Country report: Cataloguing in Nepal

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Background:

Nepal is a Himalayan kingdom lying in between China and India. It is a landlocked country. Its shape is rectangular having about 800 km length and about 200 km breadth. The area is 147,181 sq. km. It’s present estimated population is 24.35 million. The growth rate of the population is 2.2% per annum. More than 85% of the total population is still in the rural areas. Being an agricultural country, 83% of the total population is engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. The per capita income is 260 US $ (2003). The literacy rate is 54% (6 years above) but the variation in literacy between rural and urban population and between male and female is glaring.

There are 24,943 primary, 7340 lower secondary and 4113 secondary schools 5 universities and many campuses/colleges in Nepal.

Libraries in Nepal:

Nepal has been a meeting place for two great civilization-Hinduism and Buddhism. It is considered that in ancient and medieval periods the people of Nepal recognized the importance of writings and records. Mostly these materials were located in the Vihars, temples, priest’s house and king’s palaces. So, Nepal can be called with a country with ancient library traditions.

The history of modern library concept is not long in Nepal. In 1812 A.D. king Girvanyuddha Bikram shah promulgated the Royal Ordinance (Lal Mohar) for the organization and management of archival materials & books and established a library known as “Pustak
Chitati Tahavil”. The Ranas, who ruled Nepal from 1847-1951 kept people in complete darkness by prohibiting politics and education. People were not allowed to open schools and libraries. “Library parba” (Library event) was the most remarkable event in the history of Nepal. At the time of rana prime minister Bhim Shumsher in 1930, forty-five youths were arrested and punished for opening public library. In this period also few public libraries were opened in different parts of Nepal. The rana prime minister Bir Shumsher opened Ghanta Ghar Library (It is known as Clock Tower Library). Later on the library was renamed as Bir Library. In 1968 all the collection of this library were shifted to the National Archives.

After the restoration of democracy in 1950, people stated to gather at some places and began talking about the prevailing condition including education. And they thought of establishing libraries also. As a result, a number of libraries slowly began to emerge. People started establishing library in their own community in their own initiation and government also showed interest by establishing National Library in 1957. Their are more than 84,000 collection of books and thesis.

At present there are about 1000 libraries, among them 600 community/public libraries, 300 academic and the rest are government, special and foreign mission libraries. However, though the number of public libraries is big, their situation is not satisfactory.

**Cataloging in Nepalese libraries:**

We can see that the history of library is not long in Nepal. As the written record lacks, it is difficult to say the exact date of starting of using catalogue cards. In ancient time and even nowadays in some libraries alphabetical or some other kind of listing served the purpose. With the advancement of tools and materials Nepal also started using some standardized format for creating catalogue cards. It was AACR which was most widely used format and Nepalese libraries also started using this format.
Nowadays also not all the libraries possess catalogue cards. Majority of the libraries with catalogue cards lie in kathmandu valley. Academic libraries stand at top in using catalogue cards. As already mentioned. AACRII was adopted in preparing catalogue cards. With the introduction of AACRII Nepalese libraries also started using the latest edition. However some libraries still use AACRI.

Nepal National Library has more than 84000 collection among them old documents are catalogued both manually as well as digitally while new collection are catalogued digitally only .Last year(2005) we have published the third volume of Nepal National Union Catalogue(NUC) which includes all the record about Nepal published in English language regardless of the place of publication .Records were also include the works written by the Nepalese author regardless of subject and place. In this volume some Romanized records of the Tribhuwan University central library(TUCL)which were originally published in Nepalese language were also incorporated .We are trying to published the NUC for the document in Nepalese language.Total records collected from ten different libraries for the third volume were 10370.The maincatalogue has been organized alphabetically by Broad subject groups with the author and title indexes at the end with their respective NUC records number. The field tags were selected based on common communication format(CCF) to makeit compatible with other international bibliographic database.

Except Nepal National Library, Tribhuwan University Central Library ,T.U Academic Institutes, Engineering campus library are the libraries which have catalogue cards. Among these libraries TUCL has been using AACRI while other use AACRII.

Nowadays the use of catalogue card is not satisfactory because users find this time consuming and difficult in comparison to using computer.

With the use of computer and the library software WINISIS, the habit of preparing library catalogue card is decreasing. Librarians and computer engineers are trying their best to develop new programmes for fully automate the collection. As an alternate to WINISIS for Devanagari font a separate Unicode based software has been developed for Devanagari script.
Local engineers with library professional from kathmandu have succeeded in developing fully automated software which has been under observation. The major merit of this software is that not necessary to keyed again for print out the call number book pocket card if all the bibliographical data is entered. Romanization of Devanagari script has been practiced in TUCL and library of Department of Irrigation in WINISIS.

**Problems being faced:**

- Entry element for the multivolume books where each volume has its own title and editor.
- Multivolumes with different titles under one collective one and their subject also varies.
- In Nepalese context, there are certain surnames that consists of surname and the name of social group under which it falls. In such case whether it can be treated as compound surname or anything else; - K.C(Khatri, chhetri); thapa magar;
- Use of subject heading particularly seer’s list in using computer certain terms need to be changed e.g. History- Nepal should be broken into History and Nepal separately.

**Conclusion:**

The cataloguing system in Nepal is act its infantry stage in both manual as well as digital. Much have to be done to develop and to bring uniformity in Nepalese libraries. Each library uses its own local variation apart from using rules. Although the use of card form of catalogue card is slowly decreasing, we should not forget it.