BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract:

As background to problems and shortcomings noted, the history of bibliographic control in South Africa is discussed with regard to the legislation regulating legal deposits and a national agency for bibliographic control. The various role players such as interest groups, bibliographic networks, the national archival service and service providers for bibliographic control tools are also discussed. A selection of bibliographic control tools including union catalogues, bibliographies, indexes and databases are briefly listed before concluding the paper by reflecting on the need for ongoing country-specific research in the field of bibliographic control.

1   INTRODUCTION

National bibliographic control activities in South Africa have always been aimed at making publicly available information sources by South African authors such as books, journal articles, theses, archival documents, non-print media and other types of indigenous sources. South Africa has a rich collection of such sources (especially those reflecting our strong oral culture) and a variety of vernacular languages that need to be made accessible as part of our cultural heritage. One can probably assume that bibliographic control tools were initially aimed at the academic, corporate, industrial and research communities. With increased access to information via the Internet, growing interest in everyday-life information seeking, and claims of information as a human right, it is perhaps timely to reflect on bibliographic control in South Africa and the accessibility of bibliographic control tools to the wider South African community – in fact, to all citizens.

South Africa's efforts for bibliographic control are probably very similar to those of other countries working towards national and Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) – the latter can only follow if national bibliographic control is effective. To ensure access to information and successful information retrieval, South African librarians have made many efforts to meet with international standards and to ensure quality. Some libraries such as the University of South Africa (Unisa) and the University of Cape Town have e.g. received Enhanced Cataloguing Status from OCLC. South Africa is also facing numerous economic, manpower and infrastructure constraints impacting on the ideal bibliographic control situation. Although such realities must be acknowledged, it should, however, not keep librarians to strive for the ideal situation of bibliographic control.

When reflecting on bibliographic control in the country, a couple of questions come to mind:

- What has been achieved?
- Which problems and pitfalls do we need to consider?
- How should we keep up in a demanding environment, facing changing user expectations and numerous technical possibilities?
- How are experiences and expertise shared within the national and international library community?

Although all facets of bibliographic control are important to ensure effective access to information, the focus of this paper will mostly be on national bibliographic control. For national bibliographic control to be effective, there need to be a legal deposit regulation; a regulating, controlling and advisory body; supporting committees and investigations; a wide selection of bibliographic tools covering various facets of the national recorded heritage; compliance with national and international standards as well as technological developments; national support from institutions, consortia, professional associations, interest groups and qualified, dedicated individuals; research programs and initiatives and literature reporting on national bibliographic control. The paper will take a brief look at these issues.

Although bibliographic control in South Africa is well developed and attempting to follow international trends, some problems and shortcomings were noted which could be of interest to a wider audience. We verified these informally with some practitioners, but

intend to follow it up with a formal empirical survey. At this stage, it is therefore, only formulated as questions coming to mind with no attempt at a comprehensive list or possible solutions.

A variety of bibliographic control tools and supporting services has been developed since South Africa's earliest attempts at national bibliographic control. According to Musiker (2005) Mendelssohn's *South African Bibliography* (1910) is a landmark work for South African bibliographies. The need for uniform cataloguing and a national South African bibliography was also stressed in the recommendations following the Carnegie Visit in 1929 (Walker 1993:61). It is not possible to offer a comprehensive review of the history of bibliographic control in South Africa in the time slot for the paper. The following sources, however, offer useful supplementary reading: Behrens (1991, 1997, 2000), Coetzee (1990, 1991), Kalley, Schoeman and Burger (2005), Musiker (1995), and Viljoen and Zaaiman (1998). A more detailed review of the history of bibliographic control in South Africa will be published in *Mousaion*, a South African journal in the field of Library and Information Science. From our research it was clear that for the last 10 - 15 years, unlike in the past, very little has been formally published on bibliographic control in South Africa. As a result, it is very hard to come by information on the *status quo* – that is apart from discussions with people in praxis. We know that exciting things are happening in South Africa, but it seems not to be reported or "bibliographically controlled" or preserved for use by academics, students or the wider bibliographic community. A very serious issue, when current expertise retires and if such expertise needs to be replaced by a "new generation" of bibliographic controllers whose adequacy of training is often queried.

