

## **NABOB, the National Bibliography for Botswana: history, present state and perspective for development**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper gives a brief history, status and analysis of users and contexts of use of the National Bibliography of Botswana. (here after referred to as NABOB) The paper also illustrates the position of NABOB in the digital age. National bibliographies are constantly changing: they include records for digital resources and printed versions are gradually replaced with electronic, and one can ask if this applied to NABOB as well. If it doesn't, then advice and assistance would be given to assist Botswana National Library Services (BNLS), to respond to the growing significance of electronic media to produce electronic national bibliographies. This can only be done if NABOB status is discussed at length. The intended audience of this paper will be that team that is charged with the management of National Bibliographic services, (BNLS (University of Botswana Library and Botswana National Archives. These are also legal deposit centres in Botswana.*

**Keywords:** national bibliographies, cataloguing standards, legal deposit, national bibliographic agency, cataloguing rules

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### **Introduction.**

The nature, format, presentation and way in which national bibliographies are produced is changing rapidly to reflect developments in technology and user expectations.

This paper will also look into the status of Botswana National Library Services (acting as a bibliographic agency) in relation to the various components that make up bibliographic control and whether NABOB meets some of the requirements of a national bibliography in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with particular attention to its conformance with, and implementation of recommendations produced by IFLA Bibliography Section on "Survey on the state of national bibliographies in Africa, August 2007. I will also look into how Botswana meet some of the recommendations from the International Conference on National Bibliographic Services (ICNBS) in Copenhagen, 1998 as the main guide for national bibliographies worldwide and other guidelines and recommendations which I will not elaborate on in this paper.

The mission of this study was to get an overview of the current situation in Africa in terms of legal deposit and national bibliography. The main aims of the survey were:

- To ask about the existence of legal deposit in each country
- To determine the extent of bibliographic control by national agencies and whether there is coherence between bibliographic control and legal deposit
- To identify forthcoming changes in the area of bibliographic control and legal deposit
- To ask about the existence of national bibliography, its coverage and formats
- To investigate whether all the material under bibliographic control is included in the national bibliography
- To determine the extent of use of international standards and principles
- To determine whether national bibliographic records are available online.

### **The Botswana National Library Service**

The Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) was established under the National Library Service Act of 1967, CAP 58:02 of the Laws of Botswana.

The main functions of the BNLS are defined in the Act as to: promote literacy, develop and oversee the operations and management of public library systems including libraries in government, schools, colleges of education, technical colleges, and Village Reading Rooms (VRRs).<sup>i</sup>

The Act mandated BNLS among other responsibilities, to carry out the provision of centralised services (e.g., provide national reference service, compiling the national bibliography, preservation of national documentary heritage, lending services) to users directly and through other library and information centres. Also this gives them authority to negotiate with publisher and trade representatives on legal deposit and other issues of national significance.

The Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) has been operating under the National Library Service Act since 1967, but now, after 36 years, a lot of changes have since taken place both at the international and the local level and these changes should reflect in the provision of service, bibliographic control and the compilation of NABOB.

### **History and Background of NABOB**

The importance of a national bibliography cannot be overemphasised. In the “Guidelines for the National Bibliographic Agency and the National Bibliography” (IFLA, 1979) the national bibliography is defined as “the cumulation of the authoritative and comprehensive records of the national imprint of a country, published in a printed form (and/or produced in other physical form, such as catalogue cards, machine-readable tapes) regularly and with least possible delay”<sup>ii</sup> The principal aim of the National Bibliography of Botswana (NABOB) which is, to provide complete and reliable bibliographic data about intellectual and cultural heritage of Botswana conforms with this definition.

The National Bibliography of Botswana (NABOB) can be defined as, a complete record of new publications issued in Botswana and deposited at the National Library under the Legal Deposit Law which is Section 10 of the 1967 National Library Services Act.

The National Reference Library (NRL) a division that houses national heritage, is responsible for the production of NABOB and other bibliographic control services.

