

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL: THE INTERNATIONAL CONCEPT AND THE NATIONAL EFFORT

By Mrs. C. Kwei

This paper discusses the importance of bibliographic control, especially in the case of a developing country like Ghana where various constraints are encountered in the attempt to provide excellent bibliographic services. Recommendations are made for the improvement of bibliographic control.

Introduction

Bibliographic control simply means the controlling or monitoring of publications or other bibliographic material for effective use. It is a means by which publications could be identified and made available as and when the need arises. Since the advent of printing and its resultant appearance of published material in large quantities, librarians have been concerned with the ways and means by which the bibliographic record of the material published could be controlled. Librarians have developed, as Anderson puts it "an assortment of bibliographic tools with their purpose to supply answers to a variety of questions: to identify the published works of one author, editions of one work, publications of one country, the location of publications in one country, publications on a particular subject, works printed during a particular period."¹

What is Universal Bibliographic Control?

Universal Bibliographic Control (U.B.C.) is a long-term programme for the development of a worldwide system for the effective control and exchange of bibliographic information, so as to make universally and promptly available, in a form which is internationally acceptable, basic bibliographic data on publications issued in all countries.² It is, therefore a network of component national parts, covering a wide range of library and publisher activities, integrated at the international level to form a global system. U.B.C. presupposes that each country should identify and record its literary output in a way that would facilitate international use; and this came into being as a result of the realization by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

(I.F.L.A.) and UNESCO that the thirst for information has become a universal phenomenon which should be quenched adequately. I.F.L.A. with the support of UNESCO therefore, established U.B.C. and included it in their main policy objectives due to the importance accorded it. It is the aim of U.B.C. to make available to information specialists, or a certain category of information users, wherever they may be, the means of access to publications and items of information recorded in all media.

Standardization

To stimulate the flow of bibliographic information and facilitate its comprehension throughout the world, I.F.L.A. introduced the International Standard Bibliographic Description (I.S.B.D.) which is an internationally accepted code for selection of entries and headings of all materials which have their place in a library. At its meeting of Cataloguing Experts held in Copenhagen in 1969, a working group was set up to consider the description of monographic publications. Consequently the I.S.B.D.(M) was published in 1974. This specifies the requirements for the description of monographs, assigns an order to the elements of the description and specifies a system of punctuation for the description. I.S.B.D.(M) aims at meeting national and inter-

national demands, serving the needs of the reader and producing a standardized form of catalogues for exchange and resource sharing.

After I.S.B.D. (M) I.F.L.A. established I.S.B.D.(S) for the description of current printed serial publications. I.S.B.D.(S) aims at owning the maximum descriptive information for a whole range of bibliographic activities, such as the distinctive 'title'.

There are also the I.S.D.S. mainly for the identification of serials; the I.S.B.D. (G) established in 1975, which lists all the elements required to describe and identify all types of material likely to appear in a library's collections; the I.S.B.D.(NEM) which came into being in 1977 and specified the requirements for the description and identification of non-book materials, such as audio-visual documents; the I.S.B.D. (GM) which specifies the requirements for the description and identification of cartographic materials, such as maps, plans, charts and atlases. The establishment of the International Serials Data System (I.S.D.S.), the International Standard Book Number (I.S.B.N.), the International Standard Serials Number (I.S.S.N.) and the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Monographs and Serials has thus become the effective machinery for organizing seg-

ments of the U.B.C. system; a programme which is the most complex and highly organized operation so far undertaken by I.F.L.A.

The National Bibliographic Agency

The National Bibliographic Agency of a country may form part of the national library (the library which has the duty of collecting and preserving for posterity the literary output of a country and usually stands at the apex of a country's library structure) or may be a separate organizational unit within a country's library system. Its functions are:

1. To prepare the authoritative and comprehensive bibliographic record for each new publication issued in a country in accordance with accepted international bibliographic standards.

