

The usage of Machine-Readable Cataloguing format (MARC) for University Library Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs) in Sri Lanka.

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Abstract

The rapid development of technology has revolutionized the way information is managed and accessed in libraries worldwide. In this context, the Machine-Readable Cataloguing (MARC) format has emerged as a crucial tool for the efficient management and accessibility of library resources, particularly in university libraries catering to the research and educational needs of the academic community. This research paper explores the utilization of the MARC format in the Online Public Access catalogues (OPAC) systems of two arbitrarily selected university libraries in Sri Lanka. The study aims to investigate the level of uniformity in MARC implementation and improve easy access to bibliographical information. Furthermore, the research examines the collaborative functions performed by university libraries to facilitate the exchange of cataloguing data, benefiting both readers and library staff. The research methodology employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, involving the administration of questionnaires and participatory observations. The sample consists of forty university readers and heads of the cataloguing departments in the selected universities. The findings indicate a lack of uniformity in the utilization of the MARC format across the library system, with variations in MARC tag usage and issues with accurate cataloguing data entry. To address these challenges, the study recommends raising awareness within the entire university system regarding the Descriptive

cataloguing framework for the MARC format introduced by the National Library. The establishment of cataloguing guidelines and standards for staff is crucial, ensuring adherence to prescribed practices when creating or editing MARC records. These guidelines should undergo periodic review and updates to ensure efficient data entry. To improve OPACs, a unique Sinhala transliteration system for the entire university system is also essential.

Keywords: *Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC), Online Public Access Cataloging (OPAC), university libraries, cataloguing data, standardization*