Two issues of NABOB were first published in 1969. The first issue covered the period January to July, 1969, and the second issue being a cumulative one for the whole of 1969. In 1970, three issues appeared- January-April, May-August, and a cumulative one for the whole of 1970. Cataloguing was done according to the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (Chicago: American Library Association, 1967). Entries were arranged by the Dewey Decimal classification system with special expansion for Botswana material. There was also an alphabetical index in each issue combining authors, titles and series.

### **Legal Deposit and NABOB**

Legal deposit is the best, legal and systematic way of collecting publications for the national library and it is important for national bibliographies. It stipulates the terms of deposit, and provides definitions of the kinds of materials which are to be deposited. However, many of these laws are outdated. For instance in the case of Botswana, legal deposit law dates as far back as 1967.

Many of the countries which responded to IFLA *Survey on National Bibliographies in Africa* (2007) indicated that there has never been a revision of the law since it was passed.

Two legislative laws back BNLS as a publisher of NABOB.

1. The Botswana National Library Service Act (cap 58:02-Section 10 of 1967. By this law, every publisher is required to deposit two copies of every book they publish with the National Library, and one copy with the University of Botswana Library.
2. The Anthropological Research Act requires every person wishing to carry out research in Botswana to seek permission from the Office of the President. A copy of the research permit is deposited with the National Library and University of Botswana library.

Botswana was one of the 3 countries that did not consider their legal deposit system to be efficient. She reported "it is our wish to amend the National Library Act, and have it cater for all the items that were received under legal deposit. Currently it is outdated". Perhaps that is the reason why when agencies were asked to indicate whether the material under bibliographic control was included in their legal deposit legislation, Botswana was one of the countries which had more materials under bibliographic control than what is included in the legal deposit system.

According to the final recommendations emanating from the *International Congress on National Bibliographies*, (Paris, 1998), national bibliographic agencies were requested to re-examine existing legislation in relation to present and future requirements; and those without deposit laws were asked to introduce them, when necessary, existing legislation should be revised.

The congress also recommended that new deposit laws should be comprehensive in terminology and wording so as to include newer formats such as electronic materials, for example, Legal Deposit law in Botswana is silent on electronic formats. The problems faced by legal deposit law in Botswana will be dealt under the publishing industry in Botswana.

It is recognized from literature that many countries in Africa need to revise their Legal Deposit Acts.

### **Present State and Coverage of NABOB**

The International Conference on National Bibliographic Services (1998) recommends that national bibliographies should include the current national output. NABOB covers all publications deposited under the Legal Deposit Act. These include books, monographic series, research reports, journals, first issues of newspapers and magazines, pamphlets

government publications, conference proceedings, theses/dissertations presented at the University of Botswana and some non print materials including videos. (Textual and audiovisual material materials) Books on Botswana published outside are purchased and included in NABOB.

NABOB is currently published in print form. The recording of e-books and e-journals is nonexistent. Three publications are produced in a year, as follows:

- First Issue from January to April
- Second Issue from May to August
- Third Issue Cumulative, this covers all that has been included in the first two issues, plus what is published in the last quarter of the year.

As it has been emphasized before, the national bibliography, to serve its purposes as a selection and acquisition tool, must appear regularly and frequently and contain records of current publication. Timeliness seems to be a big problem not only for Botswana but in most African countries. For example, the last NABOB was published in 1997, almost sixteen years gap. According to Ratanang Motllhabane (2000) the subscription has gone down because of delays in publication. Delays in publishing can be attributed to a number of issues, one major one being the publication industry in Botswana.

### **The Publishing Industry in Botswana**

The role of publishing in bibliographic control cannot be overemphasised since the materials have got to be produced.

There is lack of a strong publishing industry in Botswana compared to other countries in the southern hemisphere. Some of the problems faced by the publishing industry in Botswana are that authors are not motivated to produce materials because of the relatively small population (estimated around 2,098,018 July 2012 Index Mundi) that provides a small market, publishers are not fully informed about their obligations and most importantly the enforcement of the law is lacking.

