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National bibliographies and the International Conference on National Bibliographic Services recommendations: Europe; North, Central and South America; and Oceania

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This part of the survey covered Europe, North America (including Central America and the Caribbean), South America, and Oceania with Australia and New Zealand, involving the national bibliographies of some 81 countries. Of these, 44 belonged to Europe (the 45th, Kazakhstan, is treated below in the Asia part of the survey), 19 to North America (North America, three; Central America, seven; Caribbean; nine), 13 to South America, and five to Oceania

Legal deposit laws and national bibliographies

Of the 81 countries mentioned above, 18 do not have a current national bibliography or a substitute – two in Europe; five in Central America, four in Caribbean; five in South America; two in Oceania. A few of these are included bibliographies produced by other countries or in regional bibliographies. In some cases the findings have included substitute bibliographies, following the practices of Bell's *Annotated Guide*. It is sometimes easy to understand why a bibliography might not exist, due to poverty, wars, or natural catastrophes. But this pattern is not consistent – there are countries lacking a national bibliography for no apparent reason, and some countries where a national bibliography exists despite war and bombing. An example is Bosnia-Herzegovina where a bibliography was published even after the destruction of the national library. Therefore, an important task for the IFLA Section on Bibliography should be to find ways to encourage and help countries initiate a national bibliography.

Normally, there is a strong connection between the existence of legal deposit laws and the publishing of a national bibliography. Of the 81 countries examined in this part, nine were found to lack such laws and a few others operated under provisions of an ineffective legal deposit law. However, these countries without

effective deposit requirements are not necessarily those that do not produce a national bibliography; for instance, there may exist a well-functioning agreement with booksellers. On the other hand, there may exist a deposit law and deposit, but no national bibliography. Nevertheless, the typical pattern is one where a current national bibliography goes hand in hand with legal deposit.

Two events of the late 1980s and 1990s provided the background for several new legal deposit laws or amendments to existing laws: the emergence of the new electronic media; and in Europe and Asia, the collapse of Communist regimes and the break-up of the Soviet Union. The survey found 26 new or amended deposit laws dating from this period and nine that are still in progress. Of these 23 pertain to European nations. In some cases, new laws were passed in the 1990s when a country became independent, and a new law or amendment including electronic media, especially the Internet resources, was passed a few years later. The importance attached to the national bibliography by newly independent countries is striking!

The agency responsible for publishing the national bibliography is usually the national library. There are some exceptions: In Denmark, a major component results from an agreement with a commercial corporation. Six countries (four of them in Europe) have decentralised cataloguing to a certain extent and one country is planning to pursue decentralisation. But, in all eight cases, the national libraries of these countries retain editorial responsibility. In four East European countries, the institution known in English as “the Book Chamber” still compiles the bibliography; in two of these, the national library also does – and in a few cases it is made by private individuals.

Coverage and scripts

Typically, in a national bibliography, documents in all languages published in the country are included. Surprisingly, the bibliography in addition often includes foreign publications, written by the country’s citizens and published abroad, or written by foreigners about the country. ICNBS Recommendation 5 states that whenever possible documents should be registered in the script as it is written. But, this practice is seldom observed and only found was characteristic in nine of the bibliographies examined. Several of these are former Soviet and Balkan states which register Cyrillic and Latin script, and two (the Greek part of Cyprus and Greece) include Latin and Greek script. In such bibliographies, which feature two scripts, other scripts than the two (e.g. Arabic) were transcribed in Latin, but few examples of entries that originally must have had other scripts than the two included were found. It is, of course, due to technical problems in connection with registration as well as searching of the bibliography that transcription or transliteration is preferred. Transcription systems used by the bibliographies were rarely identified in the introductions; additionally, no outline of script conversion schemes was found in any bibliography. Perhaps Recommendation 9, which asks for outlines of script conversion schemes, should instead call upon the makers of the national bibliographies to name the transcription system(s) used in the introduction.

Formats of the national bibliographies

The printed bibliography still has a very strong position among alternative formats. Even though most countries studied in this section now have an electronically based bibliography, only 12 of the 61 bibliographies do not exist in printed versions. Of these, four are European (not including the Norwegian national bibliography in which only the section for monographs is printed); four are North/Central American; two are South American; and two are Oceanian.

