Union catalogue of libraries of institutions of higher education in Kerala: A proposal

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Introduction

A union catalogue is a list of the combined holdings of several libraries. Union catalogues contain bibliographic descriptions, location and holdings information of the resources in the member libraries. The resources may include any kind of documents like books, monographs, serials, cartographic materials, electronic media, materials intended for people with special needs like Braille, talking books, captioned videos etc. Union catalogues help the librarians as well as users to locate and request materials from other libraries through inter-library loan or document delivery service.

Major union catalogues

OCLC WorldCat

OCLC WorldCat (https://www.worldcat.org/) is the best known and largest union catalogue available today. OCLC was started in 1967 as Ohio College Library Center, by a small group of library leaders with an ambitious public purpose to improve access to the information held in libraries around the globe and find ways to reduce costs for libraries through collaboration. Today, the members share the ownership, assets and governance. Its member libraries cooperatively produce and maintain WorldCat, with more than 332 million bibliographic records that represent more than 2.2 billion items in over 485 languages and dialects, held by more than 72,000 participating libraries in 170 countries and territories of the world (as on 13th February, 2015).

AMICUS

AMICUS (http://amicus.collectionscanada.gc.ca/aaweb/aalogine.htm) is the national catalogue listing of the holdings of libraries across Canada. As a national catalogue, AMICUS not only shows the published materials held at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) but also those located in over 1300 libraries across Canada. AMICUS contains over 30 million records for books, magazines, newspapers, government documents, theses, sound recordings, maps, electronic texts as well as items in braille and large print.

Copac

Copac (http://copac.ac.uk/) exposes rare and unique research material by bringing together the catalogues of 90 major university libraries, and specialist research libraries in United Kingdom and Ireland.

SUNCAT

SUNCAT (http://suncat.ac.uk/search) is the Serials Union Catalogue for the UK research community to locate serials held in libraries across the UK.

Catalogue collectif de France

Catalogue collectif de France, (Union Catalog of France) (http://ccfr.bnf.fr/portailccfr/jsp/index.jsp) contains bibliographic records of more than 30 million documents from about 5000 libraries.

IndCat

IndCat: Online Union Catalogue of Indian Universities (http://indcat.inflibnet.ac.in) is the unified online library catalogue of books, theses and journals available in major university libraries in India. The union database contains bibliographic description, location and holdings information for books, journals and theses in all subject areas available in more than 160 university libraries across the country. A Web-based interface is designed to provide easy access to the merged catalogues. The IndCat is a major source of bibliographic information that can be used for inter-library loan, collections development as well as for copy cataloguing and retro-conversion of bibliographic records. IndCat (Book Database) has 75.70 Lakhs unique records of 151 universities (as on 13th February, 2015). IndCat consists three components available in open access to users and librarians.

Books: Over twelve millions bibliographical records of books from 160 university libraries.

Theses: Doctoral theses submitted to various Indian universities

Serials: Currently subscribed journals by the universities and holdings information on serials available in various university libraries

The bibliographic records in the libraries of the following universities in Kerala are included in IndCat.

➢ Cochin University of Science and Technology

➢ Kannur University

➢ Mahatma Gandhi University

➢ National University of Advanced Legal Studies

➢ Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit

➢ University of Calicut

➢ University of Kerala

In addition to these, the bibliographic records of library of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Science & Technology, which is an Institute of National Importance, is also included in IndCat.

AgriCat

AgriCat (http://egranth.ac.in/AgriCat.html) is a union catalogue of the holdings of 12 major libraries of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutes and State Agricultural Universities combined together. Visakhi and Nabi Hassan (2013) discuss about the attempts made by ICAR to develop AgriCat in partnership with OCLC, Ohio under "eGranth Project" funded by World Bank and the tools, technologies, standards, software used in creating and developing it.

National Union Catalogue of Scientific Serials in India

National Union Catalogue of Scientific Serials in India (NUCSSI) (http://124.124.221.23/) is the first indigenous database that serves as a tool to access journal holdings information. NUCSSI is a data repository of a large number of unique journal titles and library holdings belonging to major universities, science and technology institutions, research and development units of industries, higher institutes like IISc, IITs and professional institutes spread all over the country. NUCSSI contains bibliographic records of 45549 journals which has a total of 264981 holdings distributed in 565 libraries in different parts of India (as on 13th February, 2015).

Union catalogue of journals in Indian Council of Medical Research libraries

Union catalogue of journals in Indian Council of Medical Research libraries which was compiled in 2006 can be accessed at http://www.icmr.nic.in/icmrnews/union_catalogue/union_catalougue.htm. Any update of this catalogue could not be found online.

