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Co-operation + Web Access = Timeliness

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Abstract:

"The national bibliography should appear in a timely manner to meet the needs of the users."

This is one of the recommendations from the International Conference on National Bibliographic Services in Copenhagen 1998 approved by the IFLA Professional Board in 1999. In our world of virtual reality the user expects to retrieve information quickly. To meet the challenge of a users need can be quite a task.

It means that an efficient National Bibliographic Agency (NBA) is responsible for creating national bibliographic records according to agreed standards as fast as possible.

This paper will describe the Swedish way when handling timeliness.

The Royal Library, i.e. the National Library, is one of seven libraries which receive legal deposits from the printers. This law is very old – a royal decree of 1661 established the library as the first legal deposit library in Sweden. The National Library also houses the NBA and the legal deposit is the basis for the national bibliographic registrations. It is a guarantee for ensuring the cultural heritage to be preserved and made accessible for current and future users.

<http://www.kb.se/ENG/kbstart.htm>

If your ambition, however, is to be a fast service tool for the book market on the whole and create records in connection to the release of a new book, the legal deposit is seldom of use in Sweden. It will appear

too late in the library. If you have this particular aim you need to co-operate with other performers on the book market.

When the NBA was established in 1953 we received new books from many publishers for the current national bibliography but it worked in a rather haphazard fashion. Due to an official report in the mid-1980s we reached an agreement in 1989 with the wholesale company BTJ Seelig. Seelig is the distributor for most of the commercially interesting books published in Sweden and they were willing to deliver the new volumes every single day as soon as they got them from the publisher – and that is often some weeks before the release. Seelig was also willing to supply some sort of very rudimentary but nevertheless bibliographic records – similar to CIP. This early stage of bibliographic information derives from the publishers and the records contain information about author, title, ISBN and approximate week of release. The records are exported regularly to the Swedish database LIBRIS to be used on the web by anyone.

A few words about LIBRIS: LIBRIS is a database common for ca 200 Swedish libraries, mainly research libraries. Swedish literature is almost completely covered from 1600 until today, and there are also many foreign titles. Titles covered are monographs and periodicals as well as articles, maps, printed music, and some kinds of electronic resources.
<http://www.libris.kb.se/>

The libraries make their registrations online in LIBRIS and after that the records are transferred to their respective local databases. That means that as soon as a library has got a book, some sort of bibliographic record will appear in LIBRIS. The library chooses any of the descriptive levels according to the Swedish translation of AACR2. A second library accepts the record – adds some local information – or if they want a fuller description, add more general elements to the record. The record is immediately updated. The general fields in the record can be changed until the NBA puts its hallmark on it. After that the bibliographic record will be locked.

Returning to the Seelig agreement: In exchange for the pre-information and the book which is kept in the National Library the NBA - within 8 working hours from the delivery - updates the rudimentary record to a full national bibliographic level. After that it will be re-exported to Seelig's database from which catalogue information for the booksellers is produced. The LIBRIS user has free access to the record on the web in a service named LIBRIS WebSearch.

This exchange of services enables a national bibliographic record in time for the release of a book to meet a possible need for the user whoever it may be.

In the printed, annual Swedish national bibliography for the year 2000 61 % of the titles are considered to be commercially interesting. The remaining 39 % are publications from associations, commercial firms, official authorities, and private persons. Ca 70 % of the commercially interesting books were obtained from Seelig and thus catalogued in LIBRIS on the national bibliographic level within the 8 working hours from the delivery.

It is obvious that the 8 hours agreement for certain kinds of material forces us to handle parts of the rest, i.e. parts of the legal deposit, at a slower rate. But we have the rule that within 5 days from the unpacking there must be at least a rudimentary record in LIBRIS – similar to those from Seelig - containing information about author, title, year, ISBN and local information about what date the book was received by the NBA. The input from other LIBRIS libraries improves the record even if it will not become a national bibliographic one until the NBA decides it to be. Sometimes it makes no difference to the user.

Each Friday a new list of recently published, commercially interesting books appears on the web site of the Swedish Booksellers Organization. The list contains the bibliographic records from LIBRIS according to the NBA selection criteria and created during the last week by the NBA.
<http://www.svb.se/svbokforteckn.htm>

These records and the earlier mentioned 39 % are printed in quarterly published volumes – Svensk bokförteckning – which later on are cumulated in an annual volume. Today the printed volume is the only way to get a survey of the published output included in the national bibliography.

Our ambition in Sweden is to publish the printed annual volume as soon as possible after the New Years Eve – in reality the volumes use to appear in May. Books older than two years are not included. The five- or ten-yearly cumulations were discontinued in 1985 and are now found as national bibliographic records in the vast LIBRIS database.

There is of course a desire to gain access to the entire national bibliography on the web. A national bibliographic database updated each day with records of new publications and retrospective ones for the user to browse is high on our list of priorities. A web bibliography will supply the user with much more information and many more access points than what is possible in a printed one – but there is also this problem of preserving the records for the future in a secure way. The printed national bibliography is still the best means in which to do this.

Co-operation with the publisher has also been developed in a service named Förlagsdata (Publishing Data). The publisher is welcome to add a picture from and a text about the book by e-mailing gif- or jpg-files using the ISBN in the "topic" field to the LIBRIS Department. The picture will appear in the upper right corner of the bibliographic record in LIBRIS WebSearch and you click on the picture to enlarge it. The user will find the text by clicking on "The publisher's description of the book". You gain access to the content in the text by free text search, a service that adds a lot more to the record for the benefit of the user.

Conclusion: To supply a user with national bibliographic information you need to rely upon the legal deposit. Nevertheless if you want it to be quick or if you want to include more information in the record than the National Bibliographic Agency is capable of doing you have to co-operate with the book market. The free web resources of today give more people better access to national bibliographic records than ever before.