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**Guidelines for (electronic) national bibliographies: work in progress**

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**Abstract:**

The Working group on Guidelines for (electronic) national bibliographies has started the work with an analysis of users and use of national bibliographies (NB). In addition to the well known importance of NB for libraries and librarians, other users and their requirements were identified. The results are presented and discussed; both existing and potential users and use were taken into account. The group will continue the work by specifying the functionality to support the various needs of different users.

*»A current national bibliography is a mirror that reflects the culture of a country. By looking at the current national bibliography one is able to learn about the uniqueness of a country. The emphasis on agriculture and technology, the make-up of its society through its various language publications, particular customs and ceremonies important in the life of the nation, the importance of education, literature and science, prominent literary authors of the time and political, social and religious trends within a country are all discernible. A current national bibliography should reflect the interests and unique characteristics of a country much as a mirror reflects the uniqueness of an individual.«* (Bell, 1998)

**1. What is the national bibliography?**

Exactly 50 years ago the definition was: »The ideal [current national] bibliography is

conceived as a complete listing of all books, documents, pamphlets, serials, and other printed matter published within the bounds of a single country and within the time limits of the previous year or less« (Conover, 1955). Considering the changes both in publishing, but also in the nature and use of bibliographic records, this definition is not appropriate any more and a more general one is necessary: National bibliography in the modern sense of the word is defined as a cumulation of the authoritative and comprehensive records of the national imprint (i.e., products of the national publishing industry) of a country, published regularly, and with the least possible delay. It is produced in accordance with international standards by the national bibliographic agency. Publication details and authorship are investigated and verified in detail.

The definition of the national bibliography seems relatively simple and straightforward, but it still leaves many questions unanswered:

- How is the national imprint (or, production of national publishing industry) defined?
- What are its borders (geographically, conceptually)?
- Which standards should be followed?
- What is the appropriate delay in publication of national bibliographies?
- Which format of the national bibliography is the most appropriate?

The working group of guidelines for (electronic) national bibliographies is aware of all these questions and has started to address them. The answers are not easy and simple, though.

## 2. What is the mission of the national bibliography?

A complete and timely national bibliography is an important information resource for:

- Selection and acquisition in libraries and similar institutions
- Cataloguing (both directly for copy cataloguing and cataloguing support)
- Verification of authorship and publication history

"Three main objectives have been traditionally assigned to national bibliographic services. The first is to assist cost-effective cataloguing in libraries. The second is to facilitate libraries in their selection and acquisition activities. The third is to further information searching and retrieval for document supply. These objectives are still valid. What is changing today is the environment in which such objectives are implemented." (Vitiello, 1998)

But national bibliographies are (or could be) used also outside libraries, publishing industry and book trade to (Guidelines, 1997):

- give the statistical account of a country's publishing output
- provide evidence of the impact of government policies in relation to education, language, economic programmes, etc.
- reveal the extent of a country's self sufficiency in producing the publications it requires

The national bibliography is therefore an essential tool for selection and acquisition of materials and, consequently, an important promotion of publishing industry. To fulfil this function (Lewis, 1991):

- the data has to be available immediately after publication, preferably even before publication

- for selection, subject and target audience data are essential, as well as price, while for acquisition the data on publisher and distributor, conditions of sale, and, of course, standard identifiers such as ISSN, ISBN etc.
- the format of bibliographic records has to enable simple import of data into local information system or catalogue.

As a cataloguer's tool, the requirements are (Lewis, 1991):
- high quality and completeness of records
- full coverage
- timely access to new records
- compliance with national and international standards
- continuity between retrospective and current bibliographies
- simple copying of records into local catalogues

As an information resource, the national bibliography should support (Lewis, 1991):
- sophisticated searching and many access points
- links to local catalogues or full-text to enable access to publications sought.

We may claim that there are national and international interests in the production of national bibliographies. Can these interests be in conflict? Which should then take precedence?

There is an overlap (and competition) with other products and services, such as books-in-print, national union catalogues, catalogues of big university/research libraries, even Amazon. Is therefore the national bibliography providing something other products and services do not or can not? Is the added value of the national bibliography always obvious, well advertised and known?

And finally: can continuing production of national bibliographies be taken for granted? Considering more and more constraints national libraries (and national bibliographic agencies) are facing one of our goals is to make a strong case for national bibliographies, based on needs they fulfill and uses they support. This analysis will also be the basis of recommendations for the data model and functionality of electronic national bibliographies.

## 3. Who are the users?

While there is good evidence and understanding of the use of national bibliographies in libraries, there is lack of substantial data on other users. In some countries (Czech Republic, Norway) national libraries started investigating who the users are and in what context, but broader studies are very much needed. In addition to current users we also have to focus on future and potential users not only to justify the production of the national bibliography, but also to implement the required services.

The present and potential users therefore include:
- **Librarians**
  - *Cataloguers*
    Cataloguers need national bibliographies directly (i.e. for copy cataloguing) or indirectly, as support in cataloguing. In the latter case they look for similar bibliographic records and, probably even predominantly, for authority records (names, corporate bodies)
  - *Acquisitions librarians*
    They need national bibliographies to order publications, identify

publishers and distributors, publication status.

- o *Collection development*
  To analyse available publications, to select according to collection development criteria, also awareness of future publications (e.g. using CIP records)
- o *Reference librarians*
  They act on behalf of end-users (including library patrons, formal and informal groups, corporate bodies)
- o *Legal deposit management*
  Because of the strong tie of national bibliography with legal (or voluntary) deposit, the data in national bibliographies can be used to analyse and control the deposit.
- o *Preservation*
  To determine trends in publishing and plan preservation procedures.

