

## **Forming the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations (REFSALA): a Collaborative Framework for Advancing Library and Information Science**

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Libraries play a pivotal role in knowledge dissemination, cultural preservation, and lifelong learning. However, libraries across South Asia face several common challenges, including limited collaboration, inadequate funding, and technological disparities. In response, the establishment of the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations (REFSALA) is proposed to bridge these gaps by promoting regional cooperation, knowledge sharing, and policy advocacy among library associations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The primary objective of REFSALA is to create a unified platform that strengthens library systems across the region. Its proposed structure includes a governing council with representatives from each member country, a rotational presidency, and specialized working committees focused on key areas such as policy, research, digital transformation, and professional development. REFSALA will function as a non-profit organization with international recognition, guided by a constitution that outlines membership criteria, governance structures, funding models, and operational strategies. Key areas of collaboration include policy advocacy, digital transformation, capacity building, academic research, and the development of regional library standards. Signature initiatives such as the South Asian Library Summit, the REFSALA Journal of Library & Information Science, and cross-border resource-sharing programs will serve as cornerstone projects. Strategic partnerships with global organizations like UNESCO and IFLA will be sought to ensure sustainability and global integration. The implementation of REFSALA will follow a phased approach: initial agreements among national library associations, followed by legal registration, fund-raising, and membership expansion. Long-term goals include establishing a regional digital library network, professional training programs, and technology-driven innovations in library management. The formation of REFSALA represents a transformative opportunity for South Asian libraries to collectively address regional challenges, enhance professional competencies, and advance robust library policies for the future.

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