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Collaboration among producers of bibliographic data Achievements and planned initiatives at the Italian National Bibliography

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Abstract :

The Italian National Bibliographic Agency, responsible for the Italian National Bibliography (BNI) and based at the National Central Library of Florence (BNCF), derives the majority of its bibliographic records from the National Library Service Union Catalogue, the online bibliographic database used by over 3,200 government, public and university libraries throughout Italy.

This and other Italian National Bibliographic Agency's collaborative relationships are in a phase of development, owing to: the introduction of a new Italian legal deposit law, which will have a direct effect upon the national bibliographic services; the reorganisation initiatives within the department responsible for the BNI, aimed at a more effective coverage and timeliness of the BNI; the recent adoption of renewed cataloguing and indexing tools, that can be shared within an integrated and cooperative library system.

This paper presents examples of the Italian National Bibliographic Agency's collaboration with other institutional and private bibliographic data producers and this Agency's initiatives to increase the number of bibliographic records in the BNI's various series.

1. The Italian National Bibliography (BNI)

The Italian National Bibliographic agency is a department of the National Central Library of Florence (BNCF), responsible for the Italian National Bibliography (BNI).¹ The BNI, since 1958 has recorded the national publishing output, according to legal deposit laws. This official task has traditionally included printed publications and has not yet been extended completely to non-book materials, namely to electronic resources. However, direct access electronic resources (CD-ROMs, DVDs, DVD-ROMs, etc.) are recorded in the BNI's various series with regard to their bibliographic format (monographs, series, etc.) independently from the medium, as a BNI's series exclusively reserved to electronic resources is still not available.

All material is catalogued by experienced staff using the Italian cataloguing rules (RICA, Regole italiane di catalogazione per autori, Roma, 1978), the ISBDs standards and indexed using the new Italian subject indexing system (“Nuovo soggetto”, Milano, c2006). The entries are arranged by classification number; the classification tool applied is the 21st Italian edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification (as the 22nd Italian edition has not yet been published) and the 13th abridged for certain types of bibliographic formats (e.g. printed music).

Figure 1



The BNI's series



The Italian National Bibliography, since 1958 has recorded the national publishing output, according to legal deposit laws

- Serial and monographs traditionally included; not been fully extended to e-resources

Since 1994 six series have been published, with various periodicity:

- Monographs (monthly published)
- Printed music (published as a six-monthly supplement to the main Monographs series)
- Serials (six-monthly published)
- School Textbooks (yearly published)
- Doctoral Theses (six-monthly published)
- Children's Books (four-monthly published)

The BNI's six series, comprising various bibliographic and publishing formats, are available on subscription as a UNIMARC Exchange File, as printed publication with various periodicity and as a bi-monthly DVD together with the BNCF's catalogue records.²

Figure 2



The BNI's series



- Availability on subscription as printed publication with various periodicity and as a by-monthly DVD together with the BNCF's catalogue records
- Emphasis being on publications available through normal buying channels
- Exclusion policies declared
- Doctoral theses delivered directly by Italian Universities

The coverage of the BNI has always been selective with the emphasis being on publications available through normal buying channels, except for doctoral theses, which are delivered directly

to the BNCF by Italian universities. However, the BNI exclusion policy is declared in the preliminary pages of each issue, in accordance with International Conference on National Bibliographic Services recommendations. The content of the current series includes only material printed or published over the last two years. Material published before that time is included in additional volumes, published irregularly as supplements to the main series.

As the recent 2004 law on legal deposit provides for new types of publications produced by means of whatever technology and medium, the BNI will extend its scope to new types of material (e.g., remote access electronic resources). At the BNCF, a short term crawling on large scale of the national web space has been recently carried out within the “Crawler Project” promoted by the Italian Digital Library (Biblioteca digitale italiana).³ This project has allowed a first estimate of times and costs of the web legal deposit processing. Furthermore, it can be considered as a good contribution for the testing of Internet resources deposit, according to further provisions laid down by the Italian Ministry for National Heritage and Culture in 2006.

When modes and procedures for archiving remote e-resources and digital documents have been implemented at the BNCF, the National Bibliographic Agency will then plan initiatives for their inclusion in a BNI’s specialized series.

