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NLF and OLE Nepal Complete Fourth Year of Partnership to Bring Digital Resources to Schools and Libraries across Nepal

Paul Bird paul@nepallibrary.org

Nepal's first and only functional web-based and off-line digital library and learning resource, the e-Pustakalaya, is now installed on servers in schools and libraries in twenty four of Nepal's seventy five districts. The e-Pustakalaya was developed by the Open Learning Exchange Nepal (OLE) and has been funded by the NLF over the last four years to address the need for Nepali and English language digital literary and learning resources for schools and community libraries.

For schools and libraries without broadband access the e-Pustakalaya (available online for those that do at www.pustakalaya.org) provides an inventory of over 5000 selected books and multimedia resources including slideshows, videos and sound files targeted both at school populations and the general public. Teaching and learning resources to support the Nepal National Curriculum are included as well as higher level course content. The latter allows teachers such as Indrakala Naraa from Tanahu to access college level course material for professional upgrading without having to leave her job or pay for an expensive course at a college.

An installation costs approximately NRs 80,000 (\$950) for the hardware and setup. However as Mr Madhav Acharya of the Kavre District Education Office commented, "The cost of hardware and installation of the e-Pustakalaya is minimal compared to what the school will gain from access to such a wide range of learning



Children in a Solokhumbu school use their computers as e-readers. They have access to over 2000 Nepali and English book titles. (Photo OLE Nepal)

"The cost of hardware and installation of the e-Pustakalaya is minimal compared to what the school will gain from access to such a wide range of learning materials."

Mr. Madhav Acharya,
Kavre District Education Office



Children in a Nepali village use their XO 2 computer provided through the One Laptop Per Child program to access digital material funded in part by the NLF. (Photo OLE Nepal)

See *Digital Libraries* p 3

The Year in Review

Naresh Koirala, President, NLF



NLF Gains Local NGO Status in Nepal

The most important news of the year is that, in September 2012, the Nepal Library Foundation was registered in Nepal as a Non-Government Organization with the Social Services Council of the Government of Nepal. This is the culmination of nearly two years of effort led by our Country Director Sharad Babu Shrestha.

The registration will allow NLF Nepal to apply for funding support within Nepal and internationally, independent of NLF Canada, and will provide a truly local base to the NLF. Sharad and his team deserve congratulations for pushing this through. NLF has now established a fully functional organization with highly trained staff to assist in community and school library development and management.

Nepal Office

The NLF Nepal office in Kathmandu, managed by Dhan Kumar Shrestha, hosts a small demonstration library that can be used for basic training as well as a functional library during office hours. We provide books and computers, train library managers as well as offering consulting services for communities seeking advice on how to build and run libraries.

Reading Clubs

An initiative of the NLF – and a condition of our support – is the promotion of reading clubs in the libraries with which we are associated. It has been a very successful and popular move with many positive reports reaching us of these clubs from around Nepal. The first club we started, in 2009 in Moti, is going strong. One of the highlights of my trip to Nepal in 2012 was to participate in a Reading Club meeting in the Moti Library. While I was in Rana Pal school library on the same trip four book clubs for four different age groups were established. Our experience has shown that it is not enough to build a library without actively promoting it as a community resource. Reading clubs for all ages are ways to get people into libraries and reading books. We are in full support of OLE in its plans to actively promote reading in 2013 and look forward to collaborating on this worthwhile initiative. Dhan Kumar Shrestha heads up our reading club campaign.

NLF Endowment Fund

In order to provide a reliable income stream the team in Kathmandu has started an NLF endowment fund. Contributions can be made to this through our website or directly to the NLF Nepal office. Please consider contributing to this to ensure that the NLF can continue to provide high quality services to libraries throughout Nepal. See the back page for details of our \$50 a year contribution program.

