers of this type. Scientific news can be found in publications like "Vidusara." The absence of Tamil and English-language media newspapers is the biggest drawback of the newspaper selection. Most students from international schools in the Colombo metropolitan area can be found in the Children’s Section. This means the Children’s Section needs to expand its newspaper collection to include versions written in both English and Tamil.

### Audio-Visual Material and Government Publications Available in the Children’s Section

Every Children’s Section should serve as an access facility to different types of information resources. According to the data gathered through the questionnaire, the Children’s Section has not made audiovisual equipment available. An "information society" benefits greatly from audiovisual materials.

### Demographic Characteristics of Users

#### *The nature of users*

To collect necessary facts, structured interviews on the research "Public library as a learning resource for children in the Colombo Metropolitan area" was conducted with a sample of 101 users of the Children’s Section. This sample of 101 included both male and female readers, as shown below:-

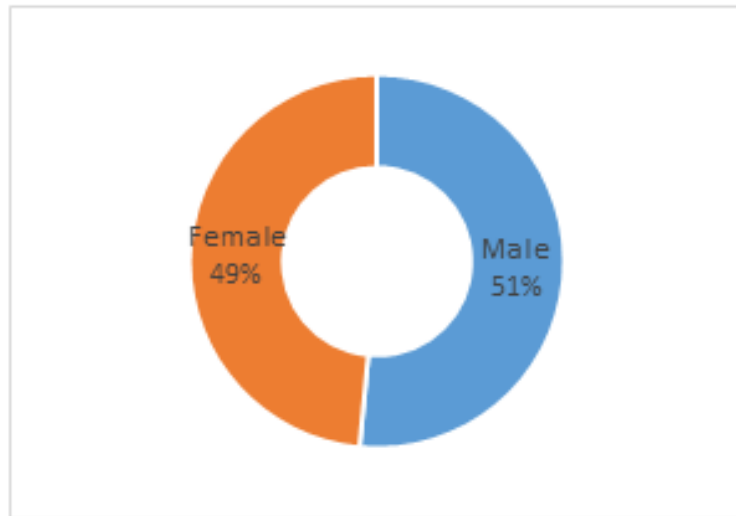


Figure 1. Sample spread over juvenile patrons males and females

According to the sample, the majority were male, i.e., 51.5%. The Female representation was 48.5%. It is clear from this data that more male child readers use the library than female child readers.

#### *Usage by age*

Distribution on the age of the child- readers in the sample can be analyzed by the following Figure 2.

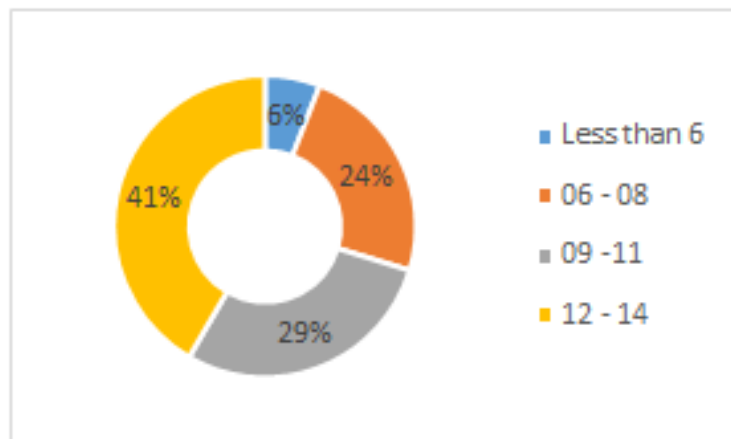


Figure 2. Distribution of the sample by age

Figure 2 shows that most children using the Children's Section belong to the age group 12-14. As a percentage, this number is 41.6%. The least number of children using the library falls within the age group of less than 6. This is 5.9% of the total sample. It can also be seen that the second biggest group of children is 9-11. i.e., 28.7%.

#### **Level of Education**

By interviews with the children, information was collected to determine which students' grades benefit from the Children's Section. From the sample of juvenile users, the frequency of attendance is shown in Table 4 below:-



Table 4: The relationship between library users and the level of education

Grade	Number of Students	%
Pre School	02	1.98
Grade One	04	3.96
Grade Two	04	3.96
Grade Three	02	1.98
Grade Four	16	15.84
Grade Five	13	12.9
Grade Six	02	1.98
Grade Seven	16	15.8
Grade Eight	19	18.8
Grade Nine	23	22.8
Total	101	100

Based on the data collected for this project, it is clear that the largest demographic of customers consists of ninth graders. Meanwhile, third- and sixth-graders are the least likely to visit the Children's Section. It was determined that students in grades 4, 7, and 8 use the library satisfactorily. Inferences about the demographics of library users can be made because a larger proportion of students in grades 7 and 9 visit the Children's Section, which was the focus of this study.