The BNI’s coverage and timeliness depend mostly on the legal deposit system, but, until recently, these requirements were not always fully satisfied due to the lengthy legal deposit procedures involving local government authorities to whom printers (and not necessarily publishers) were obliged to consign copies of all their printed matter. Despite tardy deliveries, reduced personnel and funds, the BNI has continued to ensure the publication of its issues.

2. The new legal deposit legislation

In 2004 the government passed a new legal deposit law inspired by international guidelines for legal deposit with clearly defined cultural purposes.

Figure 3



The new Italian law on legal deposit

- Issued in 2004, came into effect on 2006
 - Inspired by the international guidelines for legal deposit and aimed at clearly declared cultural purposes
 - Provision of full access to national output, according to author's and publisher's rights
 - The two national central libraries of Rome and Florence, as archives of the national output
 - Regional selected libraries as repositories of the local output
 - Scope extended to local and remote access electronic publications
 - A National Legal Deposit Commission formed
 - advising and monitoring the ways with special regard to online resources
 - A BNI's Electronic resources series scheduled

The law provides for long term preservation in national and regional archives of all publications considered in their value of cultural resource , and production of national bibliographic services including full access to national and local output, according to author's and publisher's rights.⁴ It has further nominated the two National central libraries in Florence and Rome as archives of the national output and regional selected libraries as repositories of the local output, each with different responsibilities, and its scope has been extended to cover materials made public via electronic communication network.

The new law came into force in 2006, with a final regulation⁵ that provides for a National Legal Deposit Commission to be formed, with the role of advising and monitoring the ways the national output deposit system should perform, with special regard to new categories of publications, namely, remote access resources. The Commission is working in order to define the criteria for collecting and selecting web resources and for identifying the national web space and the responsibilities connected to their preservation.

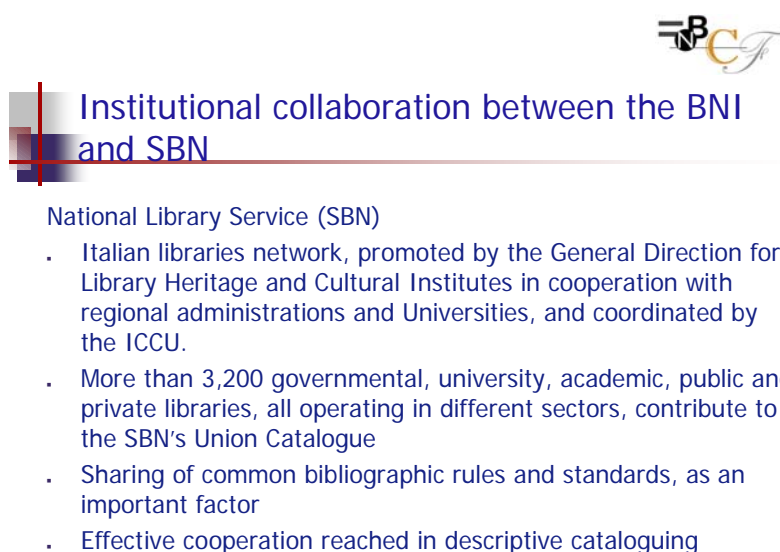
In April 2008 a regulation regarding the BNCF's financial and administrative autonomy was issued. The Florentine institution was confirmed in its task to provide national bibliographic services through the creation, coordination and dissemination of the Italian National Bibliography, in

compliance with international programs and standards. It was also given the mandate to collaborate in the development of the National Library Service (SBN),⁶ in partnership with the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and for Bibliographic Information (ICCU) and the National Central Library of Rome; and lastly, to create, review and update tools for subject indexing and classification. The BNCF's specific responsibilities, newly defined by law, will lead the National Bibliographic Agency into implementing innovative models of collaboration with all the institutions involved.

3. Institutional collaboration: the Italian National Bibliographic Agency and SBN

The most important collaboration is the one already existing between the BNI and the National Library Service (SBN), the Italian libraries network, promoted by the General Direction for Library Heritage and Cultural Institutes in cooperation with regional administrations and Universities, and coordinated by the ICCU.

Figure 4



At present, more than 3,200 governmental, university, academic, public and private libraries, all operating in different sectors, contribute to the SBN's Union Catalogue.