2   LEGAL ENFORCEMENT OF NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

In South Africa legal deposit, in some form or another, dates back to 1842. Currently it is regulated by the Legal Deposit Act, No 54 of 1997. All publishers in the country must deposit copies of each document with the following agencies:

- National Library of South Africa (NLSA) (Pretoria and Cape Town Campuses)
- City Library Services, Bloemfontein, (new name: Mangaung Library Services)
- Library of Parliament in Cape Town (new name: Msunduzi Municipal Library)
- Natal Society Library in Pietermaritzburg

It is also required that The National Film, Video and Sound Archives in Pretoria receive certain categories of documents. In spite of a Legal Deposit Committee and the creation of Official Publications Deposits (OPDs) to ensure availability of government publications there are, however, concerns that not all South African publications are adequately covered – especially legal publications. Failure to comply with legal deposit laws has in many countries been noted as a problem. It can safely be assumed that South Africa is not the exception – a recent study by Penzhorn (2007) on the implementation, monitoring and management of an effective legal deposit system for South Africa offers more detail.

With regard to legal deposit a number of concerns come to mind:

- To what extent does the current scope of material to be deposited meet with the needs of not only the academic/industrial/business/research communities, but also the ordinary South African citizen?
- How adequate is South African legal depositing (e.g. effectiveness of the system, attitude of publishers, mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the system, penalties for non-compliance)?
- How well are non-published information objects and indigenous material reflecting the South African cultural heritage (e.g. recordings of oral heritage, government publications, grey literature, etc) covered by legal deposit?
- How is the growing digital content reflecting the South African cultural heritage addressed by legal deposit?

The National Library of South Africa Act, No 92 of 1998, legally enforced the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) (http://www.nlsa.org.za) as bibliographic agency by amalgamating the former two national libraries, namely the State Library in Pretoria and the South African Library in Cape Town. The NLSA's responsibilities include:

- Receiving legal deposits as stipulated by the Legal Deposit Act (No 54 of 1997) and keeping statistics of the production of published documents.
- Creating bibliographic records, compiling catalogues, bibliographies, indexes and bibliographic databases.
- Attempting to build a complete collection of national documents by adding legal deposits to its collection, cataloguing and listing these with reference to holdings and preserving the documents for current and future use.
- Allocating International Standard Numbers to publishers in South Africa.
- Acting as a centre for interlending – for Southern African countries.

- Coordinating the compilation of a national periodical index, *Index to South African Periodicals (ISAP).* (Discussed in Section 4.2.4)

With regard to the national controlling body for bibliographic control the following questions come to mind:

- Does South Africa have the manpower to deal with the bibliographic control of growing "content" and especially digital content?
- How adequate is cooperation with other bodies such as The National Film, Video and Sound Archives, and museums?

3 SUPPORTING COMMITTEES AND INVESTIGATIONS

Setting national standards and adhering to these in compliance with international standards is important in ensuring effective national bibliographic control. Apart from the role fulfilled by the NLSA, a number of specialized committees and advisory bodies were formed and ad hoc investigations conducted over the years. Behrens (1996a, 1996c, 1997) offers good overviews. Although there have been investigations and seminars during the last 10 -15 years, these in general have not been reported in South African literature and are also not accessible to academics and students working on bibliographic control – leaving a big gap in understanding the initiatives currently taken in the country. (It is assumed that such initiatives are recorded in the minutes of internal meetings.)

Some of the earlier committees with a major impact include:

- SAILIS Committee for Bibliographic Control (CBC): acted as a standing committee to offer guidelines and recommendations on a national level.
- Advisory Committee on the State Library Bibliographic Services: along with other activities it tried to determine what the public at large want regarding bibliographic control. (This seems like an issue that needs to be revisited.)
- Interim Committee for Bibliographic Organisations (ICBO): acted in advisory capacity in overseeing bibliographic activities in the country.