- **End-users**
  This is the most heterogeneous group ranging from library patrons to users who access the online national bibliography remotely. Formal or informal groups and corporate bodies are included into this category. There is considerable variation between different national models: in the UK, for example, the NB is a commercial product and is not widely used by the general public. In Scandinavian countries, in contrast, NB is widely used as a complement to union catalogues. But regardless of business models behind the NB, the working group identified vast potential of NB for the general public.

- **Book trade**
  - o Publishers
    Commercial and non-commercial sector, also government and official publishers use national bibliographies to analyse the market and competition
  - o Booksellers
    In their needs this group is similar to collection development and acquisition librarians. In addition they may perform the function of a reference librarian and possibly even refer customers to libraries for out-of-print publications.

- **Agencies**
  - o Funding bodies
    To study the impact of existing funding or to plan future funding policies.
  - o Official statistics
    For statistical account of a country's publishing output.

- **Rights management organisations**
  Because of high-quality authority control and authoritative data on authorship national bibliography data can be (and is) used to support management of intellectual rights by collecting societies, but also government bodies for management of lending rights remuneration.

- **Others**
  Many other specific users can be listed. Some examples from Norway:
    - printers identifying publishers to offer cooperation
    - journalists to identify language/genre/origin patterns in publications
    - organizers of book fairs
    - identification of translators from/to specific language

- identification of illustrators

And, finally, we have to be aware that in addition to 'human' users of electronic national bibliographies, there is also computer software which directly accesses national bibliographic records such as federated/distributed searching and harvesting. While not users in the real sense, these cases pose additional technical requirements that have to be taken into account when planning an online national bibliography.

## 4. What are the information needs and requirements?

We have already listed various existing and potential users of national bibliographies. These various users have different information needs and different contexts in which they use national bibliographies. Taking into account the information needs, we have to define the requirements: searching criteria (access points) and the essential data elements which need to be displayed. The working group identified:

- **Cataloguing**
  Cataloguers usually search for known items (book in hand) for copy cataloguing; for cataloguing support they may search on any authority controlled fields. As a result they need full bibliographic record and an option of direct import into the local system.
  *Searching:*
    - title, author, standard identifiers (ISBN, ISSN, ISMN...)
    - authority controlled fields
  *Data needed:*
    - full bibliographic/authority record
    - direct download

- **Re-use of records** (downloading or export of batches of records into other databases and other computer applications (such as CERL, Index Translationum, library catalogues (particularly for retrospective conversion),…. the importance for commercial agencies (for example for books-in-print) was recognized, too)
    *Searching:* any criteria of selection
    *Export:* full record in required format

- **Collection development**
  To be useful for collection development, NB has to offer subject access and analysis of different aspects of publications.
  *Searching:*
    - Searching on subjects (topic): by subject headings, classification numbers or keyword
    - date of publication
    - language and country of publication
    - publication type/genre/format
  *Data needed:*
    - full bibliographic record
    - price
    - availability
    - terms/conditions (including rights, technical requirements and

publication status)

- **Acquisition and booksellers** (ordering of publications)
  *Searching:*
    - title, author, standard identifiers (ISBN, ISSN, ISMN…)
    - date of publication
  *Data needed:*
    - full bibliographic record (to be imported into the local system)
    - information needed to order publications (publisher and distributor details)
    - price
    - availability
    - terms/conditions (including rights, technical requirements and publication status)
  *Expectations*:
    - link to books-in-print

- **End-user needs** (to obtain information on authors and their publications, on topics; to identify publications and/or authors; to enable access to publications)
  *Searching:* all access points, particularly:
    - author name (any form!)
    - title words
    - language/country of publication
    - publisher
    - publication year
    - subject headings or keywords
    - publication type/genre/format
  *Data needed:*
    - to identify, select and enable to obtain access to publications (FRBR, 1998)
  *Expectations:*
    - direct access to electronic resources (taking into account rights, authentication and authorisation etc.) or obtaining location information for traditional publications

- **Publisher analysis** (to analyse the market and evaluate competition)
  *Searching:*
    - on a topic: search by subject headings, class. number or keyword
    - date of publication
    - publisher
    - publication type/genre/format
  *Data needed*:
    - basic publication data (citation format)

- **General analysis of the publishing sector, official statistics**
  *Searching:*
    - language of publication
    - language of original
    - country of publication
    - classification code

- date of publication
- target audience

*Data needed*:
- basic publication data (citation format)

- **Rights management** (to track publications and identify authors)
  *Searching:*
  - title
  - author name (any form!) (primary and secondary authors)
  - relator code

  *Display:*
  - basic publication data (citation format)
  - relator codes
  - authority records

- **Computer software** (federated searching, distributed searching, harvesting etc.) (see also Hakala, 2003):
  *Searching:*
  - standard access points (Bath profile)

  *Export:*
  - standard formats (XML), different metadata schemes

  *Specific requirement:*
  - compliance with standards such as Z39.50, SRU/SRW, OAI
  - access management with OpenURL.

## 5. Next steps

Two years ago I was advocating the development of guidelines for electronic national bibliographies (Žumer, 2003). Now, the work is well under way.

Much has changed in the last 20 years: types of publications, publishing process in general, but also the format of national bibliographies from the printed version to CD-ROM and online versions. These are all reasons for a fundamental investigation and a fresh look at national bibliographies.

We started with a discussion of the mission of NB in the new environment. Then the users and their specific needs and requirements have been identified. Parallelly the working group also focused on types of materials for inclusion into the NB and selection principles when not everything can be included due to quantity.

The next steps include specification of functionality and guidelines for the interface. We will also have to focus on conceptual and technical interoperability with other environments and systems.

And we are confident that the importance of national bibliographies will not only be reconfirmed, but that new national bibliographies will gain an even broader user base and increased interest.

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