2. To publish those records with the shortest possible delay in a national bibliography which appears regularly.

In order to fulfil these functions satisfactorily, the national bibliographic agency must

(a) be the custodian of the legal deposit and thereby have access to publications quickly and easily;

(b) have the right complement of staff with professional competence and expertise for the preparation of the bibliographic records;

(c) have the organizational and financial resources to produce the national bibliography in printed or other physical forms;

(d) have the legislative framework to carry out its functions.

Additionally the national bibliographic agency may

i. keep up-to-date an official list of the names of national authors, both individuals and groups;

ii. draw up national cataloguing rules for the compilation of the national bibliography in the framework of internationally accepted general principles;

iii. act as a centralized national cataloguing agency for the preparation and distribution of catalogues to other centres in the country;

iv. house the national I.S.D.S. Centre for the recording of serials;

v. allocate I.S.E.Ns to books published in the country;

vi. keep up-to-date the union catalogues of the national collection;

vii. analyse and index the subject-matter of national library materials;

viii. operate a programme of cataloguing-in-publications;

- ix. act as a clearing-house for the receipt and dispatch of bibliographic records;
- x. foster national input into international information systems.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL IN GHANA

Legal Deposit

This is the depository law by which publishers are required to deposit a copy or a certain number of copies of any book published in a country in specified libraries or institutions.

The purposes of legal deposit are:

1. The conservation of all documents published in the country, and possibly by nationals;
2. The recording of the documents published in the national bibliography which acts as the vehicle for bibliographical information about the country;
3. The compiling of statistics on the national output;
4. The constitution of a complete library stock for the country.

The Book and Newspaper Registration Act of 1961

(Act 73) as amended in 1963 (Act 193) enjoins publishers in Ghana to deposit a copy each of their works in the following institutions after registering the said publication with the Registrar-General's Department:

1. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Headquarters Library
2. Ghana Library Board
3. The Registrar-General's Department
4. The University of Cape Coast Library
5. The University of Ghana's Balme Library
6. The University of Science and Technology Library

The provisions in the Act do not give a clear distinction between a publisher and a printer, thus it provides a convenient loophole for depository evasions.

This Act of 1961 is by no means adequate in ensuring that every or most of the material published in the country is deposited in any or all of the libraries mentioned. In the first place, the Act does not cover government publications which constitute quite a sizeable proportion of all materials published in the country. Secondly, there is no system through which publications coming out of presses could be adequately monitored and any infringements dealt with according to the provisions in the Act. Thirdly, there is no enforcement of the Act and publishers sort of 'please themselves'. Those who desire to register their works and deposit copies do so, those who do not register or deposit their works either through ignorance of the existing

laws or through sheer apathy go virtually scot-free, because the penalties for infringement are not enforced.

However, the materials that find their way into the libraries mentioned are adequately recorded. In the early 1960s, attempts were made by a National Library Committee, set up to consider the setting up of a national library in Ghana, to distribute the functions of a national library among libraries in the country. Unfortunately, this noble attempt to collect and preserve for posterity, the nation's literary output flopped, so individual libraries continued to compile their own bibliographies, which were mostly retrospective.

The Ghana Library Board, therefore started the publication of the Ghana National Bibliography (G.N.B.) in 1965; for, being one of the legal deposit libraries and the body responsible for public libraries throughout the country, it took the initiative in the compilation of the bibliography. Responsibility for the compilation of the G.N.B. was later given to the Research Library on African Affairs which is also run by the Ghana Library Board.

The Ghana National Bibliography started as an annual compilation covering not only publications in Ghana but also publications by Ghanaians outside the country. Later, bi-monthly publications start-

ed with the title "Ghana: a current bibliography"; this bi-monthly cumulates into the annual volume. The G.N.B. attempts to list all publications, published in Ghana or abroad and written by Ghanaians; or publications on Ghana written by other nationals. It includes books, periodical articles, theses, official publications and works in the native languages.

