

Importance and challenges in implementing a digitized historical map collection in academic libraries of Sri Lanka

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Historical maps are very useful resources as they help us to learn about past spatial background of a particular location. In Sri Lankan context, the bulk of invaluable historical maps were available only in paper format which provides limited access to university students and are in danger of undergoing aging and bleaching effects. Digitization is one of the most effective method which can be used to preserve these paper-based artifacts. Objectives of the study were to identify the importance and challenges in implementing a digitized historical map collection in academic libraries. Online and internal desk research methodologies were used to collect data. The study revealed that digitizing historical maps is a contemporary need of academic context. Academic libraries should pay immediate attention to select paper-based historical maps for digitization, as they are in danger of being lost in the future. The importance of digitizing rare and limited library material will be to satisfy the increasing demand of library users and to provide wide access. Rather than stored in a room in paper format, digitized format makes it more convenient for users to access the material without time and space limitations. However there are several constrains in the process of digitization, such as selecting an appropriate storage medium for the digitized maps. Also, libraries will need to enrich their technical architecture by including a variety of servers, high-speed local networks and fast connections to the Internet. Digitized images are more likely to cause copyright infringements than traditional collections. In order to prevent copyright violations libraries can include reference under each digitized map. This study concludes that the university librarians should take necessary attention to transform historical paper maps into digitized format, which will serve the user community in the digital era in an effective and efficient manner.

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