Publishing companies publish mainly for schools because they find schools to be a reliable market. The scenario has however changed since the late 1990s with a number of independent publishers coming to the scene.

This brings me to defining the NABOB users and their information needs.

### **User Needs and Requirements**

The National Bibliographic Agency, in this case, Botswana National Library Service acting as NBA) should determine the purposes of the national bibliography and the possible repurpose of data. This could be achieved if a market survey is conducted. (no survey has been done yet) It would give staff insight into the uses of NABOB and the needs of its subscribers. In this area of budget cuts, it is not sufficient to produce a product, such as NABOB, send it out into the world and hope that someone will find it useful. The government of Botswana, which is the funding body, wants to make sure that their money is spent wisely.

The importance of knowing who is using the national bibliography and for what purpose cannot be overemphasised. The information could be used to justify the investment in the national bibliography, for example, virtual NABOB, and possibly continued commitment. Funding for the national library is directly linked to government who would need accurate and convincing answers.

National bibliographies usually serve different groups of users with different information needs and contexts. Some of the uses are immediate and direct while others are long-term and

indirect. NABOB is largely used by Librarians, that is, the Acquisition librarian, the Cataloguer, the Reference librarian and to a lesser extent those working in the information field.

Acquisitions Librarians use the bibliography for purposes of bibliographic verification to select and order materials, identify publishers and distributors or determine publication status. The currentness of the information is important here. Acquisitions librarians need to be able to obtain sufficient information on an item quickly to be able to order it.

Cataloguers use national bibliographies directly i.e for copy cataloguing or indirectly as support in cataloguing, i.e searching for similar bibliographic records and for authority records (names, corporate bodies).

Collection Development Librarians use bibliographies to select according to their Collection Development Policy, also as an awareness of future publications. To be useful for collection development, the national bibliography has to offer subject access and analysis of different aspects of publications, this applies to Botswana also. NABOB on the other hand, does not use cataloguing-in-publication or CIP records.

I use NABOB for collection development of local materials at University of Botswana library. My personal experience is that most of the materials are outdated, or we already have them in our collection.

Conservation and Preservation librarians need the national bibliography to determine trends in publishing and plan preservation procedures.

Digitization decisions. Librarians can get an overview of materials and make informed decisions on digitisation priorities.

Legal Deposit Management. The data in national bibliographies can be used by Legal Deposit managers to manage the deposit and for use in monitoring publishing as a cultural industry. That is, the records of the national bibliography will reflect the success or failure of national deposit laws.

Publishers, Booksellers and other agents of the publishing market use national bibliographies as a marketing or promotional aid and for profit. In addition Booksellers may perform functions of reference librarians and possibly refer customers to libraries for out- of-print publications.

The general public could use the national bibliography as an awareness tool for new publications. Lastly the government as a funding body, may use the national bibliography for future funding policies.

As pointed out earlier, there are short and long term uses of national bibliographies. In the long term basis, the national bibliography serves as the retrospective bibliography of the national imprint. This has historical and archival importance because it reflects the changing pattern of a country's social, literary and economic growth.

At yet another level, the bibliographic records which constitute the national bibliography are the basis for the achievement of Universal Bibliographic Control. This enables the sharing of national bibliographic records among libraries both within and outside the country. For

example, Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) subscribes to South African National Bibliography (SANB)

If records are to be shared, and data put to multiple purposes like the example above, then standards in the national bibliography become very important. It is the responsibility of BNLS to ensure that the records are as authoritative as possible with regard to authenticity of author's name, the bibliographic history of the work, the dating of its production, etc. In addition, BNLS as the national bibliographic agency should be proactive in updating and maintenance of existing standards and in the development of new bibliographic tools.

### **Standards for Identification**

The National Library acts as the maintenance agency for the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) in Botswana. The system assists in identifying the published product and is essential for resource description. It also enables follow-up since the national library is aware of what is being published and the expected day of delivery.

In Botswana, the system most widely used is Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) DDC 21<sup>st</sup> edition is used for classification.