Currently there is the Interest Group for Bibliographic Standards (IGBIS): (http://www.liasa.org.za/ interest_groups/gbis/php). IGBIS, unfortunately, has no powers of enforcement. It is aimed at the promotion and facilitation of bibliographic standards in South Africa which includes the promotion of standardisation in bibliographic work on national level, providing for the exchange of ideas and experiences with regard to the application of bibliographic standards among members; addressing issues which affect the application of bibliographic standards; identifying training needs in respect of bibliographic standards; conducting continuing education for information workers by arranging talks, meetings and workshops; and supporting academics, researchers, students and the community through the provision of information about bibliographic standards. It has a newsletter, *IGBIS-in-Touch* ((http://www.liasa.org.za/interest_groups/interest_groups.php) which is available to the wider library community.

Since the 1980's a number of important investigations and interventions have been reported in the subject literature, e.g. the Inter-University Library Committee and the

Fokker Report, Expert Seminar on Bibliographic Control and the Behrens Report (Behrens 1997).

With regard to supporting committees and investigations a few concerns come to mind:

- Is there national coordination/cooperation for investigations concerning South African bibliographic control?
- How well are results from individual projects as well as work in progress disseminated?
- Are there an enforcing body for bibliographic control investigations and committees in South Africa?
- How can access to investigations and results be enhanced?

4   BIBLIOGRAPHIC TOOLS

In the following section a number of South Africa's key bibliographic tools are mentioned. We distinguish between national union catalogues of monographs and serials, bibliographies and indexes, databases and a selection of other tools. The discussion relies heavily on the work of Behrens (2000). (More detail can be found in the article to be published in *Mousaion.*)

4.1   National union catalogues of monographs and serials

The following titles have been made available:

- *South African catalogue of monographs, 1941-1975*. Pretoria: State Library, 1976.
- *SA joint catalogue of monographs, 1971-1995*. Pretoria: State Library, 1971-1995.
- *SACat*. Centurion: SABINET Online, 1983- (http://www.sabinet.co.za)
- *Periodicals in southern African libraries (PISAL).* Pretoria: State Library, 1961-1998.
- *Union Catalogue of Theses and Dissertations of South African Universities (UCTD).* Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Higher Education, 1918- .

4.2   Bibliographies and indexes

There are a number of national as well as subject and professional bibliographies:

- *South African National Bibliography* (SANB). Pretoria: National Library of South Africa, 1959-
- *Retrospective South African National Bibliography for the period 1926-1958*. Pretoria: State Library, 1985. 2 volumes. (RSANB). Although considered an urgent responsibility the retrospective conversion of the South African national Bibliography took 20 years (Botha 1985).
- *A South African bibliography to the year 1925, being a revision and continuation of Sidney Mendelssohn's South African Bibliography (1910)*. London: Mansell, 1979. Volumes 1-4. Cape Town: South African Library, 1991 and 1997. Volume 6. (*SABIB*).
- *Index to South African Periodicals* (ISAP). ISAP went online in 1992.

4.3 Specialized bibliographies and indexes

Apart from the national bibliographies and indexes there are also a number of specialized bibliographies. Such bibliographies are also discussed by Behrens (2000). The following are two examples:

- *Bibliography of overseas publications about South Africa, including publications by South Africans and translations of South African works published abroad*. Pretoria: State Library, 1973-181. 5 volumes. It complements the SANB.
- *Bibliography of the Tswana language: a bibliography of books, periodicals, pamphlets and manuscripts to the year 1980*, compiled by M.A. Peters and M.M. Tabane. Pretoria: State Library, 1982. The Setswana title is *Bibliokerafi ya puo ya seTswana*. Introductory material is written in both English and Setswana.

