

Foreword

I am very pleased to write the foreword to this book, “A Guide for Beginners in Research”, a project of the General Research Committee of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science. This book is mainly aimed at improving the research skills of post-graduate and undergraduate students who are conducting research for their degrees.

A diversity of skills are required by a student when conducting a research project, from formulating a research hypothesis, choosing a proper experimental design, searching for literature, conducting the experiments and finally writing the thesis. This book brings together some of these skills for the undergraduate and postgraduate students in our universities and higher education institutes, so that the formidable task of conducting a research project is made easier. What is significant in this Guide is that the assortment of information and skills, provided by experts in their respective disciplines, is made available within a single book – and at a very affordable price, by courtesy of the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka.

At a time when the country is trying to make headway based on a knowledge economy, I believe that it is the responsibility of experienced scientists in the country to provide necessary guidance for the budding young scientists to improve their research skills, through a book of this nature. I am very much confident that this book would be of immense help for the young local researchers to upgrade their quality of research and in the long run to become scientists of high calibre to elevate the country to even greater heights through science.

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Preface

This book is an outcome of the activities of the General Research Committee (GRC) of the SLAAS from 2010 – 2013. The GRC was of the opinion that the culture of research should be improved in Sri Lanka. We initiated a series of lectures for the newly recruited academic staff in the recently established regional universities. These lectures addressed the origin and history of science, how to conduct experiments, recording observations, writing up the research, and writing grant proposals. While these lectures reached some of the future researchers in the country, we also saw the need to accommodate the undergraduates and postgraduate students in our universities, who are solely dependent on their mentors to acquire the basic skills of conducting a research project. The purpose of this book is to supplement the mentoring skills of the many researchers in this country and perhaps serve as a permanent source of basic information.

The addition of more chapters may enhance the quality of this Guide. However, perfection could mean a long wait. Thus, the GRC decided to bring out this simple volume and then bring it to 'perfection' in a later volume, by improving on the shortcomings of this book in the future. For this purpose, we invite you both students and researchers, to send your suggestions and point out any errors and omissions.

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All the chapters were reviewed by experts. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to all of them, which made my task much easier. The contributors and reviewers of the chapters are listed in the following pages.

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Prof. W.S. Sumathipala Chairman, NSF, and Ms. Anusha Amerasinghe Director General, NSF realized the value of this book and undertook to finance and print the book at the NSF. The SLAAS is grateful to the NSF for this kind gesture.

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