

Sri Lanka National Bibliography: a historical and critical study

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The present research is an examination of the Sri Lanka National Bibliography in terms of historical and critical viewpoints in order to establish the largely unreported history of the national bibliographic tradition in Sri Lanka and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Sri Lanka National Bibliography as a selection, cataloguing and reference tool in accordance with internationally accepted norms of "national bibliography".

The method of analysis, for the most part, involved the examination of published as well as archival materials relating to the subject. A random sample drawn from the issues of the Sri Lanka National Bibliography from 1982 to date has been used for critical analysis. Interviews were also held with librarians in major libraries in the country on the use of the national bibliography as a selection, cataloguing and reference tool.

It was found that the Sri Lanka National Bibliography is a natural extension of a recorded bibliographical tradition started in the first quarter of the seventeenth century; retrospective bibliographic control of the country is still at its infancy; the Sri Lanka National Bibliography, despite the fact it generally follows international standards in the compilation and production is not being much used as a selection and cataloguing rule by libraries for current Sri Lankan publications due both to the late listing of titles and its incomplete coverage. The error rate in cataloguing and classification of entries in the bibliography was found to be minimal and therefore it can be considered to be an authoritative general reference tool for the national imprint in Sri Lanka.

The findings lead to the formation of a number of proposals that envisage the future development of the Sri Lanka National Bibliography as a more effective national bibliographical tool.

Key words: Sri Lanka National Bibliography, Bibliographical tradition, National bibliography, Retrospective national bibliography, Bibliographic control

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