The BNI derives the majority of its bibliographic records from the SBN data base and makes them available with additional authoritative information. All the access points and the descriptive elements are confirmed by the authority control of the BNI, in compliance with national and international bibliographic standards, in order to increase the quality and accuracy of bibliographic data.

Figure 5



Institutional collaboration between the BNI and SBN

Uniformity in the field of semantic cataloguing close to being reached

- Italian translations of the DDC Editions, edited by the BNCF
- New subject indexing tool developed by the NBA, in compliance with international subject cataloguing principles and rules (“Nuovo Soggettario”, 2006)
 - A Thesaurus accessible on the web, continuously implemented
 - A body of rules for management and construction of both vocabulary and subject strings
- “Nuovo Soggettario” as a national standard offered to the whole complex system of bibliographic services in Italy
- Managing an authority control system for both subject entries and strings

An important factor in the cooperation within the SBN network consists in the sharing of common bibliographic rules and standards. Whilst an effective collaboration has been reached in regard to descriptive cataloguing, given the presence of a national cataloguing code (RICA, “Regole italiane di catalogazione per autori”), which will soon be substituted by a renewed one,⁷ it cannot be said to have reached the same results in the field of subject indexing and classification. When the SBN was founded, collaboration in the field of semantic cataloguing was not taken into consideration, due to:

- different types of libraries participating in the union catalogue, each with different indexing practices implemented to meet their users needs;
- the application of non standard indexing rules;
- the presence of an obsolete national subject indexing tool and the lack of a national edition of classification. (The Italian translations of the DDC, edited by the Italian Library Association in collaboration with the BNCF had not yet been published).

Today the situation has greatly changed and uniformity in the field of semantic cataloguing is close to being reached due to the creation of indexing and classification tools intended as national tools. The BNCF, has just published “Nuovo Soggettario”, a new subject indexing system, as a result of a six-year long process of research on subject indexing languages.⁸ The work was begun in 2000 with a Feasibility study commissioned by the BNCF and given to a group of experts formed by consultants involved in the Research Group on Subject Indexing of the Italian Library Association (GRIS, Gruppo di ricerca sull’indicizzazione per soggetto). This innovative indexing tool, developed in compliance with the most recent standards on vocabulary control and IFLA’s principles on subject indexing, has been conceived as a body of distinct subsystems. The system’s

structure is made up of various components, which are connected and interactive thanks to the appropriate software. It comprises a Thesaurus available on the web, continuously implemented through the daily indexing work of the BNI, a body of rules governing both the construction and management of the controlled vocabulary and subject strings, and an application manual. “Nuovo Soggettario” is a national standard for use by both general and specialized libraries, and equally valid for the indexing of various non-book materials (by archives, museums, media libraries, documentation centres, etc.), thus further favouring collaboration.

The BNI has already begun to use this new indexing system, but the implementation of “Nuovo soggettario” can only come about with increased cooperation between the BNCF and other Italian documentary institutions. The cooperation in the field of semantic cataloguing should above all involve the libraries and other specialized documentary institutions participating in SBN, however it will be equally important to share resources with those institutions outside the SBN. The new language is also capable of being applied at various levels of specificity, by means of technical procedures still to be defined at a national level, and supported by appropriate training of those who will use it. It has been conceived not only to satisfy the cataloguing needs of the BNI, but also to offer a new method of indexing to the entire complex system of bibliographic services in Italy. The actual incoherent and diversified situation in indexing (a natural result of tailoring to specific local needs) even though justified, can only be overcome by the use of common standards.

The Italian national agency responsible for the BNI in partnership with the ICCU will have to create a service that will:

- manage a subject authority control system;
- collect proposals of new descriptors from other SBN’s libraries for the Thesaurus implementation;
- manage an authority control system of the subject strings created by the libraries of the Union catalogue.


The Italian National Bibliographic Agency, which has often had to reduce the subject access for its bibliographic records, due to personnel shortage, will gain much from the collaboration in subject cataloguing.