Auditing

We are obliged by Revenue Canada to monitor the libraries we have supported with Canadian funds. By doing this we are able to ensure that donors are assured that any investment they make in a library is monitored and feedback provided. It also allows libraries access to advice and support if needed. In late 2011 I visited Moti Library in Parbat, Rana Pal School Library in Morang and Ria's Reading Room in Kaski (see article). I was encouraged by how well all of the libraries are doing. Ria's Reading Room was named the best library in Kaski by Room to Read this year (see article p. 4). While in Parbat, I visited Kalika Elementary School library. Kalika had requested NLF support. It had been established at the initiative of the school's teachers and members of the local community. The teachers of the school contribute one percent of their salary to defray the library's operating costs.

School Partnerships

Sutherland School in North Vancouver School District, BC has been supporting Prakash Community Library in Banepa for the last four years. Every year under the leadership of teacher Cynthia Bunbury students engage in fund raising activities to support various causes one of which is the NLF. In Spring 2013 Cynthia will be taking a party of students to Nepal who will include Prakash as part of their itinerary. Any other school interested in partnering with a Nepali school should contact paul@nepallibrary.org.

Fundraising

NLF partnered with the Sarlahi Social Welfare Foundation (SSWF) to establish a library in the village of Simara. SSWF has assured partial support to help pay for the operating cost of our Kathmandu office. Joint fund raising events between NLF and SSWF are being planned for the year 2013. Other initiatives include:

Non Resident Nepali Association donated NRs 140,000 directly to NLF Nepal in Kathmandu.

Kapil Dev Thapa, a NRNA member from Japan, has joined our mission and has pledged to contribute to the establishment of a number of libraries in the year 2013. He contributed to libraries in Lalitpur and Baglung in 2012. He also donated Rs 50,000 to the NLF Nepal office.

Grand Bank Nepal Ltd also contributed Rs 50 000 and has promised to contribute more. This is the first time a Kathmandu based business has contributed to the NLF.

\$50 a Year Campaign: We have launched a campaign to compile a list of supporters who are willing to contribute \$ 50 per year. Our target is to have a list of 250 supporters by the middle of 2013. The number of libraries seeking NLF assistance is growing every week and this reliable source of income allows us to plan ahead to provide this support.

Anju Thanju runs a small business in Calgary. After watching a presentation about the NLF she pledged to contribute 5% of the profits from her business to the NLF or \$500 whichever is greater. She has set an example for others to follow.

Suman Basnyat, a Chartered General Accountant and CEO of S Basnyat and Co. Inc. based in British Columbia has been looking after NLF's accounts pro bono. This is a huge help.

Ms Binda Pandey: NLF Nepal Board Director



Ms. Binda Pandey, a former member of Nepal's Constituent Assembly is known for her unvarnished and outspoken views and dedication to the cause of human rights. She is a strong believer in the provision of universal quality education to all citizens and considers school and community libraries as essential assets for economic and social enhancement. Ms. Pandey is one of the Directors of NLF Nepal. Recently, Naresh Koirala met Ms. Pandey to discuss her vision for the NLF.

“I can lobby concerned state authorities to include library development in state policy and programs”

How did you come to know about the Nepal Library Foundation?

I was working as chair of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principle Committee in Constituent Assembly. In the process of drafting the Committee report, the representatives of the Library Association of Nepal came to our office with some suggestions for the new constitution. The provision of public libraries was one of the topics of our discussion. Someone mentioned the Nepal Library Foundation (NLF) in this context. I learned that NLF is a registered in Canadian NGO working in Nepal. When I was in Vancouver to attend the International Trade Union Congress World Congress in 2009, I met Naresh Koirala, the founding and current President of the NLF and learned more about its work. Upon my return, I met up with the staff at NLF Nepal.

What aspects of NLF's work impressed you?

I was impressed especially by the commitment of NLF people to the cause of library development in Nepal and despite the difficulties, the efforts they were putting in to raise funds to support our community and school libraries. NLF has contributed significantly to bring awareness about the importance of libraries in our country where library development is not a priority of the

State. NLF's work has helped change social attitudes toward libraries, albeit on a small scale, and this is absolutely valuable.

Why did you join the board of the Nepal Library Foundation, Nepal?

