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The national bibliography as a system of bibliographical repertories for the study of the Cuban culture

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The national bibliography describes and controls the publishing activity of a country. So this work includes printed publications, and on occasions those not printed, from national authors, without making a distinction in respect of the subject, the language or the place of publication; likewise the information published in any part of the world about the country.

Therefore, this first function of the national libraries only manages to achieve comprehensiveness; however through the supplements it is the core of an organic system of repertories which complement it. Some emerge from it and others develop tangentially but in both cases connect as they become intertwined.

In particular Cuba has an uninterrupted national bibliography as the first Cuban bibliographer, Antonio Bachiller y Morales, published the first bibliography in 1861 which covered from the first printing in 1723 up to 1840, a compilation published in the third volume of his Notes for the study of Arts and the public instruction in Cuba. Bachiller had his successors in Eusebio Valdés Domínguez, Francisco Jimeno, Domingo del Monte and Manuel Pérez Beato who completed this precious legacy in the 'Revista de Cuba' (The Cuban Magazine) and in 'El Curioso Americano' (The Curious American). Next the great Cuban bibliographer Carlos Manuel Trelles y Govin compiled the Bibliography of the XIX century, prior to that the bibliographies for the XVII and XVIII centuries, and he moved into the XX century with the compiling of the Cuban Bibliography 1900-1916. The National Bibliography was temporarily stopped with this work until 1937 when the Cuban Bibliographical Yearbook by Fermin Paraza appeared, which was published in Cuba until 1958. Therefore, the years 1917-1936 remained empty, the so-called empty years or bibliographical lagoon. The bibliographical

work achieved until 1958 was due to the individual efforts of distinguished Cubans, the true founders who made it possible to keep the memory of our cultural heritage alive.

In the 1960s this empty period of 1917-1936, which had not been compiled previously by any bibliographer, was reconstructed by consulting the old collections of catalogues, the Chronicles of León Primelles, and the rich collections of Antonio María Eligio de la Puente and the wise writer Fernando Ortiz acquired by the National Library.

Subsequently the Cuban bibliography was recompiled for the 1900-1916 period in accordance with the Cuban National Library collections, complementing the interest for this period, that although compiled previously by C.M. Trelles, it was necessary to determine what we had in the most important libraries in the country (The Jose Marti National Library, the Havana University and the Economic Society of the Friends of the Country) in order to make the search and acquisition of what we did not have and to provide a more efficient service.

As for the current bibliography after 1959, it reappeared in 1968 with a first volume covering the 1959-1962 period, previously in 1967 (for publishing reasons) the volume corresponding to 1963-1964 had appeared, and the 1965 publishing activity in another separate volume. On 17th March 1964 Cuba passed a Decree, which guaranteed the legal deposit which had its origin in the middle of the XIX century but had been forgotten in spite of several repeals and modifications. Recently the Decree 265 dated 20th May 1999 was passed which guaranteed the legal deposit of documents in any format in which they appear in the Jose Marti National Library.

From 1965 new sections are included in our national bibliography each year, amongst others, bibliographical outlines of deceased authors every year and a basic contribution for a bio-bibliographical dictionary.

Other horizons confronted the 1971 Cuban Bibliography, which emphasised a landmark in our bibliographical development, on making it clear that cultural change and permanence were concepts that complemented each other. More embracing than the previous compilations, this work started to reflect the reality of Cuban culture. In effect, at the III Meeting of Public Libraries, held in Havana in October 1971, new sections were agreed that our national bibliographical index would describe from that year: posters and affiches, exhibition catalogues, sound recordings, cinematograph productions and the postcards issues of the country. Subsequently, the bibliographical indexes continued on a national basis offering the same information for 1972-1976 with only a few variations added for the benefit of its development.

From 1972 to 1976 the country's publishing system was integrated into publishers. Thousands of titles were published in the face of the growing educational and intellectual needs brought about by the country's cultural and aesthetic shape.

