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National Bibliographies and the International Conference on National Bibliographic Services Recommendations: Africa, Middle East, and Asia

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Brief Overview

This report covers the geographic areas of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Transcaucasia. Of the 103 countries included in these areas, 67 have national bibliographies or suitable substitutes, while 36 do not have national bibliographies. In percentages, about 65% have national bibliographies, and 34% do not. The newest national bibliographies (by beginning publication date) or "new beginnings" are from the countries of Brunei (1996), Namibia (1996), Armenia (1995), Maldives (1995?), Bahrain (1991), Turkmenistan (1991), and the United Arab Emirates (1990). The oldest national bibliographies date from the 1920s (publication date): Azerbaijan (1926), Georgia (1925), Israel (1924), and Turkey (1924). The heyday for the beginnings of national bibliography in these geographic areas was from 1960 to 1980, during which 44 began publication -- with the majority beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. A general breakdown by geographic areas is as follows.

Of the 53 African countries, over half (29 or 55%) have national bibliographies or substitutes; 24 or 45% have no national bibliographies. Lesotho and the Sudan have substitutes, and Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, and probably DR Congo are in hiatus. The first national bibliographies in Africa were from South Africa (with the forerunner of *SANB* titled *Publications received in terms of Copyright Act No. 9 of 1916*, published from 1933-1958) and Nigeria (with a forerunner to *The National bibliography of Nigeria's* titled *Nigerian publications: current national bibliography* with coverage 1950/52-1970). Most national bibliographies have been in existence for more than three decades. The first automated current national bibliography was in South Africa. The newest bibliography is Namibia (1996).

The Middle East countries include 15 countries and one "territory/state". Eleven countries have a national bibliography or a suitable substitute. Five countries do not have a national bibliography: Djibouti, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Of these countries, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia have a National Bibliographic Agency (NBA). Legal deposit exists in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Thus, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia have the infrastructure in place to establish a national bibliography, that is, they have both a national library and legal deposit legislation. The first national bibliographies in this area were Israel and Turkey in the 1920s. The newest are Bahrain (1991) and United Arab Emirates (1990).

Asia and Transcaucasia include 34 countries. There are 26 national bibliographies. Eight countries do not have a current bibliography. Of those, three are actively working towards that goal. Of geographic areas covered in this part of the survey, it is this area which has the highest percentage (76%) of national bibliographies for the number of countries -- with prospects for this increasing in the near future. The newest are Brunei (1996), and the Maldives (1995?); the oldest are Indonesia (1950), Japan (1948), and Turkmenistan (new title in 1991, but has had continuous coverage since 1930). Armenia falls into both the newest (new title in 1995) and oldest categories (since 1925).

The specific details are in the full report submitted to the Standing Committee on Bibliography. This presentation summarizes information about how the national bibliographies within the areas identified above adhere to ICNBS Recommendations 1, 5-11.

Legal deposit (ICNBS Recommendation 1)

Of the 103 countries, 65 have legal deposit laws, 33 do not, and five countries are "not known." Of the 65 with legal deposit, 15 countries have laws dating after 1985. Egypt (1995), Namibia (2000), Japan (2000), South Africa (1997), Singapore (1995), Zambia (1995) are the most recent of these. Of the remainder, the national bibliographies of 48 countries date from 1985 or earlier while those of two are in the updating process (Botswana, Thailand).

The year 1985 was chosen because that date represents the threshold when many new technologies and formats began to be produced more widely. It is important that categories of materials such as CD-ROMs and videos be included by legal deposit legislation. Above all, publishers and NBAs need to communicate and cooperate to achieve effective legal deposit. The National Library of Gambia, for example, cites the necessity of visiting publishers to track down elusive titles; unfortunately, this is not an uncommon occurrence. Countries lacking effective deposit laws are not able to produce a timely national bibliography in most cases.