The Research Library on African Affairs Assumes the Role of a National Bibliographic Agency

In 1977, UNESCO held an International Congress on National Bibliographies. At this congress the importance of national bibliographies in the promotion of national bibliographic control and consequently International Bibliographic Control was discussed. The Congress which was attended by participants from all the six continents of the world aimed at:

1. Reaching agreement on minimum standards and/or acceptable practices for the coverage, content and form of national bibliographic records, taking into account the requirements for their international exchange;
2. Reaching agreement on acceptable guidelines for the presentation, arrangement and frequency of the printed national bibliography;

3. Discussing and making proposals for the sharing of resources to assist countries in achieving national bibliographic control, using their manual or computerized methods of producing national bibliographies.

Among the recommendations adopted was one which states, "UNESCO and other appropriate institutions should be asked to assist in the establishment of pilot schemes for national bibliographic agencies, or in the production of national bibliographies and in the organization of national, regional and international seminars and training workshops for these."³

In pursuance of this recommendation, the National Library of Nigeria took the initiative and organized a seminar on bibliographic control in Africa in Lagos in 1978 under the auspices of UNESCO. Participants from Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo attended this seminar and with the help of European and Nigerian experts the librarians were introduced to the International Standard Bibliographic Description (I.S.B.D.) and the International Serials Data System (I.S.D.S.). These two systems were, at the time, being used only by Nigeria and Tunisia.

The Seminar decided to launch 'Afrbiblios' as the official bulletin for information and communication on Bibliographic Control and Standards which was to be published quarterly by the National Library of Nigeria. Consequently, another seminar was held in Dakar, Senegal in 1979, under the auspices of UNESCO, and was attended by three more African countries. The participants, after describing the bibliographic situation in their countries since the Lagos seminar, did some practical work on I.S.B.D. and I.S.D.S. under the guidance of experts.

The seminar also decided to constitute itself into a standing conference, so the African Standing Conference on Bibliographic Control (A.S.C.C.B.I.C.) came into being. An Executive Secretary was appointed and he was charged with the task of organizing the conference. He was also to work towards the gradual introduction of bibliographic control in Africa.

Before the Lagos conference, however, there had been a workshop on International Standard Bibliographic Description (I.S.B.D.) in Ibadan in April 1975. This workshop signalled the awareness to African bibliographic control and the Ghanaian librarians who participated in it organized an I.S.B.D. workshop in Accra in July, 1975 under the auspices of the Ghana Library

Association. Among the recommendations made by the participants of the Accra workshop are the following:

- i. Noting that there is need for uniformity and harmonization in bibliographical practices throughout the country in order to conform to international standards, all libraries in Ghana should consider, seriously, the adoption of I.S.B.D.
- ii. As a first step, the Research Library on African Affairs, should introduce immediately I.S.B.D. elements in the compilation of the Ghana National Bibliography.
- iii. In order to facilitate the contribution of entries in compilation of Union Catalogues of Ghanaian publications, and other union lists, I.S.B.D. should be adopted in dealing with all publications issued in this country, in all libraries.
- iv. The Ghana Library Association, or any existing agency, should interest publishers and printers in the application of I.S.B.N. and I.S.S.N., to publications emanating from this country. In this regard, the necessary documentation should be assembled for the information of the interested parties.

- v. It is important that the concept of a national library in Ghana should be taken up once again with the proper authorities, since the decision that the functions of a national library could be shared among existing libraries, has not worked successfully in practice. There are also many other functions that are yet to be developed.
- vi. A national library would assume the leadership in constantly initiating innovations in bibliographic practices for other libraries to adopt.
- vii. The proceedings and final recommendations of the workshop should be widely circulated within the country to all types of libraries, including those not represented at the workshop, for possible action.

The Ghana National Bibliography and I.S.B.D.

