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African National bibliographies

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1 Historical overview

In African countries, publishing of the national bibliography is quite recent. This is certainly due to the fact that this continent has known publishing (printing) later than Asia and Europe. In Mali, for instance, even if the early script document go back to the 11th century (Timbuktu manuscripts), the true publishing in this country started only in the sixties. We must say that these very first writings were above all, the work of travellers in North Africa and the Middle East. Later, the relief was taken by Malian and African scholars. After a short transition period, the early writings from European colonizers arose. During the colonizing period; books were published essentially in Europe and were intended for the colonial Administrator. At the beginning of the 20th century, the first African intellectuals (those who went to the colonial school) started to rise and publish there thoughts. Although this embryonic intellectual activity of Africans did exist, publishing in Africa remained weak, even inexistent in some of its countries.

Thus, taking into account these factors, (quite inexistence of a national publishing, scarcity of publications from nationals, etc.), the National bibliography could not draw forth. Nevertheless, some National bibliographies listing works written on African countries by the Europeans have been published. They were the work of colonial administrators, researchers or European librarians. Amongst them we can cite: *Bibliographie du Congo 1880 – 1895* published by Alphonse Jules Wauters and Ad Buyl in 1895, *Bibliographie de Madagascar* 1905 by Guillaume Grandidier, *Bibliographie générale du Mali (former Soudan français et Haut Sénégal Niger)* by Paule Brasseur in 1964, etc.

Unfortunately, despite the wish expressed by there authors to see the relief ensured by African librarians, these Bibliographies didn't have any continuation, surely through lack of infrastructure and/or qualified librarians. We have had to wait until 1933 to see the Republic of South Africa to publish its first real National bibliography under the title "*Publications received in terms of copyright act of 1916*". Later on, this bibliography will give birth to the current "*South African National Bibliography*". Nigeria, in West Africa, will follow the movement in producing "*Nigerian publications: current national bibliography*" which covers the works from 1950/52 to 1970. This bibliography will become later "National bibliography of Nigeria".

On the eve of independences (the tears 1950) and accession to international sovereignty (the years 1960 and 1970 principally), many African countries created their own National library and adopted legislative texts with regard to Legal deposit (i.e. Malawi adopts its Legal deposit text in 1947, Mauritius in 1952, Algeria in 1956, Ghana in 1961 etc.).

We must indicate that the texts adopted during these years are now been made obsoletes by the evolution of information technologies and arrival of new media (CD, DVD online resources etc.). It is the case for the above mentioned texts and those from Ethiopia (1975), Sudan (1978), Mali (1985), etc. Aware of the texts obsolescence for Legal deposit, some countries have proceeded to update their proper texts. It is the case for Kenya in 1987, Madagascar in 1990, Tunisia in 1993, Zambia and Egypt in 1995 and Namibia in 2000. Except may be for Namibia, it is obvious that updates need to be reviewed, if we make an objective analysis and if we consider the level of command of the new information technologies in African countries in the nineties.

Despite these positive evolutions both in infrastructure building and in legislative texts passing, some countries still don't have a National library (Guinea Bissau, Centre African republic, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Equatorial Guinea) or have just a substitute (Senegal, Comoros, Niger, Sierra Leone, Ghana). Some others also have no Legal deposit law (Somalia, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, Eritrea, Djibouti, Mozambique, Seychelles). Finally it must be noticed that if most of the countries have a National library and a text on Legal deposit, they are still weak in National agencies for ISBN (29 are in existence, c.f. appendix) and in National centres for ISSN (only 14 are in existence c.f. appendix). This situation seriously hinders the national bibliographic control.

2 African national bibliographies: constraints and characteristics

In order to grasp better the situation of National bibliographies in Africa, it is very important to evoke, besides the lack of ISBN National agencies and the lack of ISSN national centres, (c.f. table in appendix), some constraints from which African National libraries are suffering. They are lack of financial means, lack of equipments, lack of qualified staff and lack or non application of legislative texts and regulation governing the Legal deposit.

