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# Availability of Library Catalogues in School Libraries in Sri Lanka

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## ABSTRACT

The library catalogue is one of the major system that users can search the resources available in the library. To develop a library catalogue, an individual must have training and knowledge. However, there are some libraries struggling to develop and maintain their catalogues due to various reasons. Hence, the objective of this study is to identify the availability of library catalogues in school libraries in Akuressa Educational Zone, Sri Lanka. Randomly drawn 50 school libraries in Akuressa Educational Zone, Matara District, Sri Lanka was selected as the sample of the study. Primary data of this study were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A paper-based questionnaire was posted through regular mail to teacher librarians in the selected libraries. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. The response rate for the questionnaire was 72%. Majority of respondents are representing Maha Vidyalaya (18) and Kanishta Vidyalaya (11). A large majority of school libraries (34) do not have a library catalogue in their libraries. Lack of resources and lack of knowledge about cataloguing are the major reasons behind not having library catalogues. A large majority of school librarians are willing to introduce catalogues to their libraries and gain knowledge about cataloguing by participating in workshops based on theoretical and practical training. School libraries are managed by the Government of Sri Lanka and Ministry of Education. Hence, they have a responsibility to provide sufficient resources and training to school libraries and teacher librarians to enhance the performance of school libraries in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Cataloguing, School Libraries, Teacher Librarians, Independence services*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As a gateway to knowledge and information, libraries have to play different roles in information acquisition, organization, dissemination and preservation. Among all these roles, organization of information sources is one of the major roles that library has to play. Classification and cataloguing are the primary tools use in the libraries to organize their resources. Classification and cataloguing also helpful in assisting patrons to find their desired information sources without a delay.

A library catalogue is “a register of all bibliographic items found in a particular library or group of libraries” (New World Encyclopedia, 2014).The library catalogue provides the locations of the resources available in the library. It helps users to find library resources by author, title or keywords. With the development of Information Technology, the nature of library catalogue has been changed over time from card catalogue to online catalogue.

To develop a library catalogue, an individual must have training and knowledge. However, there are some libraries struggling to develop and maintain their catalogues due to various reasons. Unfortunately, a large majority (88.9%) of school librarians in Sri Lanka do not have any professional qualification in Library and Information Science Field (Senevirathna & Jayasekara, 2017). As a result, they may face difficulties when developing and maintaining library catalogues. Hence, this study is focused on the status of library catalogues in school libraries of Sri Lanka. The objective of this study is to identify the availability of library catalogues in school libraries.

## **REVIEW OF LETERATURE**

The library catalog is “an inventory of all items found within the library, either physically or electronically” (San Diego State University Library, 2017). Library patrons can get the following information using a library catalogue; “ whether the library owns a particular copy of a particular item, which works by a specific author are in the collection, which editions of a particular work the library owns, and what materials are available on a particular subject” (Rach, 2008). A printed catalogue, card catalogue, computerized catalogue(Gunasekara, 2000) and online catalogue are some of the physical forms of the catalogue. Library catalogue should be easy to update, easy to use and easy to produce multiple copies. Hence, librarians should have the ability to select the best catalogue for their library.

To fulfill users’ requirements library catalogue must consist of various unit records. Hence, librarians have to follow guidelines and standards when creating library catalogues. Classified Catalogue Code (CCC) and AACR (Anglo American Cataloguing Rules) are some standards used worldwide to prepare catalogue entries. CCC can be used to create classified catalogues and dictionary catalogues(Kumar, 1998). A classified catalogue is a combination of number entries and word entries (Ranganathan, 1945). Without proper training and knowledge, individuals cannot create a catalogue by themselves.

## METHODOLOGY

The population of this study consisted of school libraries in Akuressa Educational Zone, Matara District. Primary data of this study were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data of this study were obtained through a questionnaire survey. Among the school libraries in Akuressa Educational Zone, Matara District, 50 school libraries were selected using simple random sampling as the sample of this study. Printed questionnaires were sent to teacher librarians of selected school libraries through regular post. Qualitative data of this study were obtained using a semi-structured interview. Teacher librarians were selected as the key informants of the semi-structured interview. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The response rate for the questionnaire is 72%. There were 18 responses from Maha vidyala followed by Kanishta Vidyalaya (11) and Primary Schools (5). Also, there were only one response from National school and one response from Central school.

**Table 01: Responded school composition**

School Type	Frequency
National Schools	1
Central Schools	1
Maha Vidyalaya	18
Kanishta Vidyalaya	11
Primary Schools	5

When considering the number of books available in selected libraries, 12 out of 36 school libraries have 1001 to 2000 books available in their libraries.

There were nine school libraries with 3001-4000 books followed by five school libraries with 2001-3000 books. There were only two school libraries with more than 10,000 books.