I agree with NLF's mission. I strongly believe that we, as community members, have an obligation to provide our people with open and non –partisan resources to help their development and sharpen their critical thinking skills. A library helps to empower people by providing them with information and helps them to make informed decision in matters that concern them. In this day and age, knowledge and information is power and I hope to work with NLF to empower our people. At the same time, the State should develop a library policy and I thought I may be able to lobby the State in this area.

What will be your main role in Nepal Library Foundation?

Being a social activist, I have the skill to work with and organize people. I will use this skill to spread the importance and promote the idea of public library by connecting it with knowledge and right to information. Secondly, I can lobby the relevant state authorities to include library development in state policy and programs.

Digital Libraries (from p1)

materials”.

Mr Mahashram Sharma, until recently the Director general of the Nepal Department of Education, has said that e-Pustakalaya servers need to be installed in resource centers in all Nepal's District Education Offices to serve as focal points for supporting learning and teaching using information and communication technology (ICT). It is hoped that a portion of the funds currently set aside by the Government of Nepal for ICT based education can be directed towards achieving this goal in a timely manner in 2013.

Once installed the content can be updated by simply connecting an external drive containing the newer version available from OLE Nepal . The content is free and adheres to international copyright conventions with organizations including Room to Read, the British Council, Practical Action, Rato Bangala Foundation, the Nepalese Society for Children's Literature and Save the Children allowing free use of their material.

It is currently available as an off-line resource to 14,000 students in 78 schools and in December 2012 alone was viewed online by

25,000 users who downloaded 19,000 items.

The resource is rapidly gaining credibility with education managers, teachers and administrators who are seeking to improve teaching methodology and practice and to provide quality literary resources for their students in both Nepali and English. Last year saw new installations in 22 schools and 4 libraries. The realization of the locally served e-Pustakalaya has meant that those computers sitting idle in public libraries without internet access can now be used more productively.

With the rapid growth in tablet, e-readers and smartphones we are hopeful that the cost of access to digital material will drop to the point where it will become less of a barrier to individuals. e-Pustakalaya apps will be a step forward, development of which is part of the 2013 growth plan. The NLF has provided over \$40,000 to fund the development of this high quality resource made possible through the support of Hartley & Marks Publishers Inc, a Vancouver based publisher which provided a \$10,000 grant in 2012.

Read the 2012 report and results of a user survey carried out by OLE on our website www.nepallibrary.org/reports2012 for more

Ria's Reading Room: A School Library Helping to Build a Community

Wanda Vivequin

Ria's Reading Room Library continues to go from strength to strength; good news for the students at Sri Arun Joyoti Primary School where it is located and residents of Sundaridanda who benefit from its presence in the community.

The library, which was officially opened in 2008, now has almost 4000 books, many of them Nepali language books. Librarian Hari Devi Neupane has now been fully teacher trained via the highly acclaimed Rato Bangala training program in Kathmandu which focuses on child centred learning.

Hari incorporates a library period into class time at the school and also has responsibility for teaching class for several hours a week to a small group of new entrants. Hari's efforts have seen some remarkable behavioural changes in children at the school who now understand the role of the library and how its books can be incorporated into learning.

Another part time librarian has also been employed to give relief time for Hari to teach and assist other teachers at the school understand the potential of the library. The school roll has more than doubled in two years and the school has ambitious plans to expand in the following years. Not bad for a government school that was at risk of closing not so long ago.

Ria's Reading Room is of course a community library and students from other schools are regularly seen using the library as well as adults who come to read the paper or enjoy the books and activities on offer. Much credit for the ongoing success of Ria's



Ria's Reading Room, an NLF affiliated library, is an exemplary school library serving as a resource for teachers and students at Sri Arun Joyoti School as well as local community members.

Reading Room must go to the manager of Begnas Resort Arjun Parajuli who volunteers his time on the library committee and continues to encourage patrons staying at his resort to visit the space and donate.

Operating costs for the library are paid for through fundraising activities organized each year in Edmonton. In the last two years the generous support of Ten Thousand Villages in Edmonton has allowed fundraisers to be held in the store which have been very successful.