Not long after the National Library Workshop on I.S.B.D. held in Ibadan and the Accra workshop which took place in July 1975, the Research Library on African Affairs adopted International Standard Bibliographic Description in the compilation of the Ghana National Bibliography. In 1978, under the patronage of the Ghana Book Deve-

lopment Council, a series of meetings were held with representatives of the Ghana Publishers' Association and the concept of I.S.B.N. was introduced and explained to them for acceptance. The Research Library became officially recognized as the national I.S.B.N. agency and guidelines were provided by the International I.S.B.N. Agency in Berlin followed by the provision of a country number 9964 and computer print-outs of International Standard Book Numbers. To date, over 80 Ghanaian publishers have been registered and assigned I.S.B.N.s

In 1980, Ghana was invited through the Ghana National Commission for UNESCO to become a member of the International Serials Data System (I.S.D.S.) within the framework of the U.N.I.S.I.S.T. programme. The function of the I.S.D.S. is to establish and maintain an international register of serials in all branches of knowledge. This will help in promoting the use of International Standard Serial Numbers which identify the serial whenever information on any serial is needed to be recorded or communicated. The Research Library was chosen by the National Committee for Information and Documentation to initiate action towards participation in the I.S.D.S. project. Unlike the I.S.B.N., procedural matters connected with the setting up of I.S.D.S. Centre operated at

governmental level with the mediation of the Secretary-General of UNESCO, so the Research Library finally became the I.S.D.S. Centre for Ghana, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, in 1981. I.S.S.N.s were allocated to Ghanaian journals by the International Centre till this year when the Research Library started allocating I.S.S.N.s to Ghanaian serials.

Problems of the National Bibliographic Agency

The work of the National Bibliographic Agency is severely hampered by the following factors:

1. Lack of money to carry on the day-to-day work of the agency. For instance, the publication of the current bibliography is delayed unduly due to lack of funds to buy inputs, like paper and stencils and funds to repair machines, like typewriters, etc. A current bibliography which does not appear regularly limits its usefulness and becomes a retrospective bibliography by the time it is published.
2. Owing to the fact that the Research Library comes under the ambit of the Ghana Library Board, financial resources of the Board determine how much could be allocated for the work of the Agency. The Agency therefore becomes virtually impossible to maintain if the Libra-

ry Board is allocated very limited funds by the Government.

3. Scarcity of professional librarians, bibliographers and documentalists specifically assigned to bibliographical work.
4. Absence of a national library and union catalogues recording the holdings of all libraries, archives and other information sources making it difficult to satisfy both national and international request on time.
5. Government and public apathy to bibliographical work.
6. Lack of transportation facilities for the collection of the national imprint. Transportation is a must, especially in our circumstances where inadequate legal deposit provision hampers access to published material.
7. The developing state of publishing, printing and the book trade.

Recommendations

I would like to suggest that in order to enhance the work of the National Bibliographic Agency and improve upon bibliographic control in Ghana, the National Bibliographic Agency should form part of a national library to allow most of the functions undertaken by a bibliographic agency to be performed more satisfactorily. This requires of us, as librarians, to explain the role such as agency plays in the control of the national

literary output to the Government. We owe it as a duty to ourselves and to posterity to see to it that our nation is not left behind in the forward march to bring information to the doorsteps of those who need it.

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, Dorothy (1974), *Universal Bibliographic Control: a long-term policy: a plan for action*, Pullach/Munche: Verlag, pp. 15-16
2. Mbaye, saliou (1981), *Ascorbic manual on bibliographic control in Africa*; Paris: Unesco, p. v.
3. Mbaye, Saliou, *Ibid.* p. 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aguolu, Christian C. (1973) *Bibliographic problems in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.* *Int. Libr. Rev.* 5, p. 199-207.
- Anderson, Dorothy, IFLA's programme of I.S.B.D.s. *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, vol. xxxii, No. 3, May-June 1978. pp. 144-150
- Anderson, Dorothy, 'The role of national bibliographic centre in Trends in bibliographic control: international issues, *Library Trends*, vol. 25, No. 3, January 1977. pp. 645-663.
- Anderson, Dorothy (1974), *Universal bibliographic control.* Pullach/Munche: Verlag Documentation.