

# Dr. C.C. Jayasundara

## Librarian – University of Kelaniya

**Former Deputy Librarian** – University of Colombo  
**Former Course Coordinator** – Master of Information Systems Management, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo  
**Former Course Coordinator** – Master of Library & Information Science, Faculty of graduate studies, University of Colombo  
**Former Country Coordinator** – INASP, UK  
**Former Project Manager** – SIDA/SAREC Library Support Programme



## My memories of the Library, University of Colombo

I studied at the University of Ruhuna and came directly to work at the University of Colombo in 1998 as an Assistant Librarian. At a young age, I was sometimes seen by senior professors as a son of then-Librarian Mrs. Sumana Jayasuriya. Many people have asked me about this because Dr. Padmasiri, one of my senior colleagues and now the Librarian of the University of Visual and Performing Arts and I always used to go to the Faculty Club with Mrs. Jayasuriya. There were three dining tables in the Faculty Club at that time, with very senior staff sitting at one table and the other also with some senior professors and the third table sitting with people of lesser in seniority. Distinguished Professors such as Deshamanya Emeritus Professor W.D. Lakshman, Prof. Tilak Hettiarachchy, the late Vidya Jyothi Professor V.K. Samaranayake, Prof. P.W. Apasinghe, Prof. Raja De Fonseka, Prof. Niel Fonseka etc with Mrs. Jayasuriya used to sit at the senior table and my boss Mrs. Jayasuriya forced me to sit at the same senior table with her. Although I was well aware that *halmasso* between *Thoru* and *Moru* were inappropriate, I did not dare to speak out against my boss at that time. Therefore, I sat at that table and listened to their experiences and scholarly opinions on some certain issues, management decision taken as well as sometimes jokes and gossips. However, due to these discussions, my knowledge, personality and experience developed to a high level and I believe that I became prominent among my contemporaries at that time.

Professionally, I was not given a big responsibility in the beginning and I did cataloguing and classification work with Dr Padmasiri, who was then a Senior Assistant Librarian at the university. Since the new library was built at that time, we had to carry books, pull out shelves, set up computer networks, and organize circulation counters, etc., even in day and night. However, these conditions

helped me to gain a great deal of experience on how to build a new library, initiate and introduce new services to users etc. I did not have the opportunity to work in the library much longer and I had to go to the University of Sheffield in England to read for my Master of Science degree in Information



Management as I received a Commonwealth Open Scholarship in 2001.

When I returned to Sri Lanka in 2003 after completing my postgraduate qualifications, Mrs. Jayasuriya informed me to take over the Computer Division in the library. Further, I was assigned to deliver various lectures and hands-on sessions on information products and services without ever being asked my acceptance or wishes. One day, after working as a resource person for a workshop at University of Colombo School of Computing, the late Vidya Jyothi Prof. Samaranayake, then the director of the school told Mrs. Jayasuriya "සුමනා ඔබේ මගේ මෙයා එවන් මම Third country training programme එකට දාල දෙන්නමි". Accordingly, I got a chance to study Information Engineering, which was a full-time highly demanded course opened for the participants in developing nations. This course was a turning point in my life. I had the opportunity to manage all computer related activities of the University of Colombo Library with Mr. K. D. Wickramaratne who was the Computer Application Assistant in the Library at that time and now he is an Assistant Registrar - Library Services at the Open University of Sri Lanka. Wickrama and I worked together in the library and by that time, the University of Colombo library was at the top of any university library in the country.

Ms. Jayasuriya was the Project Leader of the Sida / SAREC Library Support Programme in Sri Lanka at the time and she nominated me as the Project Manager and referred me to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in Stockholm, Sweden. This project was the first to acquire



Certificates from Dr. Dan while the Workshop Organizer Dr. Chaminda Jayasundara (SAL/UoC, Country Coordinator for INASP/PERii) is at the Podium

electronic resource databases in collaboration with INASP, Oxford, UK, where I and Dr. Whatmanel Seneviratne, who later became the Librarian of the Open University of Sri Lanka worked with Dr. Nayana Wijayasundara who is currently the Librarian of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, were directed to train librarians in different organisations in the country. The three of us went to various libraries in Sri Lanka and started training library staff for Training of Trainers (ToT) initiations.