4.4 Databases

There is also a selection of databases including the following:

- NEXUS, a database of research in progress and research completed is maintained by the National Research Foundation (NRF) (Pretoria) (http://stardata.nrf.ac.za/). NEXUS includes several databases.
- Databases available through *Magnet* (SABINET), e.g. *SA gazettes*, *SA tenders*, *SA citation*, *SA news*, *SACat plus*, and *SA legal*.
- South African Studies available through NISC SA, is an aggregation of 17 databases including *Index to South African Periodicals*, *South African National Bibliography*, The National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown with six databases, namely *Select Index to South African Literature in English, Critical Writings*, *Select Index to South African Literature in English, Creative Writings*, *NELM,* and *Main Catalogue*.
- ISALLIS (Index to South African Literature on Library and Information Science) is an indexing system for South African literature on library and information science.
- The DISA project (http://disa.nu.ac.za/) focuses on digital imaging projects in Southern Africa to make historical material concerning the Southern African struggle for democracy more universally accessible.

With regard to existing bibliographic tools a number of concerns come to mind:

- Do these tools adequately cover the total spectrum of the South African national heritage (e.g. oral recordings of indigenous knowledge, folklore, grey literature, and government publications)?
- How are web-published documents covered and which issues need to be addressed in this regard in future?
- To what extent are bibliographic tools and especially national tools, freely available and accessible to the South African community and especially the ordinary citizen? Limited access to the national bibliographies is available for free from the National Library of South Africa (http://www.nlsa.ac.za).
- How are these tools used by users apart from librarians? (E.g. what can we learn from transaction log analysis of electronic versions, qualitative information seeking studies, etc.?)

- How well do these tools meet with the needs of users (i.e. librarians as well as the wider public)?
- What are the selection criteria for compiling the national bibliographic control tools, and is it perhaps necessary to reconsider the criteria?
- Are libraries and information services experiencing problems in accessing and using bibliographic tools (e.g. do all libraries have access to print and electronic copies)?
- Are the search features and interfaces offered by electronic versions adequate for user needs?
- Do the electronic versions of the bibliographic tools meet with the requirements for accessibility for disabled users?
- To what extent are the indigenous languages catered for in the South African bibliographic tools (e.g. in terms of coverage as well as in terms of access points)?
- How are bibliographic and especially national bibliographic tools "marketed" to libraries and the general public, e.g. how aware are everybody of new developments and is training offered in the use of electronic products? (How aware are departments of library and information science of, for example, the existence of ISALLIS?)

5 COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The importance of standardization, including the use of the *Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2)*, *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)*, *MARC* and *Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)*, has been considered in South Africa.

In 1967 the South African National Library Advisory Council (NLAC) took responsibility for the development of a MARC format for South Africa. A subcommittee on Information Retrieval was established to look at developments abroad, and to do a survey on computerized services already available/in development in South Africa. This was done in order to determine whether libraries in South Africa already participated in international cataloguing services by using magnetic tape services such as MARC. In 1972 the Committee on Bibliographic Services was appointed. They had to do a feasibility study into possible subscription to MARC tapes and similar internationally available services. The study, outcomes, etc. are discussed by Coetzee (1997). In 1973 the NLAC appointed a MARC Working Group that replaced the previous working group. In March 1980 the first edition of SAMARC was published by the NLAC. In accordance with the objectives set by Ilse Van Niekerk (her role is explained by Coetzee 1997) SAMARC was also used as communication format by Sabinet. When Van Niekerk left Sabinet, SAMARC was transferred to the SAILIS Committee for Bibliographic Control (CBC). Snyman (1997) reports on the future of MARC in South Africa. In 1997 the South African library community changed to the USMARC format from SAMARC. Coetzee (1997) discusses this decision and its rationale.