3.1 Opportunities for collaborative work between the BNCF and Italian universities: the BNI’s “Doctoral theses” series

Even though they are not normally intended for publication, doctoral theses in printed format have been deposited according to legal dispositions with the two national central libraries in Florence and

Rome since 1987. Theses deposited with the BNCF, have been included since 1995 in the six-monthly BNI's "Doctoral Theses" series.⁹

Figure 6



Institutional collaboration: the BNI's Theses series

- Since 1987 deposited by law with the two national central libraries in Rome and Florence
- Lack of visibility and public availability
- Initiative for a change: Guidelines for archiving theses in institutional repositories
- BNCF and BNCR: will proceed with the automated harvesting of the metadata and the full-text of theses deposited in the university repositories, or manually uploaded onto the two national libraries' servers
- Descriptive metadata for the BNI's bibliographic records

High costs of paper copies and their storage have become a great problem for Italian universities and the two national libraries in Florence and Rome that have the preservation of doctoral theses among their institutional and administrative duties. Research and access services have also been a problem area. At a national level, the two national central libraries in Florence and Rome should guarantee both bibliographic and access services for all deposited theses. Unfortunately, prompt cataloguing services have not always been provided to cope with the increasing annual numbers of dissertations. At the BNCF, theses are originally catalogued and their records first entered into the BNI database in Unimarc format, and afterwards uploaded onto the BNCF's OPAC. However, theses are not available on the SBN's union catalogue, since they are considered "grey literature", or "manuscript material". The National Central Library in Rome maintains only a card catalogue.

Access to the full content of theses is possible only inside the two national libraries' reading rooms and for one day only, since they are excluded from lending and copy services. In University libraries, research and access services vary according to the modes of usage of each department. In some cases bibliographic data are available on local OPACs and in other cases only in barely accessible internal catalogues. This lack of visibility and public availability has begun to be perceived as a problem to be urgently resolved.

An initiative for a change has been taken by the Open Access Working Group, founded within the Conference of the Rectors of Italian Universities (CRUI) in 2006. The working group has developed "Guidelines for archiving doctoral theses in institutional repositories". These guidelines are the first step of a larger project aimed at implementing the principles of the 2003 Berlin Declaration and the recommendations of the European Commission for Open Access to scientific

publications and is intended to provide Italian universities with recommendations for managing, collecting, preserving and making e-theses available via institutional repositories, through autonomous, but uniform procedures. At the present time doctoral theses have little internet visibility. They are either hidden in the deep web or altogether absent and their entries are occasionally accessible on the University OPAC's, but only after a specific search. In other cases, the entry is only present in local catalogues, often available only in paper copy. Depositing theses in an Open Access Archive, giving visibility to practically invisible documents, will increase their scientific value, to the advantage of both the institution and the author. This has been the main motivation behind the universities undertaking to deposit doctoral theses in digital format in their institutional repository, following the example of other countries.

The two national libraries in Florence and Rome, will proceed with the automated harvesting of the metadata and the full-text of those theses that have been deposited in the university repositories. Theses from Universities that have no repository as yet are manually uploaded onto the two national libraries' servers.

The 2004 legal deposit law and the 2006 regulation do not explicitly mention doctoral theses among the documents to be deposited. However, the fact they are deposited in open archives makes them comparable to "online resources", or to those documents subject to legal deposit, the modes of which are being established by the Italian National Commission for Legal Deposit.

Metadata and the full-content of doctoral theses can be directly uploaded onto the National Central Libraries' repositories or, alternatively can be harvested from existing institutional repositories by the central service via OAI-PMH protocol. The metadata can be used by the two national libraries' catalogue, in particular for the BNI's "Theses" series. It is for this reason that an agreement for collaborative cataloguing of theses should be established between the two national central libraries that are the mandatory consignees for the same type of material and the Italian universities that are strongly interested in making theses accessible on a national level.

4. Collaboration with private producers of bibliographic records: the BNI's Childrens' books series

"La bibliografia nazionale dei libri per ragazzi" (The national bibliography of children's books), can be considered as a first example of a fruitful and advantageous collaboration with private producers of bibliographic records.¹⁰ Children's books and juvenile literature up until 1993 were included, together with monographs and serials, in a single series of the BNI. Only since 1995 these types of material have received the attention they deserve through the publication of their own series, committed to a private bibliographic agency, but edited by the BNI.