Coverage (Language and Scripts) (ICNBS Recommendation 5)

A national bibliography should reflect the culture of the country. Countries in the geographic areas covered in this presentation have several languages represented in their national bibliographies.¹

¹ For this study no attempt was made to determine if all published languages found in a country appear in the national bibliography. That would have taken longer to determine than we had. This is an important point, one that is certainly covered by this recommendation and also in Recommendation no. 4. In our report to the Standing Committee we have given information about the languages that we found in the national bibliographies.

African countries with several languages represented in their national bibliographies are:
Ethiopia, 8 (Amharic, English, Italian, French, German, Arabic, Geez, Tigrinya); Namibia, 20 (in their language index they list 19 languages, plus English);
Nigeria, 7 (it is not known how many of the over 250 languages and dialects ² are in print.);
Zimbabwe, 4;
Libya, 4 (Arabic, English, French, Italian);
Kenya, 3 plus many others (42 are listed in their abbreviations index).

South Africa's national bibliography, however, has now been changed to include only English, since the National Library of South Africa does not have the resources available to catalogue in all eleven official South African languages.

India has 14 languages represented in its national bibliography, and Nepal has six languages.

Middle East countries of Israel, Turkey, UAE all have at least two languages represented.

Indonesia has over 400 languages and dialects, as well as English. Malaysia registers English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and East Malaysian languages. Papua New Guinea lists titles in Melanesian and English. Philippines lists titles in English, Filipino, and other Philippine languages such as Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano, etc. Singapore includes Malay, Chinese, Tamil, and English. Thailand lists titles in Thai and English, and Vietnam lists Vietnamese. Brunei includes entries in the Malay and English languages, but not any entries in Chinese or Arabic scripts. The Chinese National Bibliography states that it includes 21 minority languages.

Because of recent history, the Russian language has been the dominant language in all of the national bibliographies from Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Now that all (except Mongolia) are CIS countries, their own language will begin to appear as the dominant language in the national bibliographies. Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbek, Karakalpakski, Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani are languages that appear in the appropriate national bibliographies; Mongol is the predominant language in Mongolia. This is both exhilarating and bewildering to librarians and researchers across the world who are reeling from adjustments to all of these languages other than Russian.

As one is aware, there are many non-Roman scripts represented in the national bibliographies of these geographic areas. The ICNBS Recommendations urge countries to list the publications in the original script whenever possible. Arabic is widely represented in the northern African countries, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, and United Arab Emirates. Other non-Roman scripts are Persian (Iran), Hebrew (Israel), Kurdish (Iraq), Turkoman (Iraq), Thai, Chinese characters, Cyrillic, Georgian, and Armenian to name several. In all cases for the South Asia countries, except the Maldives, the script is transliterated into the Roman alphabet using diacritical marks. So far, computer software used has not been able to handle the script. In South East Asia, Romanized scripts are included in the Indonesian national bibliography; but some scripts do not have transliteration schemes, so books in such scripts are not presently included; Arabic scripts are Romanized. Malaysia seems to have handled the Chinese and Tamil without transliterating. Singapore has

² Some estimates have been closer to 400.

managed to accommodate in one sequence script characters as well as non-script characters. Singapore does not provide information on non-Romanized script, and transliterates when necessary.

In summary, countries are striving to meet the recommendation to create records in the same language and script as the publication. Some common problems experienced in meeting this recommendation are the limitations of computer software and the lack of trained staff to handle the diversity of languages.

Presentation (Format) (ICNBS Recommendation 6)

The printed format is, by far, the most popular format in these countries. Paper editions are important since many libraries in a country do not have computers or Web access even though the national library may. It may also be the preferred format for preservation. All but Singapore, Malaysia, and South Africa (temporary suspension?) have national bibliographies issued in the printed format. Of these countries, around 52 to 55 national bibliographies are available only in paper. Thirteen countries publish their national bibliography in more than one format. Seven countries have CD-ROM format, and four are considering it. Microfiche, magnetic tape, and disks are available in only a few countries from these regions.