### **NABOB and Cataloguing Standards**

The recommendations from the ICNBS state that the overall responsibility of coordination and implementation of standards should rest with the national bibliographic agency. (in the case of Botswana, BNLS)

Cataloguing is done according to AACRII. It must be noted however that the web has changed user expectations. They want instant access to information directly through their computer. (full text search) This presents a challenge for those national bibliographic agencies that use traditional cataloguing.

This brings in the aspect of accessibility to national bibliographies. Difficulties related to access have been eliminated in many cases. For instance in some countries like South Africa, SANB is no longer issued in paper form at all, but it is published online. This enables data to be updated regularly and made available to users anywhere in the world, whenever they want it.

Most importantly, the web offers full text to electronic resources. However, this is not the case with NABOB which is still published in print format. The obvious reason is that BNLS is not fully automated.

At this point in time, BNLS is not in a position to talk about repurpose. Repurpose in this context would mean re-use of recordings including downloading or export of batches of records into other databases and/or other computer applications. Perhaps it is time BNLS collaborates with other institutions in the information field to advance in information technology and its applications regarding NABOB.

### **Collaboration**

Presently there is no formal collaboration between BNLS, acting as a national bibliographic agency, University of Botswana Library, Botswana National Archives and publishers. Publishers would play an important role because they are the source of information for the bibliography. BNLS single handedly compiles NABOB.

My recommendation in this regard is a collaborative control of legal deposit material and bibliographic control. The three legal deposit centres i.e. Botswana National Library Services, University of Botswana Library and Botswana National Archives should effectively work together with regards to issues of legal deposit and bibliographic control. The importance of providing complex bibliographical coverage of electronic publications means that it will be imperative to work collaboratively to ensure the best use of staff resources.

Collaboration between the libraries on legal deposit issues could be carried out by a Legal Deposit committee (not existing at the moment)

### **Do we really need bibliographies in the future?**

Personally, I would say, a national bibliography, irrespective of format, is an integral part of a country. It records the publishing activity of a country as such, is a measure of their intellectual output. In Botswana we do have other bibliographies and they are important for supporting teaching and research. For example, we have the Khoe and San Bibliography published in Botswana. This bibliography promotes research on, with and by the indigenous minority of Southern Africa known variously as the Bushmen, Khoesan, San or Basarwa. The answers to who are the users and what are their information needs and requirements determine the purpose and future of the national bibliography.

### **Some Concluding Remarks**

In this paper, I have sought to give an overview of bibliographic control in Botswana and the status of NABOB in the digital age. A lot needs to be done in order for NABOB to be relevant in the digital age. Botswana National Library Services produces the national bibliography single handed. Cooperation between University of Botswana Library, Botswana National Archives and Botswana National Library Services in the production of NABOB may prove very valuable. There is also a need to revise the Legal Deposit law of Botswana. Legal Deposit law dates back as far as 1967 and no revision whatsoever. I can confidently say in Botswana, there has been no improvement whatsoever since the release of the results of the *IFLA Survey on National Bibliographies in Africa (August 2007)*. The final recommendations of the *International Conference on National Bibliographic Services (1998: (1999))* were not implemented. This paints a gloomy picture of bibliographic work in Botswana. It is time to think of a virtual bibliography but faced with all these, it becomes difficult point where to start because Botswana National Library Services (BNLS) has failed to respond to the growing significance of electronic media to produce electronic national bibliographies. There is a need for Botswana to collaborate (both nationally and internationally) with other libraries. They should not just cooperate, but participate. Look at South Africa, despite the apartheid regime in the 1980s, they have made tremendous progress. Perhaps it is time that we learn from them. South African National Bibliography has evolved from printed lists to a printed bibliography and now the virtual SANB. South Africa realized that having national bibliographies that reflect digital information output was one way to ensure their ongoing usefulness and vitality.

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<sup>i</sup> National Library Policy  
Document Version Number 4.0  
Final Version (Unpublished)

<sup>ii</sup> IFLA International Office for UBC. Guidelines for the National Bibliographic Agency and the National Bibliography. Paris: UNESCO, 1979