### Usage of Computers by Children

Undeniably, children's education has benefited greatly from the prevalence of computer-based learning. Reading is not limited to classroom instruction. The library is positively impacting the community if it provides children with opportunities to learn how to use computers. This area of study, then, focuses on information gathered for discovery. This research aimed to identify the locations where participants received computer literacy instruction. This data was gleaned from conversations and interviews with readers' parents. Eighty-two percent of the readers in the sample were previous computer users, while 23

Table 5: Place of the first contact with computers

Place of Education	Number of Users	%
Children's Section	19	24.4
School	16	20.5
Home	15	19.2
Tuition classes	26	33.3
Other	02	2.6
Total	78	100

According to Table 5, about 77.2% of the sample studied had used computers before. Most of those who learned the use of computers had started it in tuition classes. Their percentage is 33.3%. At the same time, it is clear that 24.4% of the readers had learned the use of computers for the first time at the library itself. That constitutes a reasonable percentage. Of the entire sample, 19.2% had received training use of computers at home. This shows that a considerable number of people have computers in their homes. Therefore it is possible to state that 27.8% of the readers need training on using computers as they do not have personal computers. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that readers are not familiar with using computers; it is the prime duty of the library to help them develop their computer skills.

### The Nature of Services Provided by Colombo Public Library

Whether the Children's Section is a resource for children or not can be examined through the services it renders. The library's use largely depends on the services it renders. The following are the main service areas covered by the Children's Section:-

- Reference section

- Lending section
- Computer unit
- Photocopying services

This survey reveals that other services, such as the Inter-library loan system, Reprography, Documentation, and, Audio-visual facilities, are not provided in the Children’s Section.

**Facilities for Disabled Children**

Question 02 was also designed to gather information regarding the services available to disabled children. All 42 employees stated that disabled children were not registered in the library. It is necessary to make arrangements to register those who are not allowed to register. Services for them should be provided after identifying their needs concerning their study subjects. This is because a public library should be a place where services are provided to any individual without discrimination.

**The Information Requirements of the Library Users**

Reading preferences among children can and should vary widely. Even a cursory examination of course descriptions reveals this. Both subject-related and unrelated reading preferences among children were investigated in this study. Analyzing the content of the most popular books for children allowed us to see if the Children’s Section met the needs of its target audience. Consequently, information was gathered, assuming this was a crucial part of the study. The research aimed to better understand the information needs of young readers.

Table 6: Categories of external subject areas mostly required by the readers in the sample as is desired by them

Category	Response	%
Children’s storybooks	35	34.7
Biographies	26	25.7
Translations	15	14.9
Short stories	08	7.9
Intelligence test books	07	6.9
General knowledge books	06	5.9
Novels	03	3
Aptitude tests	01	1
Cinema/Drama	0	0
Total	101	100

The research shows that people have a greater preference for reading children’s books. That equates to a percentage of 34.7%. A noteworthy finding from the research is that most of these students are in elementary school. Concurrently, 26 participants, or 25.7%, of the students in the study primarily read biographies. Similarly, 14.9% of people who participated in the survey reported having fun reading translated works. This research also showed that fewer students used books during general knowledge and aptitude examinations. In addition, books about film and the arts do not garner much attention from buyers. We can conclude from this review that children’s literature, translations, and biographies are the most popular forms of literature.

Table 7: The distribution of subject areas most needed by children according to their desires-according to priority

Category	Response	%
Science	28	29.5
Geography/History	15	15.8
Sinhalese Language	14	14.68
English Language	12	12.63
Social studies	12	12.63
Education on citizenship	09	9.5
Music/Dancing	05	5.26
Mathematics	0	0
Total	95	100

Note: the preschool children (02) and grade one (04) have not answered this question. Only 95 children out of 101 were included in the table.

If you look at the table above, you'll see that only 95 readers have provided information about the types of books they read out of the total sample of frequently read titles. Notably, none kindergarteners or grade one students responded to this question. Of the total sample, roughly 28 children (or roughly 60%) said they prefer science-related books to other genres. On the other hand, they also enjoy reading books about world history and geography. The same is true of book lovers, with a respectable percentage of the sample expressing a desire to acquire titles in both Sinhala and English.

**The Pattern of Selecting Library Books for Borrowing**

Children's participation in book selection was also examined in this study. The goal was to see if the child chose what to read or if a parent or library employee made the selections. Most children's reading preferences could be shaped by the books they choose to read. For your convenience, we've included a table below that shows how many young readers do their book picking and how many let someone else do it.