Microform is “out”. Only seven countries seem to publish in this format.

Only 13 countries seem not to have an online version – however, several of these are planning automation. In several cases, the online bibliography is in fact part of the library’s online catalogue, or a union

catalogue, and cannot be searched as a separate entity. This is the case also with the Web versions – usually the catalogue can be searched through the Web, not the bibliography. However, in cases where the national bibliography is available on the Web, password and payment are often required. Free or fee-based Web versions were found in the cases of 11 national bibliographies: those of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Poland, United Kingdom, Wales, Canada, Chile, and New Zealand. In addition, numerous Web catalogues were discovered as were four national bibliography “lists of new books” on the Web; such lists will be further discussed below.

CD-ROM versions of national bibliographies are published in 22 countries (18 European; Canada; the Brazil; New Zealand and Tokelau in Oceania). However, several national bibliographies published in this format during the 1980s and 1990s have discontinued producing CD-ROM versions. As a practical matter introductory information, including a title-page equivalent as well as data about cataloguing and classification tools, should be included on the CD-ROM itself. However, CD-ROM is often installed on a local network, and such information is lost to the users if it is only found in an accompanying paper manual.

Information on the web

The Web offers unique possibilities for national libraries to convey information about themselves and their activities. A good source to consult for addresses to Web accessible national libraries is IFLA’s list: *Web Accessible National and Major Libraries* (<http://www.ifla.org/II/natlibs.htm>). But, one is advised to check this listing regularly, given the problem of reliable URLs; for example, when checked in May 2001, ten dead links to formerly accessible home pages were encountered.

Having found the national library homepage, it is somewhat surprising that it may prove challenging to locate information about the nation bibliography. Since one would reasonably consider the national bibliography to be a major activity of a national library, one would expect to be able to access information about it in a menu heading – for instance under “Services” or “Databases” or “Activities”, or – why not? – “National Bibliography”. But, sometimes the national bibliography is only located by means of a “Search the homepage” box. And, in some cases it was necessary to collect bits of information found here and there.

Out of several possibilities, on the other hand, the New Zealand homepages provide a very good example where such information is easily found. Here one can choose between Maori and English texts. To access the English text, click on <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/index1.html>; next, click on “New Zealand National Bibliography” and go on to <http://tepuna.natlib.govt.nz/abouttp/abnznb/about.html> for the monthly lists of new documents and a link to information about the bibliography.

A Web site can also offer the possibility of linking a search page of the national bibliography (or catalogue) to relevant information about the bibliography or catalogue. Here are examples of how that’s done in Denmark and Norway:

Denmark: <http://www.kb.dk/formidl/natbib/> – with a list (but only in Danish) of the parts of the national bibliography with links to descriptions of the parts and to search pages of some of the parts.

Norway: <http://www.nb.no/baser/> – with a list (now only in Norwegian, but an English version is under development) of the parts of the national bibliography and links to descriptions and search pages of all parts – in Norwegian and English.

Timeliness

Already mentioned has been a feature of “lists of new books” on the Web. In 2000, four of the countries with national bibliographies studied in this part of the report had initiated such lists: Belgium, Hungary, Sweden, and New Zealand. The *New Zealand National Bibliography* serves as a good example to demonstrate this feature. The Web page includes a table of contents, showing that the Dewey Decimal Classification is used, and a short introduction.

<http://tepuna.natlib.govt.nz/abouttp/abnznb/about.html>

The other lists are found at:

Belgium: <http://www.kbr.be/bb/fr/Bbstr1.htm>

Hungary: <http://www.oszk.hu/mnbkb/index-en.html>

Sweden: <http://www.svb.se/svbokforteckn.htm>

Such Web lists are still few in number – but many countries have printed lists of new books covering the last month or two, or some other interval. Many bibliographies have cumulated annual and/or multi-annual volumes, while some have only cumulated indexes. Timeliness is a weak point of many otherwise good bibliographies. In several countries national bibliographies are working to improve in this area. For example, Peru succeeded in publishing *Adenda 1990-98* in February 2000 and the 1999 volume in April 2000. Swaziland and Sweden also have managed to speed up their process; their experiences should provide others with useful ideas for achieving more timely presentations.