2.1 Constraints

2.1.1 Financing of African National Libraries

In Africa, mainly in the south of Sahara, National libraries, as the other libraries of the public sector, rarely have an acquisition budget. Only the operating budget is generally given. Insufficient, this operating budget can only be used for library and computing supplies (catalogue cards, paper, ink, CD-ROM ...). Therefore, acquisition of professional software, documentary material publishing (bibliographies, directories, guidelines, etc.) as well as professional material is hindered by lack of financial means.

For a National bibliography publishing for instance, it is not rare to see National libraries asking an international organisation for support (*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, for instance) or a cooperation service (from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, or from a Foundation. For example, "*La Bibliographie nationale du Mali 1995 – 2000*" has been financed by the "*Banque Internationale d'Information sur les Etats Francophones*" (BIEF).

This dependence upon outside may have consequences on the regular periodicity of publications, as it is necessary to seek financing in the time frame. Anyway, in the meantime, for National library activities financing, the external dependence, still stays an unavoidable solution.

2.1.2 African National libraries equipment

National libraries in Africa, except for some, are under equipped. Tools for collecting and processing information (computers and requisites) are missing or are dedicated to secretary work, direction or supervision service. Thus, it can be noticed that computer did not, up to now, come into the daily work for the staff in charge of the National bibliography in our countries.

Besides the hardware, purchase of Databases management systems (i.e. Alexandrie, BCDI, Ariane, etc.) and catalogues on CD-ROMs (i.e. Electre, from now-on accessible online) which cost often exceeds the National libraries' operating budget, stays still out of reach for National libraries.

To compensate for this inadequacy, especially when the hardware is available, National libraries must turn towards open source software usage (Koha, PMB, etc.) otherwise, to purchase Database management systems, they have to negotiate with their vendors, preferential tariffs.

In any case, publishing of Bibliographies, especially in electronic format (CD, DVD) or the National bibliography published online is not imaginable without the equipment of National libraries with computers and requisites.

2.1.3 Training of librarians

Africa is characterized by scarceness of training schools in Librarianship in particular and in information and communication science. The few countries advanced in this field, are South Africa (Pretoria University), Cameroon (*Ecole supérieure des sciences et techniques de l'information et de la communication*), Nigeria (*African Regional Centre for Information Science* at the University of Ibadan), Mali (the *Filière Métiers du Livre, des Archives et de la documentation* at the University of Bamako), Uganda (*East African School of Library and Information Science* at the Makerere University), Senegal (*Ecole des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes*). At the North, we can mention Morocco (*Ecole des Sciences de l'Information*), Tunisia (Institut Supérieur de la Documentation). This scarceness of training school in Information and communication science implies that many of the staff people are coming in the library profession without initial skill in librarianship and documentation. For example, the National library of Mali has 3 professional librarians upon 28 staff people. Professionally speaking, this situation has an effect on products and services. Besides professional in librarianship staff lacking, there is a problem, in training programs in African and even in industrialized country schools of adaptation and taking into consideration African realities on one side and on the other side specificities of National libraries. For example, these schools don't train ISBN agency management, Legal deposit management, National library building, taking into account IFLA recommendations or, for example, lack of Legal deposit legislation in a country.

2.1.4 Legislative texts and regulations

As mentioned above, many African countries do not have any text on Legal deposit or when they have some, they are not applied. But Legal deposit in National libraries is an essential source of bibliographic references for National bibliography making. Absence of texts on Legal deposit or their non application combined with lack of ISBN national agencies, make publishing unknown and out of control, in number of countries. Thus it is not rare, when preparing the national bibliography to discover books on sale on the marketplace that have not been received as Legal deposit nor purchased by the library. This can result from a non application of the Legal deposit text or from a lack of financial means for purchasing.