Web sites are listed for Japan, Namibia, Swaziland (through the university catalogue), Israel, Turkey, and Taiwan (planning), Thailand (planning), Vietnam (planning) and Zimbabwe (considering). One can confidently predict that this list will grow in the coming years. As indicated in Anne Langballe's presentation, it is often difficult to find the national bibliography or information about it on the national library's homepage. The national library should be encouraged to promote ease of access to the national bibliography.

Other formats for national bibliographies in these areas are through subscriptions to providers such as OCLC, and via the database SACat (available by subscription through SABINET (South Africa)), cartridge tapes (Singapore), or online (Georgia -- planning stages).

This recommendation states that at least one national bibliography format should meet archiving and preservation needs and should be permanently accessible. As mentioned, the majority of the national bibliographies are in printed format only; therefore, it is important that acid-free ink and paper be used. This needs to be stressed with countries that currently use newsprint. Also, accessibility needs to be assured for CD-ROM and tape products.

One area that was not evident in any national bibliography examined was its means of access to meet the needs of special users. It may be too soon to see how this part of the recommendation will be fulfilled. It is up to each national bibliographic agency to make that decision.

Timeliness and distribution (ICNBS Recommendation 7)

It is necessary to break this category down into three areas: 1) timeliness of entry records, 2) timeliness of the publication date of the national bibliography, and 3) timeliness in distributing the national bibliography from the publication date to its destination.

Timeliness of entry records

The timeliness of entry records listed in the national bibliography has improved in the last several years, although there are still countries where further improvement is needed. It would aid the user of national bibliographies to have scope notes clearly stated in the introduction. If a national bibliography includes the current year and one earlier year (or titles recently received and not yet listed) that fact should be stated. With automated procedures in more countries, it is also relatively easy to limit entries by imprint date. Of the 27 African national bibliographies analyzed for this first category, 18 are adequate in listing timely entries, and nine need to improve. It proved difficult to identify timeliness of entries in the Arabic national bibliographies. However, in general, entries were for the year covered or for one/two years earlier. Exceptions to this pattern were Iraq (many entries for earlier years), and possibly the United Arab Emirates. Non-Arabic Middle East countries should improve in the coming years. Israel has now completed its computerization project and should become more timely as a result; entries from Turkey and Iran are from the period covered or one/two years earlier.

The entries included in the national bibliographies of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have been timely and within the stated period of coverage. Pakistan needs to improve the timeliness of the entries in covering a specific time period. It is expected that the next issue of the Maldives National Bibliography will have a smaller coverage period in order to provide users with more timely information. With the exception of Singapore, the seven other countries of South East Asia need to work on having entries more timely for the period covered (or within a specific stated scope, e.g., two previous years). Timeliness in listing current imprints for East Asia seems to be met in Japan (88% are from the year covered in the volume checked), Hong Kong, and Korea. For China and Taiwan dates were not analyzed for currency (not in Roman alphabet), although one can be fairly certain that the imprints are from the time period. For the national bibliographies where it was possible to obtain recent issues, entries analyzed in Central Asia, and Transcaucasia (Armenia) appear to be timely.

Timeliness of the publication date of the national bibliography

The second category is a major factor in contributing to an untimely national bibliography. Some of the national bibliographies covered in this presentation may have timely entries, but the national bibliography becomes untimely because of the publication process. There are several reasons causing such delays -- e.g., lack of staff, financial limitations, and government bureaucracy. Some countries publish their national bibliographies in a multi-year volume. Even if the records from the national bibliography are for the period covered, this delay in publication causes the bibliography to be untimely. If possible, these multi-year volumes should become annuals.