Figure 7



Collaboration with private producers of bibliographic records

The BNI's Children's books series

- Begun in 1995
- 2005: new agreement with the editorial office of "LiBeR": Libri per bambini e ragazzi
- 2006: "La bibliografia nazionale dei libri per ragazzi" available in printed format as well as on the LiBeR database (www.liberdatabase.it)
 - Greater timeliness, coverage, and completeness of information
 - Records accessible in a high bibliographic level and content format
 - Information tool of great value for final users

In 2006, the Italian national bibliographic agency made a new agreement with an organization specialized in this sector, the editorial office of "Liber", a quarterly periodical, that lists bibliographic records relating to new publications for children deposited in or purchased by a specialized library, considered to be a centre for excellence in children's books and juvenile literature.¹¹

The quality and accuracy of the descriptive records is guaranteed by the authoritative check made by the BNI. This series is much more specialized than a regular BNI series, having for example a greater completeness of information on subject content. The entries are organized according to "genres", rather than the traditional BNI format according to the DDC, such as game books, fairy tales, adventures, etc. although records are classified with DDC21 numbers. They also include new elements, the responsibility of which is with the editorial office of "Liber": the provision of an abstract, the indication of age limits for the works and a literary evaluation, expressed by means of codes (e.g. very interesting, deserving attention, of little value, etc.). These records, included in the printed format can also be accessed in a high bibliographic level and content format with a greater number of access points in the Liber database (accessible on the web), where the entire archive of children's books published in Italy since 1987 is available (more than 34.000 entries).¹² Since these bibliographic records, apart from their increasing number, offer the most recent information on publications available on the market, this series is an information tool of great value for final users: booksellers, children's libraries, teachers etc. This is a truly collaborative model that could be extended to other BNI's series.

Conclusion

This paper has presented collaborative initiatives already realized and those still to be undertaken. The latter will depend on the policies and decisions taken by the NBA in the near future. A report has just been carried out by the National bibliographic agency on its present internal situation; it offers diagnoses of the shortcomings but also provides proposals for their solutions. It is hoped that a Feasibility Study for the reorganization of the National bibliographic agency, will be undertaken in order to better advise on ways to successfully fulfil its mandate and, through self-analysis, to better confront the challenges emerging from changing information technologies and to meet the demands of a new generation of users.

¹ In 1886 the BNCf was given both the right to receive one copy of every publication printed in Italy, according to legal deposit laws, and the institutional duty of producing a bibliography of all publications received by legal deposit, under the name of *Bollettino delle pubblicazioni italiane*, and after 1958 known as *Italian National Bibliography*.

² The BNI's various series are as follows: Monographs (the main series), Serials, Printed music, Doctoral theses, Children's books, and School textbooks. The Monographs, Serials and Doctoral Theses series are also available as e-books and print-on-demand.

³ <http://www.biblioteca digitale italiana.it/genera.jsp>.

⁴ <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/041061.htm>.

⁵ http://www.librari.beniculturali.it/upload/documenti/Regolamento_deposito_legale.pdf.

⁶ For more information about the SBN, see the ICCU's web site, <http://www.iccu.sbn.it>.

⁷ Regole italiane di catalogazione (REICA). Its publication is expected by the end of this year. The REICA draft is available at: <http://www.iccu.sbn.it/upload/documenti/ReicaFeb2008.pdf?l=it>.

⁸ Nuovo soggettario : guida al sistema italiano di indicizzazione per soggetto : prototipo del Thesaurus / Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze. - Milano: Bibliografica, ©2006 (stampa 2007).

⁹ BNI : Bibliografia nazionale italiana : [nuova serie del Bollettino delle pubblicazioni italiane ricevute per diritto di stampa]. Tesi di dottorato -. A. 38, fasc. 1 (1995)- Roma : Istituto centrale per il catalogo unico delle biblioteche italiane e per le informazioni bibliografiche, 1995- . Semestrale. - Dal 1998 editore: Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale. - ISSN 1125-0895.

The entries of each issue are arranged under DDC numbers, indexed according to author and title, but not subject headings. It covers about 10,000 theses per year; this number is increasing.

¹⁰ La bibliografia nazionale dei libri per ragazzi. - 2006- . Campi Bisenzio : Idest, [2006]- .. - Trimestrale. - A cura della Biblioteca nazionale centrale Firenze.

¹¹ Centro regionale di servizi per le biblioteche per ragazzi, Biblioteca di Villa Montalvo, Campi Bisenzio (Firenze).

¹² www.liberdatabase.it.