

## **The Role of the national union catalogue in library cooperation in Sri Lanka**

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Rapid growth of information, high cost of library materials and constantly changing methods of technology generate a complex situation in libraries with regard to acquisition of knowledge produced in the world. This situation highlights in the libraries of the developing countries when compared to the libraries in the developed countries due to economical and infrastructural issues. The main responsibility of any library of the world would be the fulfilment of information requirements of its users in spite of such obstacles. Concept of library cooperation provides a better solution in such situations by sharing of information and resources which are spread out within the country. National Union Catalogue (NUCAT) is one of the main tools which can be used as an interface between library collections and users by providing bibliographic records of the library collections available in a country with physical locations of the resources.

This study was carried out with the main objective of exploring the possibilities of new mechanism and methodology to improve the conventional frame of the NUCAT to facilitate a better library and information service to the library users in Sri Lanka. Data used in this study were collected through randomly selected sample of 68 member libraries and 50 users of the NUCAT by using structured questionnaires.

The survey results of this study indicated that the 40% of the members of NUCAT project represented the category of special libraries. The main users of the NUCAT were the researchers and the various professionals from the different fields and their usage of NUCAT showed 24% and 40% respectively. Findings revealed that 60% were not aware about the NUCAT at all and 81% of the librarians were in an opinion of that the NUCAT need to be restructured according to the needs of users.

The study concludes that the traditional frame of the NUCAT needs to be reorganized along with the developing world, ever changing technology and the user demands. Also the continue contribution and involvement of the membership is highly essential rather than providing bibliographic information about the library collections available in Sri Lanka. Finally the level of public awareness needs to be strengthened regarding the service and benefits which they could obtain through the NUCAT.

**Key words:** Library cooperation, Union catalogue, National union catalogue, Bibliographic databases, Sri Lanka

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