**Table 02: No of books available in libraries**

Number of books	Number of school libraries
Less than 1000	3
1001-2000	12
2001-3000	5
3001-4000	9
4001-5000	1
5001-6000	3
6001-7000	1
More than 10000	2

Unfortunately, a large majority of school libraries (34 out of 36) do not have a library catalogue in their libraries. Only two libraries have catalogues; among them, one libraries still in preparing stage. The available catalogues are traditional card catalogues.

**Table 03: Availability of catalogue**

Availability	Number of School libraries
Available	2
Not Available	34

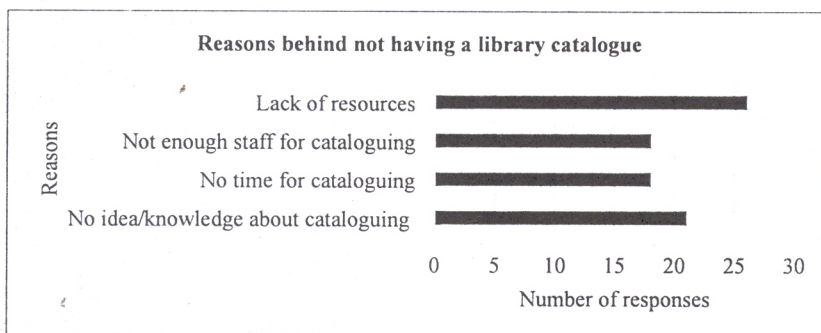
Figure 01 illustrates the reasons behind not having a library catalogue. A majority of teacher librarians (26) pointed out ‘lack of resources’ as the major reason followed by ‘no idea/ knowledge about cataloguing’ (21). Furthermore, they mentioned ‘no time for cataloguing’ and ‘not enough staff for cataloguing’ as reasons for not having a library catalogue.

*“Our school library is a very small one. Also, there are not any funds available to improve the library services. So, how can we create a catalogue without resources?” (Teacher Librarian 3)*

*“I have a basic idea about cataloguing. I am the only person working in the library. I have to teach several subjects too. Therefore, I do not have enough time for cataloguing.” (Teacher Librarian 25)*

*“We are not teacher librarians. We are teachers who work in the libraries during our off periods. So, we do not have knowledge about cataloguing. How can we perform a librarians role without proper knowledge and training” (Teacher Librarians 14)*

**Figure 01: Reasons behind not having a library catalogue**



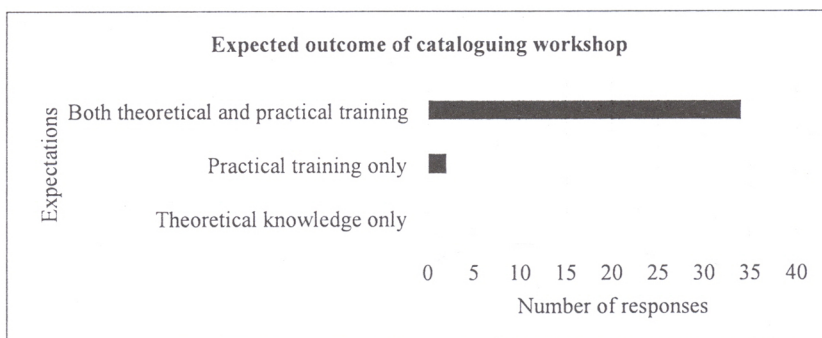
A large majority of the teacher librarians (32) like to introduce a catalogue to their libraries and like to participate incataloguing workshops (33).

**Table 04: School librarians' preference forcataloguing and training**

School librarians preference	Yes	No
Likeliness to introduce a catalogue	32	2
Likeliness to participate in a cataloguing workshop	33	3

Figure 02 illustrates teacher librarians expected out of some of the workshops on cataloguing. Majority of them (34) were expecting both theoretical and practical training. Meanwhile, only two teacher librarians want to have practical training only.

**Figure 02: Expected outcome of cataloguing workshop**



The importance of a catalogue in a library increases with the size of the collection of the library. When its collection is growing the importance of the catalogue, also grows. The large majority of school libraries considered in this study have 1000-2000 items (Table 2). Hence, these school libraries can be considered as small libraries. As small libraries, the requirement of a formal catalogue in those school libraries is very less. According to the availability of current infrastructure in school libraries, the cardcatalogue is the best option for them. Teacher librarians can create a simple catalogue with title and author, which will help users to find the items in the library. However, there are some libraries with more than 2000 books (Table 2). To overcome the problems occur with an informal catalogue with a large collection, they can group the books by subject categories taught in the school.

## CONCLUSION

As revealed by the results of this study, the majority of school libraries do not have a library catalogue. The major reasons behind not having a library catalogue are; lack of resources, no idea or knowledge about cataloguing, no time for cataloguing and not enough staff for cataloguing. A large majority of teacher librarians would like to participate in cataloguing workshops focused on both theoretical and practical training.

School libraries in Sri Lanka are managed by the Government of Sri Lanka and Ministry of Education. Hence, they have responsibility to provide sufficient resources and training to school libraries and teacher librarians to enhance the performance of school libraries in Sri Lanka.

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