As part of efforts to ensure standardization in bibliographic control for subject description, a number of local thesauri were developed. South Africa also has links with international efforts for bibliographic control and standards, e.g. through the SABINET Online Standards Committee and SABICAT's involvement with OCLC cataloguing. Sabinet signed a national cataloguing agreement with OCLC, Inc. in August 1998

offering South African libraries access to OCLC Cataloguing services, OCLC Interlending services and OCLC PromptCat services. Some libraries such as the University of South Africa (Unisa) and the University of Cape Town have received Enhanced Cataloguing Status from OCLC. The Enhance Program is designed to allow skilled cataloguers to improve the quality of the OCLC WorldCat database by upgrading WorldCat records, primarily from less-than-full level to full level. There is also contact through the IFLA Division of Bibliographic Control (http://www.ifla.org/VII/d4/dbc.htm). Currently there certainly are also efforts to keep to international standards. However, these efforts are not shared with the wider library community in the same way as before.

The following are a few questions that come to mind with regard to bibliographic control and standardization:

- Are there standards for the bibliographic control of *all types* of information objects reflecting the South African cultural heritage and do they all meet with international requirements?
- Are the standards accessible to all participants contributing to bibliographic control and do they all receive adequate training in using the standards?
- Are there any problems experienced with quality control and if so what measures are considered? Marais (2004) e.g. addresses some possibilities for authority control in her thesis.

6 NATIONAL SUPPORT FROM INSTITUTIONS, CONSORTIA, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, INTEREST GROUPS AND QUALIFIED, DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS

Support from all affected parties is essential for effective national bibliographic control. A number of these will be considered in the following sections.

6.1 Sabinet

Sabinet (South African Bibliographic and Information Network) (http://www.sabinet.co.za) was founded in 1983 as a not-for-profit organization. It sold its operational activities in 1997 to Sabinet Online. Although initially aimed at supporting national bibliographic control it currently also caters for commercial and business sectors, providing access to an extensive list of information sources and bibliographic and full-text databases via the Internet. Apart from consulting services, training and Web publishing, it supports cataloguing services (SABICat), information retrieval services (MagNet), and interlending support services (ReQuest).

6.2 Library consortia

The Coalition of South African Library Consortia (COSALC) (http://www.cosalc.ac.za/) was established on 2 July 1999. Its main focus was access to electronic information through the establishment of the national site licensing initiative (SASLI), as well as the promotion and support of national co-operative initiatives, such as contributing to the SA National Catalogue (SACat) and interlending agreements, training, capacity building, communication, liaison and lobbying. There are the following consortia members which are also linked to the academic consortia:

- CHEC (Cape Higher Education Consortium) linked to CALICO (Cape Library Consortium), established in 1992.
- FOTIM (Foundation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis) linked to GAELIC (Gauteng and Environs Library Consortium), established in 1996.
- esATI (Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions) linked to esAL (Eastern Seaboard Association of Libraries), established in 1997.
- ECHEA (Eastern Cape Higher Education Association) linked to SEALS (South Eastern Alliance of Library Systems), established in 1998.
- FSHETT (Free State Higher and Further Education and Training Trust) linked to FRELICO (Free State Library and Information Consortium), established in 1996/1997.
- SANRIC (South African National Research Information Consortium), http://sanric.co.za/index.htm established as LISSCO (Library and Information Services of Science Councils) in 1999.

The academic consortia are discussed in more detail by Thomas and Fourie (2006). Currently more information is, however, needed on

- how the consortia deal with bibliographic control
- the adequacy of cooperation concerning bibliographic control between consortia as well as with other stakeholders
- the dissemination of information on initiatives by consortia and findings from surveys, etc.

6.3   National Archives of South Africa

The National Archives of South Africa (http://www.national.archives.gov.za/) is the coordinating body for union catalogues for archival records. It is situated in Pretoria and has additional repositories in Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein and Durban. It undertakes four projects which are the equivalent of the union catalogues:

- *NAROS*: National register of oral sources: audiotapes, audio cassettes, video tapes, etc. containing interviews.
- *NAREM*: National register of manuscripts: manuscripts, letters, diaries, etc. (i.e. hand-written or typed documents).
- *NAREF*: National register of photographs.
- *NAROM*: National register of audio-visual material (i.e. films, gramophone records, audio tapes, audio cassettes, video tapes and other audiovisual material, music pieces and scores).

