

Cataloguing in Sri Lanka: Country Report Presented to the 4th IFLA Meeting of Experts -2006

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Abstract

The art of writing, the first prerequisite of any bibliographical activity, has been known on the island of Ceylon since the 3rd century B. C. The advent of Buddhism in 3rd century B.C. marked the growth of an intellectual tradition. Learning and scholarship have been centered on monasteries and temples. Eventually, these centers have been transformed into the libraries and book producing institutes. It is believed, such centers have been operated since 5th century A.D.

Ola leaves were the writing materials of the early ear. Sri Lanka was reputed among Asian countries for ola lives books and other writing materials. South India, China and Thailand had obtained Buddhist text books and commentaries. Though there were books, libraries and scholarships in ancient Sri Lanka, no information is available of the cataloguing system before seventeenth century.

Sri Lanka entered the era of printing during the Dutch period in the island. The first Sinhalese printed book entitled "Singlesch Gebeede- Boek" appeared in 1737.

A record of a library catalogue was found for the first time in Sri Lanka in 18th century, during the period of Dutch Governor, Cornelis Joan Simons in 1707. After that the cataloguing systems were developed around the western countries and Sri Lanka. But, they were not with formulated code system until middle of the 19th century.

Available early library catalogues in Sri Lanka are in printed book form. These catalogues can be categorized into six groups: 1). Catalogues of Academic/ Research libraries, 2). Catalogues of subscription/ Public Libraries, 3). Printed Catalogues for Manuscript, 4). Catalogues for the national imprint, 5). Subject catalogues and 6). Sales/ trade catalogues.

According to this study the first printed catalogue in Sri Lanka was published in 1827. This is a catalogue of both the books in the library and the objects in the museum of the Medical department of Sri Lanka. The Colombo museum has produced several catalogues from 1877. After these initiatives many institutes and personals have produced number of catalogues that covers vast array of subject areas. And also advanced cataloging systems are also developed over the time.

The main objective of this paper is to scrutinize the evolutionary process of the cataloging systems and their scientific base in Sri Lanka. Institutional frame work and the experts that involved developing catalogue systems in this country have also been examined from this study.