All together, this situation don't help for a well developed publishing memory of the country in the National library and therefore, for making a good National bibliography. Many other factors exist that are impacting a good African National bibliography making. It may be a suggestion for an other paper. The interesting fact here, is because of those factors, African National bibliographies have got specific characteristics among which we can cite: irregularity in issuing, non-professionalism in the making of,

existence in quite a single format of all African National bibliographies. An other characteristic which is in great part a consequence of colonisation is the multilinguism of these bibliographies.

2.2 Characteristics of African National bibliographies

2.2.1 Irregularity of issuing

Upon 53 Countries, 36 have a National Bibliography. If this number is encouraging, the regularity of publishing is not. Some countries are publishing their National bibliography from time to time they don't respect any timetable. The breaking between issues can often last for 10 years, even more. This is the case for Mali which breaking lasted from 1976 to 2000. Other countries have practically put a stop to their National Bibliography publication since a number of years, even decades. They are: Ivory Coast (1877), Sierra Leone (Since 1987), Senegal (1997), to mention only those. Only some rare countries show a relative regularity (Sudan, Uganda, South Africa, Namibia, Benin, Botswana, Swaziland, and Libya) and the most recent issues are from Uganda (2004), Benin (2005), Mauritius (2005), Namibia (2005), and Sudan (2006). Using a bibliographic database management system for the National Bibliography, irregularity will be very much attenuated. However, we must notice that right now, only a few countries have this experience. They are: South Africa, Namibia, Algeria, Ethiopia, Swaziland and Benin.

Besides irregularity in issuing, African bibliographies also suffer from delay in distribution. Very often, no mechanism or timetable is put in place to ensure issues are reaching addressees. Considering the delays in collecting and processing of data, African National bibliographies are mainly cumulative (1 to 5 year even more). This cumulative publication is of two kinds: "progressive cumulative" and "retrospective cumulative".

Progressive cumulative publication, the most in use, starts with the first edition of the National bibliography in a country and tries to produce an up-to-date bibliography that lists recent editions. Taking into account the difficulties in producing and publishing that makes the issuing irregular, it gathers several years to be update. An example is, the *Bibliographie nationale du Mali 1995 – 1999* (The National Bibliography of Mali first edition is dating from 1964).

The second type is retrospective cumulative publication. It tries to fill the gap between the origins up to the first edition of the National bibliography in a country. Its coverage in time can be restricted (2.5 or 10 years) or quite large (i.e. *Bibliographie nationale du Cameroun : des origines à 1996*).

2.2.2 Non professionalism in National bibliographies making

Many African National libraries are short of qualified librarians – bibliographers. Worse, many of those rare specialists, totally unaware or simply don't apply IFLA recommendations for National bibliography publication. As a result, we can establish that some important information sources are lacking in African National bibliographies. For instance, in some bibliographies, there is no introduction to get information on the Legal deposit, no publication frequency, no explanation of terms used, no explanation on records classification method, and arrangement of chapters, etc. (i.e. Mauritius, Morocco, Senegal from years 1990). For Arabic speaking countries, an introduction in English or French is necessary in addition of the one in Arabic. Despite these insufficiencies, some National libraries have a very good introduction and deserve to be cited: the one for Nigeria and the one for Namibia.

Other African National bibliographies lacunas are the lack of exploitation guidelines, lack of commercial data (price, place and period of sale), and lack of ISBN or ISSN etc.

Despite these lacunas, elements of satisfaction do exist. They are: respect of ISBD for record description, existence of various indexes, usage of the Dewey classification scheme by most of the countries and usage of the universal decimal classification by Madagascar, Mali, Morocco and Tunisia.

We must mention here that only four countries (Angola, Mauritius, Sudan, and Lesotho) are not using any of these classification schemes.

As a whole, National bibliographies that can serve as a model for the other African countries, as they are respecting accompanying elements recommended by IFLA (introduction, index, exploitation guidelines, commercial data elements, etc.) and as they are regularly issued, are bibliographies for: Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Gambia and Botswana.