Plans now are to expand the library a little to accommodate several laptop computers for the children to begin familiarizing themselves with computer based learning possibilities. Anyone wanting more information about Ria's Reading Room can contact Wanda

Library Development: The Core of Our Mission

Karlim Lower Secondary School Library, Baglung



New computer lab in Karlim School Library

In October 2012, NLF assisted in upgrading the existing Library at Karlim Lower Secondary school. The school had a small library established with assistance from Room to Read. This library required additional books, furniture; computers and its staff needed library management training. Karlim Society of Japan collected Rs. 500 000 under the leadership of Kapil Dev Thapa of NRN Japan for the upgrading. NLF provided three days training in library management; helped in purchase of books; in cataloguing books and setting up ten computers in the new upgraded library. The upgraded library has more book holdings than the existing library; 10 computers and brand new furniture. Although an

e-Pustakalaya server has not been installed yet due to the lack of funds, a local computer specialist Sri Kumar helped down load 25 documents including 10 books from e-Pustakalaya. Jiba Lammichane, President NRNA, inaugurated the upgraded library by downloading the book "Atma Britanta" by B. P. Koirala in the presence of District Education Officers.

Suklaphant Community Library, Bhim Datta, Kanchanpur



Community members receiving training in Bhim Datta

The library in Suklaphant is located in the municipality of Bhim Datta and serves three Village Development Committees. NLF helped set up the library and trained library personnel in management and cataloguing.

Dhan Kumar Shrestha—Keeping it All Going in Kathmandu

Paul Bird

Libraries are a much sought after community resource in Nepal. Part of the work that the NLF does is to assist communities in setting up libraries that meet the needs of, and are put to good use by, their members. We have found from our experiences in doing this and looking at how existing libraries function and operate that thorough preparation is a must.

“My vision is to establish sustainable libraries throughout the country and to have as many people as possible benefit from them so as to work towards a new Nepal” Dhan Kumar Shrestha

We are very fortunate to have Dhan Kumar working with us to ensure that the libraries we partner with are given a sound foundation from the start. Acting as a consultant with library stakeholders, Dhan provides advice and assistance in planning, project management, financial management, training and sustainability. He also runs the Kathmandu office in which there is a small model library open to the public. He also organizes and runs a volunteer program that services library activities associated with the NLF.

Dhan is from Gaighat in the Udayapur district in Eastern Nepal. He has been involved with libraries since 2041 BS (1984 AD) recently working as a regional coordinator for READ Nepal and for the last three years with the NLF

In his travels he has visited 35 districts in Nepal working with over 75 libraries established by Room to Read, READ Nepal, the NLF and other organisations. From this experience he has clear views on the roles and function of libraries. He sees the need to market libraries to a wider audience citing as an example the fact that generally teachers do not see libraries playing a role in their teaching strategy. He is also keen to promote reading habits and to make the libraries he works with more accessible to the many people in Nepal who are illiterate.

Dhan is married with one son, who is currently completing his high school studies prior to starting his post-secondary training.



Dhan works his audience at the inauguration at Subudhi Mahanada Academic Library

Corporate Values: What Caring Means to Golder Associates

Naresh Koirala, President of NLF, met with Neil McQuitty, Golder's British Columbia Managing Principal, in Neil's Vancouver office. Following are excerpts from their conversation.

Naresh: On behalf of NLF, I would like to thank Golder for sponsoring NLF and providing it with financial assistance. Please share the scope of engineering services Golder provides, its mission and why Golder is interested in humanitarian works.

Neil: Golder is an employee-owned, global company providing consulting, design, and construction services in the areas of earth, the environment, and the related areas of energy. From 180 offices worldwide, Golder's 8,000 employees work with clients to manage their environmental and engineering activities in a technically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible manner. The success of our global company is built on supporting our local communities.

As owners of the company, Golder employees recognize the positive influence of good corporate citizenship. This commitment is expressed through ethical business practices, philanthropy to support important causes and encouragement and support of active involvement in civic organizations, charitable programs, professional societies and other community groups. About two years ago, we asked our owners (our employees) to list what they see as driving Golder values. Besides technical excellence and environmental stewardship, an overwhelming majority of our people said “Caring”.