In Africa, for one of the above reasons, thirteen countries need to improve in this second category. In the Middle East, Iran and Turkey (which should improve after automation) are doing well. For one of the reasons stated above, other Middle East countries need to work on shortening the gap between the period of coverage and the publication date. The time between the stated coverage date and the date of publication of the national bibliography needs to be improved in all of the countries of South Asia. There have been some recent attempts to improve in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The

national bibliography of Nepal, now independent of the *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, should be able to set its own publication schedule. The national bibliographies of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan are doing well in this area, but most of the rest of Asia needs to improve their publication dates to achieve timeliness.

Timeliness in distributing the national bibliography from the publication date to its destination

The third category, time from the date of publication to the national bibliography's arrival at its destination, needs to improve. Reasons for this untimeliness vary. Some countries that have several issues per year may "batch mail" all issues of the national bibliography only once a year. The rising cost of postage may determine that national bibliographies go by surface mail or as printed matter. However, once the publication is available it needs to reach to its destination so that new titles can be utilized in timely fashion. Sometimes it is hard to convince government bureaucracies to speed up this final step. Countries doing well in this area are: Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, and Hong Kong. All other countries need to improve.

Countries that are doing well in all three of these areas should be commended: Swaziland (since 1998), and South Africa (although now the national bibliography is in non-print format and harder to identify as a national bibliography--e.g. SANB is available by subscription as a part of the OCLC database or via access to SABINET) and Singapore. Some countries are beginning to improve in one or more of the areas, such as Libya achieving a more timely publication date and Sri Lanka with increased frequency and more timely entries. Overall, it is heartening to see a vast improvement in the timeliness of entry records from a few years ago. The publishing schedule and distribution need serious attention to make for timely national bibliographies. Communication on intent of publication would be a guideline for people waiting for the latest issue, especially if a publication schedule can not be met. India has done this in the past, as has Botswana.

In summary, many national bibliographies have improved the listing of timely records for the period covered. Areas that need to be further addressed are (1) the length of time from the period of coverage to the publication date and (2) the distribution time lag.

INFORMATION INCLUDED ON THE NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY ITSELF (ICNBS Recommendation 8)

This recommendation includes basic but important guidelines about provision of data needed to help the user identify and gather information about the national bibliography. In the African countries details about the availability (where and how to purchase the national bibliography) and price of the national bibliography itself are missing in a surprising number of national bibliographies. Slightly less than half of the national bibliographies in the geographic areas covered in this paper do not have the ISSN or ISBN on the national bibliography itself. This number exists for some of the national bibliography titles even if the country does not participate in the ISSN program. It would be an important and straightforward for Bibliography Section's Standing Committee to address this matter.

- Availability information needs to be added to bibliographies produced by 31 of the 67 countries (46%).

- Price information of the national bibliography itself needs to be added in about 65% or 44 of the countries.
- Copyright information needs to be added to 30 countries (44%).

(It should be noted that a copy of a current Georgia national bibliography was not located so it could not be checked regarding these elements.)

In summary, the Philippines, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Japan, Botswana, Nigeria, and Turkey supply all or lack only one piece of information requested in this Recommendation. One of the most common elements missing is the ISSN. Information about availability, copyright, and price for the national bibliography also are missing in many cases. The Standing Committee could encourage inclusion of such data.

INTRODUCTION OR USER-GUIDE (ICNBS Recommendation 9)

The introduction and user-guide are essential to users of a national bibliography regardless of the format. Coverage notes including exceptions, basis of records and legal deposit information, frequency, arrangement, rules followed, terms used, script conversion schemes (if used), classification outlines, systems requirements (if used) should all be covered in the bibliography's introduction.

Most national bibliographies have an adequate introduction with many, but hardly ever all, of these elements. Namibia and Nigeria have excellent introductions as have Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Elements found lacking most frequency in the introduction were list of special terms used, definitions, and abbreviations (21%), and description of filing system (49%).

A few countries (15%) had no introduction in the issues examined. The Standing Committee on Bibliography should encourage these countries to add one and all others to add the elements currently missing from their introductions.