Particularly in 1977, the Cuban Bibliography, as a practical instrument of information and as a register of our publishing production, included a new section that described a large part of the maps published in Cuba since 1959. The inherent characteristics of these materials have prevented a specific and/or stable frequency in regard to their appearance in our national repertory. Some years ago we managed to achieve the compiling of the national cartography corresponding to 1977-1991, which will be included in the Cuban Bibliography 1990, yet to

be published.

Greater organisation achieved the Cuban Bibliography in 1978 with the inclusion of the total information analysis in a single index of titles and another analytical. This modification made the recovery of the information easier and provided greater uniformity in the search language used.

In 1979 the description of programmes, first hand documents for the history of our culture was commenced, and in 1980 printed music works were included in a retrospective way back to 1972 in an alphabetical index that required a great deal of searching on extending to bibliographical descriptions. The bio-bibliographical information underwent a change, which was limited up to 1979, to the life and works of writers and scientists, and from 1980 it included data on the life and works of distinguished Cubans.

In 1982, our first index underwent new modifications to help with greater technical perfection: its bi-monthly frequency attempted to accelerate the flow of information to satisfy the exchange that we held with the Socialist camp.

But for obvious reasons we went back to an annual frequency in 1990 (financial reasons) and the Dewey classification (because of its universality).

In the difficult years of the 90s we managed to compile the Cuban Bibliography 1991, as they are awaiting publication, and we also compiled the years 1992-1993 (volume published with the support of the Puerto Rican Atlantea Project) and later for the years 1994-1996 and 1997 we are making an effort to publish them. We are indebted to Dra. Haydeé Muñoz resolution from the Puerto Rican Río Piedras University. Nowadays the data base BD 98 in the UNIMARC format is finished and we are working in unison on the DB 1999-2000 and 2001. In addition we are organising and processing the years 2002-2003 in accordance with the information flow taking into account, mainly, according to the legal deposit law (20th May 1999).

Enriching modifications and variations have benefited the development of our first national index, which we still cannot declare as having been completely automated, but in a process of automation.

On their part, the local libraries have carried out the corresponding research for the rescue of their respective publishing activities.

At the present time specialists from the Cuban Bibliography Department of the Jose Marti National Library have been tutors to more than 15 grade theses presented to the Faculty of Communication of the Havana University by means of which the dazzling XIX century for Cuba has been compiled not for the purpose of improving on the great work of the Cuban bibliographer Carlos Manuel Trelles y Govin, but with the aim of determining what real collections we have in the richest libraries in the Cuban capital (the Jose Marti National Library, the Institute of Literature and Linguistics and at the University of Havana).

With regard to the classification and analysis of the works described, these theses preceded by substantial studies of each one of the periods analysed provided the recovery of thousands of data and thus promoting the study of numerous matters of historical, political, social, cultural and literary natures, likewise the bibliometrical analysis of them.

But the improvement of the national bibliography, both current and retrospective involved specialists from all round the world. The interest in this matter has been especially demonstrated in Cuba.

For several years now the Jose Marti National Library has been linked to the study and development of the national bibliographies of differing countries, especially those in Latin America, with a vision of achieving a greater development of the system, likewise an improvement in the effectiveness of their services.

Because of this, we have analysed the Latin American national bibliographies present in the Jose Marti National Library collections and we have compared, specifically, certain significant aspects of the Latin American national compilations. As for Cuba, from 1961 the Jose Marti National Library has been the corporate manager of the national collections. At the present time, Cuba is the country which collects the greatest number of document types.

