

Improving Sinhalese Personal Name Authority Control in Sri Lankan Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs)

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ABSTRACT

Personal names play a crucial role in locating books systematically and identifying individuals. Previous studies have emphasized that searching by an author's name is the most common method used by library users in automated systems. The objective of name authority control is to enhance searching and browsing capabilities by ensuring the accurate retrieval of all works associated with an individual, including variations of personal identity such as pseudonyms and family names. Unfortunately, Sinhalese personal names are quite common. These variations negatively impact information retrieval quality, the linking of related resources, and copyright management. Rather than that misspelled names and duplicated same name in data entries can be easily detected by machines. However, other variations, such as an author using their full name or an abbreviated form, one person having different name forms, or multiple people sharing the same name, cannot be easily identified by machines. Therefore, libraries employ authority control files for personal names, using a single, distinct spelling of the personal name (*known as the heading*) for each library material.

The objective of this survey was to develop an automated authority file capable of accurately identifying books based on specific personal names. In pursuit of this goal, a statistical approach was utilized, which entailed compiling an extensive list of author names extracted from the university libraries of Kelaniya and Moratuwa. The dataset of author names ($n=76,592$ names) was obtained from the Tag 100 and Tag 700 data fields present within these libraries. To ensure data accuracy, a series of initial data cleaning steps were implemented to remove redundant, irrelevant, and incomplete entries from the dataset.

It has been observed that libraries follow inconsistent patterns of name forms, without considering proper authority forms. Establishing a comprehensive automated author name authority file is essential to minimize confusion in these cases. Furthermore, adopting a proper transliteration process is important for effective authority control functions. To minimize errors in searching personal names, as identified by the survey, suitable name forms were automatically detected and separately compiled for authors. This compilation can help facilitate easier information searching across libraries.

Keywords: *Sinhalese Name, Personal name authority control, Online Public Access Catalogues, National library of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka*