

# Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC Core Programme (UBCIM)



## *Distribution and Exchange*

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## **Abstract**

*Consideration is given to the changing nature of national bibliographic services as users make increased demands upon them and as technological change opens up new distribution channels. Using a consultation exercise carried out by the British Library as an exemplar, the future development of national bibliographies is outlined as increasingly dependent upon cooperative efforts between national agencies, publishers and the private sector. The importance of committing to standards is emphasised and the need for a new paradigm for the relationship between national bibliographic services and their users is suggested.*

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 I am conscious in addressing the topic of the distribution and exchange of bibliographic data of the ground moving beneath my feet, as it were. This is a time of significant and rapid change in the provision of the kind of support services which national bibliographic agencies were set up to provide and a time of increased expectations from the users of those services. Indeed, even writing this paper a few months before the conference at which it will be presented, runs the risk that some of my assumptions will have been proved wrong by the time I come to speak.

1.2 Nonetheless, I believe that certain precepts can be articulated with some confidence, key among them being that the national bibliographic service must reflect and act upon the demands of its users. How those demands are changing is therefore of crucial importance as we look to the future. I intend using the British National Bibliography (BNB) as a case study in this paper, and it is timely that this conference coincides with the conclusion of a major consultation exercise which the British Library has been conducting into the use and likely development path for the BNB. I am also tending to use the national bibliography as shorthand for the national bibliographic service - they are not entirely co-terminous, but the national bibliography underpins the provision of national bibliographic services to such an extent that I believe this is legitimate. I will refer to the consultation exercise and attempt to bring out the key issues which have been raised - along with some indication of how the British Library intends to address them. Furthermore, although distribution and exchange is my given topic, I will need to range wider in order to contextualise the likely future distribution patterns for bibliographic data. I will be looking, therefore, at both the content and format of national bibliographies as well at broader policy issues for national bibliographic services.

## 2 Background to the British National Bibliography

2.1 The British National Bibliography was established in 1950, as part of the post-war reconstruction of the British library service, in the belief that there was a need for a comprehensive record of books and serials published in the United Kingdom to support cataloguing, selection and reference work in British libraries. Those three activities are still regarded as the core uses for the national bibliography. But there is a broader aim - that of capturing the national published archive for posterity and recording it in a way which will continue to be useful to researchers for the future. The Table below gives an overview of the British National Bibliography.

### **THE BRITISH NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY**

#### **Content**

Detailed bibliographic records for all monographs and first issue of serials published in the UK

Brief bibliographic records for monographs due to be published in the UK (CIP)

All records created in UKMARC format

#### **Origin of bibliographic records**

Full bibliographic records prepared by the British Library or one of the libraries in the Copyright Libraries Shared Cataloguing Project

CIP records prepared under contract by the private sector

#### **Medium**

Published in print, online (via Blaise), CD-ROM, magnetic tape, ftp

**Format**

Available in UKMARC or USMARC format

**Average no. of records listed pa**

70,000 pa

**Key performance measures**

BNBMARC Hit Rate

Number of subscriptions

Number of end-user licensees

### 3 Publishing/Distribution

3.1 The publishing profile of the British National Bibliography has, inevitably, changed significantly over the years. Beginning as a printed weekly listing, it was made available in magnetic tape form in the 1970s for loading onto mainframe-based automated systems, and in CD-ROM in the late 1980s; most recently the data has been made available via File Transfer Protocol (ftp) across the Internet. The table below gives an indication of the current range of options.

**FORMAT FREQUENCY****Print**

Weekly listing with cumulated monthly index; two cumulations plus annual volume (annual volume also available in microfiche)

**CD-ROM**

Monthly (full cumulation monthly)

**Online**

BNB database from 1950 to date held in Blaise-Line - updated weekly

**Tape**

Data written to tape weekly - available by subscription

**FTP**

Data made available via the Internet weekly - available by subscription

3.2 This pattern of distribution is not untypical for many national bibliographies; how it may change is a key question for national bibliographic services. It is clear that there is a widespread and increasing expectation that bibliographic data should be made available via the Internet. For BNB at present, MARC data in bulk can be sourced from the Internet by subscribers holding a licence to use or redistribute the data. The online service Blaise is also available as a Web-based service (Blaise Web) and this is increasingly the access method of

choice. It is planned to make BNB records available to libraries via the Z39.50 protocol when the BL implements its new Corporate Bibliographic Programme next year. What all these services have in common is that they are priced services on the Internet; as such they sit alongside many free services (including some from the British Library itself - see 4.2 below).

## 4 Pricing - public responsibility vs. commercial viability

4.1 In terms of pricing, the British Library's commitment to the national bibliography is made in the context of an economic model which is, at least in part, commercially oriented. What this means, in the UK context, is that the national bibliography in its various manifestations, is required to cover all its production, development and marketing costs and to show a surplus. It is not, however, required to meet the costs of cataloguing, with the exception of the CIP programme - which, for the last seven years, has been outsourced.

4.2 The requirement to make a surplus clearly has implications for pricing and distribution policy. It can also appear to create anomalies - in particular, the BL, along with many libraries throughout the world, makes its OPAC available free on the Internet. The OPAC gives access to the Library's catalogue - but not to the BNB database. Furthermore, the OPAC is likely to be developed to become the chief means of access to the Library's collections - through the addition of value-added (priced) services. At present the Library is managing the inherent tension between free services and priced services carefully, with the aim of providing a clearly defined level of free access which can then allow the user, where appropriate, to move easily to priced services provided by the Library and/or its partners.

## 5 Stakeholders

5.1 I have suggested that it is axiomatic for a national bibliographic service to listen to and respond to its stakeholders. Who they are may vary from country to country, but, in essence they are the partners in the enterprise and the users of the services (and by users I mean both present and future).

5.2 Of course, the national library itself has, in many countries, a major stake in recording and distributing the national published archive - it may generally be regarded as one of its core functions. Beyond the national library there are other national or quasi-national libraries (in Britain, for example, the five other legal deposit libraries) who may be partners in as well as users of the national bibliographic service. Then there are the major users/customers - in particular public and academic libraries. Their use of the national bibliography incorporates selection (usually via the printed version); cataloguing (by deriving MARC records either online or from CD-ROM); and as a reference and bibliographic tool. The stake which those users have in the national bibliography is vital. In Britain, particularly, the library community has a strong sense of ownership of the national bibliography. While this is, overall, a positive feature, it can make it difficult to initiate change.

## 6 Consultation Exercise on the British National Bibliography

6.1 It was, indeed, precisely because the BL felt that change was needed to the national bibliography that a major consultation exercise was undertaken during 1997/8. The need for consultation arose from an understanding that the BNB was not fully doing the job it was intended to do. This partly reflected a growing concern that new media were not being adequately addressed (if at all) and that exclusions from the BNB were not driven by reference to the objectives of the national bibliography. In seeking to articulate some principles for change the following precepts were developed:

- the BNB should record the national published output
- nonetheless, the scope of what is included in BNB must be qualified
- the content of the BNB must not be dependent upon BL collection-development or cataloguing policies
- where appropriate data should be imported so as to include material which will not meet the BL's scoping criteria
- the corollary of this is that some data which is catalogued by the BL and finds its way automatically to the national bibliography may not be required and should be excluded.

6.2 Now in order to act upon these precepts a new approach would be needed for the national bibliographic services - in particular, more cooperation and, in particular, better links with publishers. It was clear that stakeholders and users of the BNB needed to be involved in furthering these discussions.

6.3 The first approach to users was via a seminar on the future of the national bibliography. Out of this seminar came a set of key propositions which reflected views of how BNB should be developed, informed by participants' views of the purpose of the national bibliography and the role of the British Library. These propositions were incorporated into *The future of the national bibliography: a consultation paper from the British Library* which was widely distributed for comment within the library and information community nationally and internationally. The six propositions are as follows:

### **Proposition 1**

*The case for national bibliographies is a strong one; a national bibliography is the primary record of a country's publishing output*

### **Proposition 2**

*The British Library has a central role to play in the compilation and publication of the UK national bibliography*

### **Proposition 3**

The British Library should regard this role as a key responsibility

### **Proposition 4**

It is desirable that the British National Bibliography should continue to be made available in printed form

**Proposition 5**

The scope and coverage of the British National Bibliography should be widened through the development of a distributed national bibliography; this should be realised through a more cooperative and collaborative effort between the British Library and other national agencies

**Proposition 6**

British National Bibliography could be improved by the inclusion of further bibliographic data additional to that included as part of the 'core' record

6.4 The responses which were received to the consultation paper were, on the whole, consistent in their support for these key propositions.

**6.4.1 Proposition 1** *'The case for national bibliographies is a strong one; a national bibliography is the primary record of a country's publishing output'*

This was perhaps the least contentious proposition. Support for this viewpoint was almost universal. Responses from academic libraries in particular confirmed the intellectual validity of this notion, though some noted the difficulty of categorising electronic publications on the World Wide Web in this way.

**6.4.2 Proposition 2** *'The British Library has a central role to play in the compilation and publication of the UK national bibliography'*

There was little disagreement with the idea of the Library having a central role, but opinions differed quite sharply as to what this role should be. The key issue was one of "ownership", with some suggesting that only if the Library retained ownership could the national bibliography develop coherently, while others suggested that the national bibliography would be best served by removing the Library's rights of ownership. In this context suggestions for management of the national bibliography included the setting up of a cooperative council (founded from key stakeholders).

**6.4.3 Proposition 3** *'The British Library should regard this role as a key responsibility'*

Almost complete agreement was expressed for this proposition.

**6.4.4 Proposition 4** *'It is desirable that the British National Bibliography should continue to be made available in printed form'*

Many respondents expressed their concern that BNB should continue to appear in printed form for as long as possible. Such responses acknowledged that the

medium of the future was probably electronic, but the practical convenience of the printed BNB for acquisitions and selection purposes was emphasised as was the comparative difficulty in using non-print media for this purpose.

A small minority of responses suggested the current review was the right time to stop publishing the BNB in printed form.

Some were concerned that the consultation paper overemphasised the printed nature of BNB. They were concerned that BNB should be seen as an entity wider than just its printed or CD-ROM manifestation. In this context they also noted that the use to which the records are put should influence the way in which BNB is developed. For while the consultation paper was emphasising the national bibliography's role as a record of the nation's publishing output (ie an archival role) the responses to the paper emphasised the vital importance of the data for information retrieval purposes and as a source of bibliographic records for incorporation in Library catalogues.

**6.4.5 Proposition 5** *'The scope and coverage of the British National Bibliography should be widened through the development of a distributed national bibliography; this should be realised through a more cooperative and collaborative effort between the British Library and other national agencies'*

In some ways this was the core proposition of the consultation exercise; it offers a practical way forward to developing the national bibliography, and implies a major change from the way things have been done in the past. The principle of cooperation was endorsed, but with some areas of concern - in particular over standards, the issue of intellectual property rights and the dangers of too much segmentation of the national bibliography.

#### *Standards*

The issue here was the difficulty perceived in maintaining standards if records from a number of agencies are to be brought together. In terms of bibliographic standards, what has been identified as the BL 'core' record (ie AACR2, level 2 cataloguing, MARC format, Dewey and LCSH subject access) was regarded as the minimum necessary for bibliographic records to be fit for purpose. Equally important were thought to be standards of completeness, accuracy and general quality of data.

#### *Intellectual Property Rights*

As for the commercial context in which cooperative developments might happen, many responses made clear their concern that the Library should make explicit at an early stage how it regards the question of rights in the data which might be collected to cover material not currently included - and who would have ownership and exploitation rights and under what

circumstances. If agencies cooperate to produce such a supplement, who will have the right to license further use? If some agencies wish the material to be free and others wish it priced, then how are such issues to be resolved? In a cooperative environment how would pricing policy be set and implemented?

#### *Over-Segmentation*

Whilst the distribution of the national bibliography at the point of collection might be a reasonable way of managing things, it was not acceptable for the national bibliography to be distributed at the point of delivery or use. In practice, the user would not want to be referred from one resource or database which might be labelled 'part of the BNB' but would want access to a seamless integrated resource (preferably - of course - via the World Wide Web).

There was a general feeling that the core for this development should be the existing legal deposit agencies, with other supplements being developed with other specialist agencies where perhaps these agencies had unique access to that category of material, or were uniquely placed to exploit it.

The lack of coverage of local material was a running thread and a role was suggested for the regional library systems in identifying such material and ensuring it was deposited with the legal deposit libraries. Equally, non-print material should certainly be included in the national bibliography, and the sooner the better.

#### **6.4.6 Proposition 6** *'British National Bibliography could be improved by the inclusion of further bibliographic data additional to that included as part of the 'core' record'*

This was enthusiastically endorsed, but more than one response expressed disquiet that we should try and 'improve' the national bibliography in this way before resolving existing problems connected with record quality. Suggestions were made that CIP records themselves should comprise a separate supplement - that BNB should confine itself to what has definitely been published.

A distinction was made between the record content required for a national bibliography, to record an item's existence, and that required for selection. However, additional data provided to support selection, such as tables of contents, availability on other formats, references to reviews should not be provided at the expense of timeliness.

6.5 The consultation exercise has provided valuable information on how its users and stakeholders now perceive the British National Bibliography. It has not, it must be conceded, given an entirely unambiguous steer for future planning. While there is a broad consensus as



to the general direction the Library should take, there remain considerable differences of view as to how the Library should move forward. There is clearly general agreement that the Library can no longer rely as exclusively as it has in the past on its own legal deposit intake to provide input to the national bibliography. The Library needs to share the compilation with the other legal deposit libraries and with other national centres. This sharing may also need to extend to decision and policy making. Of critical importance is that this distribution of effort should not lead to a relaxation in the application of standards, which are widely regarded as being of paramount importance.

6.6 One crucial question which needs to be resolved before meaningful progress can be made centres on ownership of the bibliographic resource which will result from any kind of distributed effort. In particular there will be questions over who will have intellectual property rights to use and exploit the resource, and on what basis. This may prove one of the more difficult challenges for national agencies and their partners as we try move forward.

6.7 At the time of writing, the Library is considering the responses to the consultation exercise and seeking to develop a clear statement of policy for the future development of the national bibliography. This is now being formulated in the context of a wider Strategic Review of all the Library's functions. This review has been initiated in recognition of the continuing decline in government funding and an understanding that the Library cannot continue to pursue all its activities at current levels. Inevitably, the need to mesh the BNB consultation with the wider review has meant that the Library is not in a position to make firm commitment to a development path for the national bibliography as soon as has originally been intended, but it remains high on the agenda.

## **7 Legal Deposit**

7.1 On a different but related issue, and aside from the BNB consultation exercise, the British Library is continuing to lobby government to enact new legislation for the extension of legal deposit in the UK so as to allow electronic publications to be deposited. Whilst some headway is being made, progress is not as swift as the Library would have liked, and - as an interim solution - voluntary deposit schemes are to be attempted with some publishers. The inclusion of non-book materials in the national bibliography is essential if the national bibliography is to retain its value; extended legal deposit offers a means of acquiring material and recording it for the national bibliography which is likely to be more comprehensive than any voluntary schemes.

## **8 BIBLINK**

The importance of better links with publishers (the other end of the distribution chain) also needs to be recognised. In the UK the CIP programme presents advance information for monographs derived from publishers for inclusion in the BNB. In the electronic environment it is conceivable that electronic documents can incorporate their own bibliographic data - indeed some already do. What

role is there, then, for national bibliographic services? One example can be found in an EU-funded project - BIBLINK - which is currently developing a demonstrator to show the feasibility of data flows between publishers, national bibliographic services and users. If this were to translate into an operational service, a new distribution model for bibliographic data will emerge. In this case, the publishers would be playing a leading role, by supplying basic metadata electronically to the national bibliographic service; the national bibliographic service will then supplement the publisher-provided metadata with value-added bibliographic data (eg subject headings) and (maybe as a quid pro quo) supplying the enhanced metadata back to the publisher for incorporation into the electronic publication. Both the national bibliographic service and the publisher will then be in a position to distribute the enhanced bibliographic records to users. Technical issues aside, this model presents significant challenges for national agencies and publishers in agreeing on distribution rights and data ownership but, potentially, significant benefits to users.

## 9 Conclusion

9.3 In summary, it seems clear that if the national bibliographic service is to continue to have a leading role in the distribution and exchange of bibliographic data and in the compilation of its national bibliography it must align itself closely with the expectations of its users. I suggest that what this comes down to is a strong commitment to standards; a serious exploration of cooperative initiatives - with both public and private sectors; and both nationally and internationally; and, ultimately, the development of a new paradigm for the relationship between the national bibliographic service and its key stakeholders. This paradigm will be based upon partnerships and cooperative efforts, underpinned by a mixed economic model (ie public and private) for services once regarded as the sole preserve of the public sector.

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