2.2.3 About the media

Despite diversity of media in use in the information sector, paper stays the dominant medium for African National bibliographies. Only some rare National libraries are giving access to their National bibliography through a web site. These are the national libraries of: South Africa, Namibia, Algeria, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Tunisia has a version of it on microfiche. At last, we can notice with satisfaction, that Benin has published in 2005, its National bibliography 6th edition both on paper and on CD-ROM. Burning a CD-ROM being easier, cheaper and quicker to publish, it is highly probable that many countries will choose this solution.

2.3 Multilingualism of African National bibliographies

Because of colonization, quite every African country has got at least one official language coming from this colonization (French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese or Italian) and national languages which alphabet often differ from Latin and in which publications are issued. Therefore, National bibliographies which are listing these publications (among all, from the country), have to cope at least with two scripts: the script from the official language and the script from a national language. This does not go without difficulties. As the best illustration of this multilingualism, we can take Ethiopia which bibliography record publications in eight languages (English, Arabic, Italian, Geez, Amharic, German, French and Tigrinya). Other National bibliographies are doing more or less the same: the one for Namibia (20 languages), Libya (4 languages), South Africa (2 languages), Mali (2 languages for the moment), etc. This multilingualism brings problems in information processing (keyboarding, filing, research tools, etc.).

3 Conclusion

We can conclude saying that National Bibliography in Africa is face with many difficulties and insufficiencies. These difficulties are numerous but nevertheless can be overcome. For that, African countries must give more financial, material and human resources to their National libraries. When libraries don't have an acquisition budget, what is expected from them?

It is also necessary for librarians and database managers in African National libraries, even with weak means, to be fully invested in National bibliography making. They have to conduct, with authors, printers and publishers, information and sensitiveness campaigns on texts ruling Legal deposit. They must involve themselves in the work done at IFLA and include its recommendations into their day-to-day work. They are invited to a larger and more diversified documentary cooperation with their homologous from the continent or from elsewhere, to share experiences. They must exploit the advantages given by new information and communication technology (computers, databases, CD-ROM, web sites, etc.) to make, publish and disseminate their products. All these actions must be elaborated in a clear juridical environment (Law on legal deposit, texts on library management and organization, and organical frameworks) regularly updated and actually applied. In addition, African countries will have to build general policies and development specific plans (funding, equipment, staff training) for libraries and publishing.

National libraries complementary structures, which are National Agencies of ISBN, National centres of ISSN, etc. also must be built and developed.

Professionalism of the African documentary sector is more than ever, a priority. From this need satisfaction will depend the good organization, the best preservation and the largest dissemination of documentary information in Africa

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3. <http://www.nlu.go.ug/bibiliography.htm> (site of the National library Uganda, visited 3 January 2006)
4. <http://www.knls.or.ke/publications.htm> (site of the National library of Kenya, visited 10 July 2006)
5. <http://www.bibliotat.dz/French/Bibliographie.htm> (site of the National library of Algeria, visited 10 July 2006)