Granthalaya.org

Granthalaya.org (http://granthalaya.org/) is a project of Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Thane which intends to create bibliographic union database of holdings of all the public libraries in Konkan area including Thane.

Kerala Agricultural University Library Catalogue

Kerala Agricultural University is providing a union catalogue of its central library and libraries of constituent colleges (http://14.139.185.57/). The holdings of the university library and college libraries are catalogued in Agricat.

Mahatma Gandhi University Library Union Catalogue

Mahatma Gandhi University Library Union Catalogue Section is engaged in the process of developing a union catalogue of books of the four university library study centres and 30 teaching department libraries.

Cochin University of Science and Technology Library Union Catalogue

Cochin University of Science and Technology Library Union Catalogue is in stage of development.

Literature review

Powell (1991) said that "resource sharing, in the interlibrary lending arena in developing countries is a myth". In the context of academic libraries in Kerala, it is still a truth even after 24 years.

Harish Chandra (2002) was in favour of networking of engineering college libraries for effective resource sharing and he emphasised the creation of a union catalogue of participating libraries.

Mohan (2002) proposed KOCHINET for the sharing of resources among libraries and creation of union catalogue of periodicals and books in his paper to avoid the duplication of subscription of journals by some special libraries of Cochin City. Sreekumar and Vijayakumar (2008) suggested preparing an online union catalogue of collections in individual libraries as part of their proposed Kerala Libraries Network (KELNET). They opined it will improve bibliographic control in Kerala state and an effective inter-library loan agreement among participating libraries will supplement it and enable the users to get the documents at their individual library locations.

In his proposal for re-orienting the department libraries of Schools of University of Kerala, Suresh Kumar (2013) suggested the establishment of a union catalogue. Jayakrishnan (2013) has proposed Kerala Public Library Network (KPLNET) under the management of Kerala State Library Council and preparation of online union catalogue of collections in the public libraries of Kerala.

Benefits of union catalogue

There may be a lot of costly resources available in the libraries of nearby institutions, which may be divided just by compound walls. It is a wastage of resources to duplicate them, which can be wisely utilised for the acquisition of fresh titles which are not available within any of the libraries in the vicinity. This helps the libraries to direct their users beyond their walls, just as in the case of online resources. Union catalogues essentially help in the resource sharing programme or interlibrary loans. Without union catalogues, one cannot even think of interlibrary loan or sharing of resources.

Union catalogues also help in classification and cataloguing. It has been proved by OCLC Classify. Classify (http://classify.oclc.org/classify2/) is a FRBR-

based prototype designed to support the assignment of classification numbers and subject headings for books, DVDs, CDs, and other types of materials.

Efforts for data entry will be considerably reduced through the sharing of bibliographic records.

Institutions of higher education in Kerala

Kerala is blessed with a number of higher education institutions. They include the Central University of Kerala, 12 state universities, 2 deemed universities and 12 autonomous institutions. In addition to these, Kerala has a got a number of colleges in various disciplines like arts and science, fine arts, medicine, engineering, law etc. Some schools in the state have very good libraries rich in documents in a variety of subjects. A large number of public libraries are attached with local self-governing bodies and other organizations also. But this article is limiting its scope to the libraries of higher education institutions, since most of them have technical experts to initiate an online public access catalogue.

Online Library catalogues

Although a large number of libraries are present in the highly literate state of Kerala, the use of library by the academia and public is low. Most of the people are not even aware of the libraries in their vicinity. There may be many reasons which one can point out for this phenomenon. One of the main reasons for underused libraries is the lack of online catalogues of the resource they possess. If the libraries will be able to indicate its prospective users that they are worth visiting by simply exposing their resources, the usage of libraries will increase a lot.

Proposal for a union catalogue of libraries of institutions of higher education in Kerala

A union catalogue of the libraries of institutions of higher education can be started at a local level by enthusiastic library professionals. The catalogue must be online and compatible with each other, which will allow local cooperation among the libraries for offering better services to its users. An online catalogue will also help to avoid duplication of expensive documents in nearby institutions. These online catalogues can be gradually developed into a district-wide and then into a state-wide catalogues for the benefit of users.

Conclusion

A pilot project has been initiated by the author, which proved the feasibility of the proposal. The technical details like the hardware, software, connectivity etc., organizational structure and steps in implementation of the project, prerequisites, terms and conditions for the participating members of the network etc. has to be drawn out after the completion of the pilot project. The project can be expanded to more areas of higher education and wider geographical areas with the aid of interested institutions those would like to be part of it for their own benefit and the society.

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