Aside from learning the electronic database, many librarians at the time did not even know about how to use the Internet, so we had to face various difficulties. Although some events were funny, I realized as I matured that we all behave the same way in moments and times when we know nothing about the new things. Besides, a series of local and foreign training programmes were initiated by this project to train university librarians in Sri Lanka, and many were largely benefited from initiating the digital repositories etc.

In 2003, I was appointed as a visiting Lecturer in Research Methodology at the Masters Degree in Library and Information Science programme conducted by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo.



ULA Exco members were having a discussion with Dr. Tise

None of the young lecturers was in the teaching panel at that time and it was an amazing opportunity for me as soon as I reached the county after my graduate studies. Although the Library had many senior librarians, they did not have such an opportunity. I am forever indebted to the University of Colombo and the Library in particular, and all the opportunities I have had in my life are due to this University. During my time there, I had the opportunity to travel abroad several times a year and sometimes my friends made fun of me and mocked at me as the Foreign Minister in the Colombo university library.



In 2006, I was appointed as the Course Coordinator for the Master of Library and Information Science Degree, and my colleague Dr. Pradeepa Wijetunga, then the Director of the National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS), took the MLIS course from the Faculty of Graduate Studies to the NILIS though we thoroughly opposed it. It was not a forcible attempt, but it was by no means an amicable

endeavour. However, my reputation, as well as my morale, plummeted. I was no longer the acting hero of the LIS wing in the English medium education, which led me to discuss this matter with Deshabandu Emeritus Professor Lakshman Dissanayake, who was then the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and later the Vice-Chancellor and he advised me to introduce a new course that could cater to a wider audience with high quality. Following his advice, I put in a lot of effort and initiated the Postgraduate Diploma in Information Systems Management leading to Master of Information Systems Management programme, which was the most lucrative course at FGS at that time. I had to travel to Sri Lankan universities, private



From Left Dr. Chaminda Jayasundara, University of Colombo, Mr. Anura Kooragamage, Ms. Prabodhiya Wijetunge and Mr. L.G Silva, Managing Director ADS

companies and foreign universities at my expenses and discuss to develop its syllabus. However, I thought all such bitterness was sweet and the active support that I received from my chief, Madam Jayasuriya, was remarkable and treasured. More than 1000 applications were received per year and only 200-250 students were selected for the day course and weekend course through an entrance exam and a rigorous interview. After completing this industry-focused programme, some students left for higher educational opportunities in the USA and UK, as well as for jobs abroad. According to the saying that among all sorrows that there is a gem of happiness, this course brought joy to my life and to this date, there is a love between me and its past students not only as a teacher but also as a brother. Thus, Colombo University gave me so much generosity including money, happiness, affection and love. Thus, I love this university even for the rest of my life.

By now, Senior Professor Kshanika Hirimburegama was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor and I, Prof. Senaka Rajapaksha, currently the Director, Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, Mr. Sudheera Abewickrama, Currently work at the University of Ballarat and Mrs. Vajira Hapuhinna, Deputy Register, University of Colombo were directed by the VC to increase the ranking of the university. At that time, the University of Colombo had dropped several places down from the webometric rankings and we



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were able to bring the university to the first position in Sri Lanka due to our relentless effort and dedication. Latter a good position in the QS ranking also received. Madam, Hirimburegama was a very talented lady and working with her was not an easy task. She knows almost everything. Nobody can make her fool. I did many things under her guidance. I never forget that experience that I gained during her time. I was persuaded by her to go beyond the capacity of a

librarian and even to lead committees of senior academics. I must recall her very fondly at this time.

If there is any national or international popularity or recognition that I have gained today, it is all from the University of Colombo. However, in late 2012, I was appointed as a university librarian at a foreign university on my sabbatical leave and unfortunately, I forgot about University of Colombo and decided to stay there for a long time. Then I returned to Sri Lanka in 2018 and although I am currently on duty at the University of Kelaniya, how can I forget mother UOC. She gave me so much of what I had in my life and she generously gave me almost everything, even kindly ignoring my mistakes that were done for playfulness in my youth.

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