ARRANGEMENT OF NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY (ICNBS Recommendation 10)

This recommendation states that bibliographic records should be based on international standards and arranged in an appropriate manner with adequate access (indexing or searching) points.

The majority of countries (over 60%) in these geographic areas use Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) for the arrangement of the national bibliography. Six (9%) countries use the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) system. The Library of Congress classification system (LCC) or its Subject Headings (LCSH) are used by a few. The rest are arranged by classification numbers according to their national system with many similar to the DDC, by broad subject headings, by accession numbers, or alphabetically with no classification.

As for cataloguing standards, most countries use ISBD or AACR2, but sometimes not the latest edition.

Indexing is adequate in most national bibliographies -- except for Hong Kong and Mongolia which have no indexes. The CD-ROMs that were checked have good access points. It is possible to search Namibia's Web-based database. It would be helpful if Thailand's national bibliography were enhanced with an annual index, and if Vietnam's included monthly indexes (in each issue) in addition to its annual index. A particular strength of national bibliographies produced in Central Asia and Transcaucasia is provision of access points. This feature has been inherited from the former USSR system. Most have three or more indexes.

In summary, arrangement of the national bibliography is mainly by international standards, with a few exceptions. It is these exceptions (4-6 countries) with no subject arrangement that should be encouraged to adopt an internationally acceptable system. The ISBDs and AACR2 are used by most countries. Those bibliographies not having indexes should be encouraged to add them.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS USED (ICNBS Recommendation 11)

The National Bibliographic Agencies have the responsibility for preparing comprehensive bibliographic records for the national imprint and should adopt international standards and principles for cataloguing, ISBN, ISSN, classification schemes, metadata and permanent naming of digital objects.

In the majority of cases, the national library publishes the national bibliography -- exceptions being countries such as Lesotho where there is a substitute national bibliography. It is heartening to know that the Jordan National Library is now publishing the Jordanian National Bibliography; until recently it was published by the Library Association. The national bibliography in Palestine is published by the Arab Studies Society. Swaziland's national bibliography is published by the University, but in consultation with the National Library. In Central Asia, four of the five national bibliographies are published by the book chamber, which follows the former USSR structure. Mongolia's national bibliography is published by the Academy of Sciences Publishing House. The three national bibliographies in Transcaucasia are published by national book chambers. It may be that Azerbaijan's 1993 legal deposit law changes this responsibility; at present their book chamber is closed. Brunei has no designated national bibliographic agency, so libraries in Brunei are sharing bibliographic functions. Brunei Museum Library is responsible for compiling the new "substitute" national bibliography that lists titles in that library for the time period covered.

Authority control is the responsibility of the NBA. This is not mentioned in the introduction of many national bibliographies. In looking at entries in the national bibliography, it appears that there is authority control but this needs closer study. For instance, Namibia doesn't mention authority control but it is known that the National Library has started an authority file; this may be the case for other countries. (In this workshop, we will hear from South Africa more on this topic.) It becomes painfully obvious if countries do not have authority guidelines to follow, and it would be useful if countries would make mention of the authority rules they follow.

The Bibliography Section's Standing Committee should recommend and encourage NBAs to adopt ISBNs and ISSNs for their publishers/ publications where the systems are not now used. Countries

not using one or both were surprisingly high in these areas, approaching 75% of those with national bibliographies.

Metadata and permanent naming of digital objects are not used by the national bibliographies that were studied. It may be too soon to see results in these areas yet.

It will be interesting to watch developments regarding automation and Internet capabilities. As witnessed by the response from Mongolia, as of June 2001, they are connected to the Internet as the result of a grant from the Soros Foundation. They also mention plans to work on the "Registration and Information database on National Bibliographies of Mongolia."

Next steps

In summary, the authors are presenting their findings and suggestions to the Standing Committee on Bibliography. Members of this group will determine how and what they can do and with whom they need to work to improve the national bibliographic scene and the universal bibliographic control.