Information in the bibliography on the bibliography

ICNBS Recommendations 8 and 9 list information that should be found in a national bibliography for identification purposes and to ease the use of the bibliography – such information as period covered, place, name and address of the publisher, copyright information, CIP, price. These Recommendations also urge inclusion of an introduction stating the basis of the records, coverage, classification and cataloguing tools, list of abbreviations, etc.

During the ICNBS Conference, several participants suggested that the introduction ought to be given in a world language in addition to the country’s own language. For example, in the Norwegian national bibliography the introduction should also be added in English (or German, etc.). Even though, this point was not included in the recommendations, and the authors of this report want to encourage bibliographies to consider providing the additional introduction to facilitate comprehension by users whose knowledge may not include the language in which the bibliography is compiled.

It was previously mentioned that most of the recommended information could be found in the printed versions of national bibliographies and that it proved more difficult to find such information in the electronic versions. In a few cases, however, the introduction was missing or was very short (only four to five lines). Data elements often missing in introductions otherwise judged as sufficient included: price, CIP (not all countries practice CIP, of course), and the addresses of publishers. Descriptions of filing system used by the bibliography were seldom given in detail. Exceptions are Estonia and Latvia, which give their complete alphabets. At least the introductory remarks ought to explain where special letters that are found in many countries’ alphabets are filed. Description of “systems requirements” is especially needed for the for CD-ROM versions of bibliographies; such details were given in the manual of the few that were examined. New Zealand also gives this information on the web.

Arrangement of the bibliography

For the printed bibliography, arrangement concerns main parts and indexes, for the online versions also search possibilities. In the printed editions, arrangement according to classification or broader subject groups is still the predominant approach. There are several relevant indexes in most bibliographies. In the electronic versions it is usually possible for the user to choose between a simple and an advanced search page (the latter offering choices of searching words by rolling menus and using Boolean operators). In addition to the more common searching approaches such as authors' names, titles, title words, subjects, and classification symbols, several systems offer the possibility to search for (or limit by) language, country of publishing, categories like juvenile literature, biographies, festschriften etc. – indeed, all or most coded fields contained by MARC formats.

International standards and principles used by the bibliography

A MARC format (often a national version) is used in most electronic bibliographies. For cataloguing, the ISBDs or AACR2 are the standards normally used, often also according to a national version. The classification used in most bibliographies is usually DDC or UDC; to a lesser extent are used “broad subject groups” (usually based on Unesco's). Three countries use Library of Congress classification, a couple have national schemes, and a few have no classification at all. The authors recommend that the full title of the actual cataloguing and classification code be given in the introduction to the national bibliographies – not just “ISBD” or “DDC” or “UDC”.

Authority control is a topic seldom mentioned in the introduction. An exception is the Greek national bibliography, where it is stated that there is not a proper authority control because of the declination of proper names. In the Web catalogues, especially where older records are concerned, different forms of the same name were found. Even though authority control is not mentioned, it is obviously widely practised, no examples of different forms of the same name were found in the printed bibliographies that were examined for this study.

Brazil and Chile have very good authority files on the Web, Brazil to the catalogue, Chile to the bibliography/catalogue:

Brazil: <http://www.bn.br/index2.html>

Click “Catalogo de Autoridades – Nomes” and go on to “Nomes Pessoais” and search for e.g. *Hanibal* – and find the chosen form *Anibal* and several references.

Chile: <http://200.28.149.230:4505/ALEPH/SESSION-93062/start/libros>

Click “Hojea” and choose “Autor” from the rolling menu. Write name; name found (main form or reference) has a link to a Library of Congress Name Authority Record.

Finally, regarding ISSN, ISBN, and other standard numbers: As only monograph parts of the national bibliography were examined, the authors assume that ISSN is included in cases where the ISBN is given. Most national bibliographies include standard numbers in the entries – only 12 out of 61 bibliographies examined for this section of the report do not. No examples of URNs were discovered, probably because there are presently few examples of works for which such numbers have been provided.