Table 8: Pattern of selecting library books for borrowing

Books Selected by	Responses by Readers	%
The child	32	31.68
Guardians	66	65.35
Librarians	03	2.97
Total	101	100

From the data presented above, it is evident that many young readers' parents decide on which books their children may borrow. 31.68% of the children in the sample select books by themselves. The librarian's input into the readers' book choices is minimal. The fact that the librarians have chosen books suitable for only three young adults indicates this.

Table 9: Reader's desirability to select books for reading

Desire to select a book by the reader	79	78.2
Desire to read books selected by parents	22	21.8
Total	101	100

To give readers the freedom to enjoy the books they want to read, they must be able to do so. If parents insist their child reads only books they've picked out, the children might not get the information she needs. And it can have a ripple effect on the children's academic performance, interests, and reading preferences.

The children should be free to choose books they'll enjoy reading to foster a lifelong habit of reading. Instead of encouraging the child to read books selected by the parents, the child would be better off reading books selected by the child.

**Problems Encountered in Daily Usage**

The final discussion with the juvenile readers and their guardians was on the problems they faced in using the Children's Section. Their problems can be tabulated as follows:

Table 10: Problems the juvenile readers and parents (guardians) had to face in using the children's section

Problems	Problems by Readers	%
1. Waiting for a Long time in the queue	95	94.05
2. Having a limited number of computers	82	81.18
3. Unavailability of extension services	75	74.25
4. Library situated in an unsuitable place	63	62.37
5. Keeping Computer room closed very often	52	51.48
6. Lack of internet	29	28.71
7. Non-availability of suitably qualified officials as computer teachers	23	22.77
8. No new books are added to the collection	19	18.81
9. Insufficiency of space	07	06.93

Some conclusions have been drawn from the above data, including the following: According to feedback from our readers, the average time spent waiting in line was quite lengthy. The majority of the 101 people who read the sample had this concern. Yet another problem that most readers had to deal with was the lack of reader extension services like exhibits, drama performances, educational services for readers, reading contests, and debates. According to the study, reading services were rated poorly by both children and their parents. The supplementary services were unknown to younger children under the age of six. The Computer Division has its share of problems, as well. The main issues are:

- The outdated technology.
- The permanent closure of the computer room.
- The lack of available personnel.

It has come to light that the Computer Division is also experiencing some difficulties. There is no access to the internet in the children's section. The audience was impacted as a result. It is not fair to judge a person's reading level based on how many books they have read. With the current global context in mind, e-resources have a major impact on children's learning processes. Many young patrons in the Children's Section expressed satisfaction with the books available. On the other hand, several parents voiced concerns about the selection of books.

A total of 84% is reached. Readers of the Children's Section were unhappy with the limited content. However, the actual number was quite low. Authorities should implement a fast service system to accommodate the large number of readers who are forced to wait in line for extended periods beginning at 2.00 PM. on Weekends and weekdays.

## CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results showed that users have adequate time for their academic and extracurricular pursuits. Research has shown that the current location of the Children's Section is inconvenient for patrons. According to the data, most library patrons come in on weekdays after 2:00 pm. The Children's Section is where most library patrons with children under 13 can be found. The number of available computers is insufficient compared to the number of library users. The estimated annual budget for the Children's Section cannot be determined due to a lack of relevant data. Based on the data collected, boys are more likely than girls to visit this library as children. Children in the 12-14 age range made up the bulk of library patrons. Children under 6 make up the library's smallest user group. A large number of seventh- and ninth-graders use this library regularly.

According to the study results, promoting computer use among library patrons is the library's duty. No library services are offered in the Children's Section; only the use of computers and photocopiers for research and borrowing purposes. Most parents regularly borrow books from the library's lending section for their children to read. It's also found that children-friendly books, translations, and biographies are the most popular among children's reading preferences. A subset of users regularly peruses science-related supplementary readers. This study provides more evidence that parents make the call on what books their children should read. Parents can't fulfill their child's need for knowledge just by recommending books they've already read.

The library's Sinhala, English, and Tamil book collections are unevenly stocked. In the Children's Section, there are a select few magazines, but the quality of the material relies heavily on the reader's ability to understand

and appreciate complex ideas. The number of newspapers in the Young Readers' Section is adequate. The lack of Tamil and English-language newspapers is the collection's biggest shortcoming. The library has no records of disabled children. A review of the available literature reveals that the library's Children's Section offered numerous outreach programs before its 1972 opening. However, the Children's Section only offers television programs as extension services. Furthermore, the analysis shows some systemic issues with the Children's Section. Numerous obstacles prevent young people from making use of the library's resources.

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