6. <http://www.library.uq.edu.au/ssah/jeast/websites.html> (liste of web sites of National libraries in the world, visited 13 July 2006).
7. <http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/ncb/mac/nlibrary/bib.html> (site of the National library of Mauritius, 10 July 2006)
8. http://www.nlsa.ac.za/about_bibliographic_services.html#e (National library of South Africa, visited le 17 June 2006)
9. <http://www.archivesdusenegal.gouv.sn/biblio.html> (National Archives of Senegal, visited 10 July 2006)
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Nb	Country	PRESENCE OF				National Bibliography	
		National Library or substitute	ISBN National Agency	ISSN National centre	Legal deposit regulation (Date of adoption)	Published	Recent Editions
1	Algeria	x	X	X	* 1956	X	
2	Angola	x	No	No	* 1979	X	
3	Benin	x	X	X	* 1975	X	2005
4	Botswana	x	X	No	*	X	
5	Burkina Faso	x	No	X	* 1996	No	
6	Burundi	x	X	No		No	
7	Cameroon	x	No	No		X	
8	Cabo Verde	S	No	No	x	X	
9	Comoros	S	No	No	*2001 serials	No	
10	Congo (Brazzaville)	x	No	No	x	No	
11	Côte d'Ivoire	x	No	No	* 1962, 1969	X	
12	Djibouti		No	No		No	
13	Egypt	x	X	X	x	X	
14	Eritrea		X	No		No	
15	Ethiopia	x	X	No	* 1975	X	Database
16	Gabon	x	No	No	x	X	
17	Gambia	x	X	X	* 1976	X	
18	Ghana	S	X	X	* 1961, 1963	X	
19	Guinea (Bissau)	S	No	No	x	X	
20	Guinea (Conakry)	x	No	No	x	No	
21	Guinea Equatorial		No	No		No	
22	Kenya	x	X	No	* 1987	X	2002
23	Lesotho	x	X	No	x	X	1956/ 1963

Nb	Country	PRESENCE OF				National Bibliography	
		National Library or substitute	ISBN National Agency	ISSN National centre	Legal deposit regulation (Date of adoption)	Published	Recent Editions
24	Liberia	x	No	No		No	
25	Libya	x	X	No	* 1984	X	
26	Madagascar	x	No	No	x	X	
27	Malawi	x	X	No	* 1947	X	2001
28	Mali	x	X	No	* 1985	X	2000
29	Morocco	x	X	X	*1944, 1951, 1972	X	2002
30	Mauritania	x	No	No	* 1963, 1965	X	
31	Mozambique	x	No	No		No	
32	Namibia	x	X	No	x	X	2005
33	Niger	S	No	X	x	No	
34	Nigeria	x	X	X	* 1970	X	
35	Uganda	x	X	No	*1958, 1964, 1969	X	2004
36	Rep. Centrafricaine		No	No		No	
37	Rep. Democratic of Congo	x	X	No	* 1974, 1978	X	2005
38	Mauritius	x	X	X	* 1952	X	2005
39	South Africa	x	X	No	x	X	
40	Rwanda	x	No	No	x	No	
41	Sao Tome	x	No	No		No	
42	Senegal	S	No	X	* 1976	X	
43	Seychelles	x	X	X		No	
44	Sierra Leone	S	X	No	* 1962	X	
45	Somalia	x	No	No	* 1977	No	
46	Sudan	x	X	No	*1966, 1971, 1978	X	2006

Nb	Country	PRESENCE OF				National Bibliography	
		National Library or substitute	ISBN National Agency	ISSN National centre	Legal deposit regulation (Date of adoption)	Published	Recent Editions
47	Swaziland	x	X	No	*1912, 1978	X	
48	Tanzania	x	X	X	* 1962, 1975	X	
49	Chad	x	No	No	x	No	
50	Togo	x	No	No	x	X	
51	Tunisia	x	X	X	x	X	2000
52	Zambia	x	X	No		X	
53	Zimbabwe	x	X	No	*1975	X	

Table 1: state of infrastructures, legal deposit situation and National Bibliography publishing in Africa

Legend

S: Substitute to the National library

X: Means Yes, that is to say presence of the element we refer to

No: In the Bibliography column means that the country do not produce a National bibliography

Empty cell: In Recent edition column, means lack of information

Date: In Legal deposit column, presence of a text on legal deposit with the date of adoption. The 2nd and 3rd dates indicate a date of modification

Recapitulative

Number of countries having a National bibliography:	36
Number of countries having an ISBN National Agency:	29
Number of countries having an ISSN National Centre:	14

NB : Taking into account the difficulty to obtain and to verify data, I would ask colleagues to put themselves in a logic of amendment of the present paper by reporting to me any incorrect or obsolete information and sending me the correct information along with justification if possible. My goal is to give to anyone, a global vision of African National bibliographies situation.