Our philanthropic programs such as the *Golder Trust for Orphans* (goldertrust.org), our support to the *United Way* (unitedway.ca), fundraising for *Mining for Miracles* (miningformiracles.org), *UNICEF* (unicef.ca) and the *Nepal Library Foundation* (nepallibrary.org) are expressions of our “Caring” ethos. All of these programs are initiated by our employees. Golder believes in lending a helping hand.

Our commitment to sustain and help develop human capital extends to helping those in need and less fortunate than us.

Naresh: Tell me more about Golder's own Golder Trust for Orphans. I understand it is a very successful program implemented even in countries where Golder does not have engineering projects.

Neil: We had a long discussion with our staff in trying to define “Caring”. The word caring to us has little to do with business development; it is a part of our belief in shared responsibility for long-term sustainability of the earth's material resources and in developing human capital. Our commitment to sustain and help develop human capital extends to helping those in need and less fortunate than us.

This commitment is not encumbered with geographical or business development boundaries. Needless to say, we cannot do everything we want; but the focus of our philanthropy is primarily on health care and education. Golder Trust for Orphans was created in 2003 to provide support to children and families in Africa who have been orphaned or displaced by the AIDS pandemic. The Trust provides funding to groups engaged in sustainable projects and projects seeking to become self-sustaining in their charitable work. We also provide one-time grants to organizations looking for immediate aid. To date our efforts are supporting over 1,000 children in Africa.

BC Teachers Help Raise Funds for Libraries

Alison Bird, a retired teacher, continues to organize the Paperblanks fundraising campaign in British Columbia. Hartley & Marks Publishers Inc. is a long time corporate partner of the NLF, donating high quality blank journals (www.paperblanks.com) to the NLF.

The NLF wishes to recognize the many British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) members along with parents who have contributed their time and effort to assist Alison in her fund raising efforts. These include school librarians and elementary school teachers who have used the fund raising events to raise awareness of literacy in developing countries. The BCTF is actively engaged in International Solidarity campaigns to support human rights and education in developing countries.

Corporate Values (from p5)

Naresh: Golder's decision to continue its support of NLF? Is this also inspired by Golder's commitment to "Caring".

Neil: Yes, indeed! We know that you founded the NLF some years ago and the work that the NLF is doing echo our commitment to "Caring" and your focus on education aligns with one of the focuses of our philanthropy. We are very pleased to support a Golder employee's initiative which aligns with our sense of "Caring". We look forward to hearing about the progress NLF is making for people of Nepal.

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Affordable Access to the Digital Word

Paul Bird

It has been very rewarding to see that the children who have access to the One Laptop Per Child XO computers use the e-Pustakalaya resource mostly as a source of recreational reading in out of school time. As it has a back lit screen it can be read after dark in rural areas where lighting is not available for most of the time due to power shortages. The over two thousand book titles will keep even the most avid reader busy for a while. These are the pioneers of a new culture of recreational readers in Nepal!

At \$230 for the new XO4 model it is still largely out of reach for most rural Nepali families. The recently unveiled British designed and Indian produced Aakash tablet device sells to educational institutions for \$40 in India as part of a national drive to enhance education.

**A tablet device now costs \$40,
where is the \$5 e-reader?**

If a tablet can be produced for this amount can someone not come up with a very basic e-reader akin to the early simple e-Readers that have become a part of everyday life for so many of us?

So here's the challenge: who is going to come up with \$5 e-reader? Nothing fancy, it doesn't have to have a color display (my heavily used Sony e-Reader doesn't) and could be linked to worldwide literature sources on the net and wouldn't be of much use except for reading words.

Although the XO computer is a proven and very hardy device, which has stood up well to the rigors of rural Nepali schools and homes, the cheap tablet and e-reader offers huge potential. The NLF is seeking partners to investigate the most cost effective devices that can bring digital content to poor rural and urban communities. Please contact me at paul@nepallibrary.org with your ideas and suggestions.

www.nepallibrary.org



About the NLF

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