

## Bibliographic Control of Early Printed Works in Sri Lanka

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The process of organizing information in the form of bibliographies, indexes, lists or databases to make them available to users is known as bibliographic control. Hence it is fundamental to all research endeavours. No research could be carried out successfully without knowing what has been previously published on the subject. The present study focuses on the availability of bibliographical information or the bibliographical control of early printed works in Sri Lanka to the researchers especially in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Since the introduction of printing to Sri Lanka in 1737 a great number of books, pamphlets, periodicals etc. that reflect the intellectual and artistic thought of the nation has been published in all three national languages of the country. The study attempts to disclose how this memory of the nation has been organized bibliographically for the use by the researchers. The methodology involved the examination of locally and internationally published bibliographies, indexes and library catalogues of the national imprint.

It was found that although the recording of the national imprint had become a legal requirement under the "Printers and Publishers Ordinance" in 1885, the systematic listing of publications came into vogue in mid 20th century. Catalogues prepared by Gerard A. Joseph, the librarian of the Colombo Museum could be considered as monumental tools of bibliographic control in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Catalogues prepared by Don Martino de Zilva Wickremasinghe are landmarks of bibliographical control in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to these works a number of printed library catalogues of the period is also available. It was noted that works published in Sinhala and Tamil during early period have not been properly recorded. Hence, a welter of information contained in these works passes unnoticed to researchers. However, in recent past the Sri Lanka National Library has started the compilation of a retrospective national bibliography of which four volumes covering the period from 1737 to 1910 have already been published. In spite of its pardonable mistakes this is the only tool available for researchers looking for information on early printed Sinhala books in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, no attempt has yet been taken to compile a comprehensive index of journal articles published in Sinhala and Tamil during the period

When compared to vernacular publications, works published in English during the period have been systematically listed. Ian Goonetilleke's five volumes of "Bibliography of Ceylon" is still the major bibliographical source for early printed English works in Sri Lanka. In conclusion the study suggests that there should be a concerted national effort to record the early national imprint including journal articles in order to facilitate the works of researchers engaged in Sri Lanka studies.

**Keywords:** *bibliographic control, early printed books, national imprint, retrospective national bibliography, bibliographies, Sri Lanka*