PREFACE

My interest in this research arises because of my professional work as a college librarian and also my active involvement in creating databases in both CDS/ISIS and SOUL environment. I have also developed some interest in the area of document description out of my involvement as a part-time teacher in the Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University for several years in teaching cataloguing and other related papers. This area invites continuous study and research as the field is ever changing due to multi-faceted growth of literatures in various forms – conventional, non-conventional including metadata form.

Document description is a process of recording, listing, and indexing library materials available in the collection of a library or of a group of libraries for the purpose of retrieval of information in order to meet the various information need of the user community. In this research, the term document description and cataloguing has been used synonymously. The process of document description involves identification and location of document pinpointedly. It is the basic inventory tool for retrieval of information and other library services are centred upon the effectiveness of the tool. The advent of new technology of the present age made the process of document description vis-à-vis cataloguing a profound change, which we cannot imagine a decade ago. In this age the library catalogue has been migrated from offline machine-readable environment to network environment and as a result there have been a number of significant technological changes in the way cataloguing data is accessed and
The online catalogue has a profound impact on the user interface with the library catalogue.

The study has been undertaken in eleven university libraries and the only IIT library of the region and out of these twelve libraries the Gauhati university, Tripura university and Mizoram university libraries are still in manual mode which has many limitations in meeting the basic objectives of library catalogue as a tool for indexing documents. Among the rest nine libraries, six university libraries are semi-automated where both manual card catalogue and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) are available and other three libraries are fully automated.

The manual practice of document description has many limitations to meet the basic objectives of the library catalogue for which they have been prepared. It pushes the manually operated university libraries in North East on the back foot to take the advantages of modern technologies for accessing information as per users requirements. The impact of new technologies on document description and its enormous potential over manual methods has also influenced me to undertake the present study.

The manually operated university libraries of the region should plan for implementing automated catalogues in order to reduce the pressure they are facing from the user community to provide better services. The application of computer and communication technology for organization and dissemination of information are gradually taken over the practice of conventional methods, which has many advantages in comparison to conventional method.
If this piece of study helps the university libraries of North East towards improving the existing practices of document description for extending effective services to the university community, my work will be rewarded.

System of References made in the Thesis:

In preparing this study, reference to documents have been given on different pages in the text according to practice made in recent times. Accordingly, author's surname, year of publication and pages of the work appearing in the text have been cited (e.g. Hunter : 1986 : 11). Details of referred work are given in the bibliography and references arranged author wise under surname with date of publication, title etc. and attaches at the end of the text.