6.4   Other professional associations and interest groups

Apart from the role of IGBIS as an interest group of LIASA (discussed in section 3), the following also contributes to bibliographic control in South Africa:

- ASAIB (Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers) (http://www.asaib.org.za/). ASAIB was established in September 1994 by Prof Reuben Musiker. The association is responsible for two directories, namely *Index of subject specialisation* and *Freelance indexers and bibliographers*. Awards for best indexes and bibliographies are made at ASAIB's annual conference.

- SAMA (South African Museum Association): http://www.samaweb.org.za/
- SASA (South African Society of Archivists): http://www.archives.org.za/
- PASA (Publishers' Association of South Africa): http://www.publishsa.co.za/.

Questions that come to mind:

- What cooperation is there between professional associations and interest groups with specific reference to issues concerning bibliographic control?
- How is information generated by the associations/groups disseminated to the wider library community and stakeholders in bibliographic control?

7   LITERATURE ON NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

To ensure continuing effective national bibliographic control we need to understand the past and learn from research efforts. At this stage the South African literature includes theses, dissertations, articles in national as well as international periodicals, national as well as international conferences and a number of unpublished reports, minutes of meetings, etc. For the last 10 - 15 years publications on South African bibliographic control, however, seem rather scant. It is, therefore, recommended that an in-depth content-analysis of the South African literature on bibliographic control should be completed to determine the *status quo* of the country's *recorded knowledge* on the topic in combination with an information audit of work completed over the past 15 years and work in progress. The results should then be published in South African as well as international contexts. Such an exercise might also help to stimulate research in the field (bearing in mind that research does not imply only academic studies and large scale surveys/investigations).

Questions that come to mind in this regard include:

- How do librarians keep track of national and international trends in bibliographic control?
- What access do they have to literature on bibliographic control?
- How aware are they of trends and practices in countries with problems similar to South Africa (e.g. other developing countries)?

Possibilities for current awareness or alerting services can be considered to disseminate information in the field (e.g. monitoring journal tables of content, search engine alerting services, discussion lists/weblogs catering for South African bibliographic control, etc.). Fourie and Claasen-Veldsman (2007) have e.g. recently explored such possibilities for oncology nurses.

8   EXPERTISE IN BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

Continuing growth of expertise in bibliographic control is extremely important. Concerns about the dwindling of South African expertise on bibliographic control have, however, widely been noted e.g. an ageing staff corps, inadequate undergraduate training, decreased "visibility" of academics in the field (this should be seen in comparison to the number of publications listed in this paper by academics such as Behrens, Coetzee, and Snyman).

9   SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

To move ahead and to improve activities in bibliographic control, support is required e.g. from the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) and library and institutional managers. Unfortunately we were not able to collect information on this aspect when preparing for the paper. The following question, however, comes to mind: What are practitioners' perceptions on support for developments in South African bibliographic control from library management, the NLSA, professional library associations, interest groups, and government?

Creating awareness of the importance of national bibliographic control among public decision makers is very important. We would think that research evidence on the actual use of bibliographic tools and what the country may miss because of inadequate bibliographic control, along with published reports in the peer-reviewed scholarly arena, might help to make a case to gain such support.

10   CONCLUSION

South Africa has a rich history of bibliographic control as well as current bibliographic activities. Within the scope of this paper we could merely highlight developments and problems that may hinder progress and the ideal situation. Understanding these, as well as the full spectrum of our literature is however, important to ensure that we can meet future challenges. We therefore recommend that:

- A spectrum of (small scale) research projects based on concerns mentioned in this paper should be identified and conducted.
- That an empirical study be conducted to determine perceptions and experiences of practitioners over the total spectrum of bibliographic control in South Africa.
- An in-depth content analysis of South African literature on bibliographic control, as well as an information audit of unpublished activities should be conducted.
- The use of alerting services and options available for free via the WWW for noting information on bibliographic control should be investigated.

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