But the national bibliography is not only the sole inventory of our culture as other bibliographies emerge from it which makes the National Library contribution to bibliographical research stronger, our institution has compiled and published other repertories of historical interest, amongst others, the bibliographies of the Ten Years War (1868-1878), the Chiquita War (1879-1880), the War of Independence (1895-1898), and the Revolution corresponding to the 1959-1972 period, which are essential repertories for the study of the Cuban history. These provide the localisation of exact data in a systematic way, avoiding infinite and unnecessary searches. The information appears organised under general and specific subject headings in the corresponding indexes, and by relevant aspects in the body of the work, a classification in accordance with the characteristics of the information recovered in each case. The non-schematic bio-bibliographies of great figures in Cuban culture, which follow the steps in the life and the work of the creators of dynamic movement and of profound achievements, are indexes that also branch out from the main stream. Research and data compilations for the progressive activity of the years and description of the work of immortal figures, factors with which it has been possible to create these consultation indexes that give access to the scope of a work and to the vital path upwards of a creator. To contribute to this access as an opening has been the basic purpose of this retrospective task that the National Library has carried out in regard to persons like José Martí and other persons foremost in the country's literature, history and culture, such as Fernando Ortiz, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, Nicolás Guillén, Alejo Carpentier, Lisandro Otero, Dulce María Loynaz, Mario Rodríguez Alemán, and others. In general this bibliographical research is carried out in respect of the collections of these persons. Sometimes the bibliographical work gives rise to the donation of these collections and on other occasions the acquisition of them gives rise to the bibliographical work. In both cases the indexes are extensive and exact and preceded by critical bibliographical analysis. In parallel the demands of the technicians and scientists who request our bibliographical services are satisfied.

But we do not forget the periodical publications, which by their specific nature and by their development in our country, have required great bibliographical control.

The technical processing of these Cuban documents corresponding to the XVIII and XIX centuries gave rise to the Catalogue of Periodicals for the XVIII and XIX Centuries, which has become a reference work in both Cuban and foreign libraries. Its second edition, already sold out, offers greater information enriched with innumerable acquisitions and donations.

The analytical indexing or processing of the most relevant Cuban magazines for the XIX

century (more than 60 titles) has encouraged even more bibliographical control and has accelerated the creation of other reference works.

As far as the organisation of the information offered by the Cuban serials for the XX century, since several years the National Library compile the Cuban Catalogue of Periodicals for that century and, in 1970, started the publication of the General Index of Cuban Periodicals, the most relevant complement of the national bibliography, which thoroughly analysed the magazines published each year. The accumulation of this annual information has encouraged retrospective compilations of different themes such as poetry, cinema, music, television, etc. which in some cases has been grade thesis for the obtaining of the qualification of Bachelor of Scientific Information. It means that this General Index has given, and still is giving, rise to retrospective works (from 1970 up to the present time) which offer exhaustive information on different matters, basically, literary, historical and cultural. Of course the development of this index (which already has approximately 10,000 entries per year) did not exclude the retrospective analysis of Cuban serials from the XX century, likewise neither the analysis of some closed magazines nor of others that are being currently published, these because of their long life and their importance for the culture of the country are very consulted. In this case, these indexes cover from the commencement of the publication up to when their information starts to appear in the General Index.

Regarding to the indexes of closed collections corresponding to the XX century, the National Library has compiled more than 60 magazine titles.

From this massive task of creating the bibliographical repertories necessary to satisfy the demand required by our national and foreign users, both in the field of humanities and equally in the scientific and technical fields gives validity to the Jose Marti National Library Catalogue of Publications (1978) which describes hundreds of printed titles from 1905 to 1977, likewise its supplement, covering the period from 1978 to 1990, as yet unpublished. Both throw up a total of more than 1,000 published titles. Without counting several hundred scientific and technical bibliographies in addition to those from the humanities which give service in our institution, the majority of bibliographical listings, and to a lesser extent broad scope of repertories indexes but as yet unpublished. Repertories emanating from the national bibliography and others complementary to same. It is a complete system that organically gives us a broad view of the national bibliography since the rest of the indexes stemming from it, or that which is related to our intellectual creation, with our culture, complement the national bibliography tree in an essential system that describes the living memory of a country in a way that is general or specific, current or retrospective whose culture develops in Cuba or away from Cuba it, is only because of its own characteristics, for its strength and wealth and its very defined identity, the memory of Cuba and the Cuban wherever he or she may dwell.