Bibliographical Activity

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Bibliography has been most simply defined as a list of works arranged in some systematic manner. While most bibliographies fit comfortably enough within such a description, almost none are this and nothing more. It is not until one attempts to determine the functions they serve that he realizes the complexities of form in which they may be issued. Essentially, it is the function of a bibliography to provide the research worker with a list of existing works from which he may select certain ones for examination. When it has been compiled by another scholar working in the same or a related field it is a primary device by which research people share with one another the results of their labors.

Any compilation of bibliographic entries must so describe its items that each may be identified without question; it also must regard the ways readers approach the works listed. Too, it may, through the addition of related information, promote other ends. There may be added such data as the size of the piece; the presence of illustrations, maps, and other pictorial matter and peculiarities of physical form; the relationship to other works; the location of copies; the sales price if secured from the publisher; and the situation of the publisher. When annotated, bibliographies may effectively permit the researcher to discard items in which he would have no interest.

The bibliographies issued by federal agency libraries actually do serve more than one purpose. In some cases they are simple lists of new works in certain fields added to the library. In some they are selected materials present in the holdings. In other instances they may be materials known to exist, yet not known to be available in any particular library. On the whole, the bibliographies with which we are principally concerned here are those which identify and locate specific works accessible for consultation in federal or other libraries.

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or available for purchase through commercial sources or from the government; and those which more or less comprehensively cover large areas of subject matter, listing items issued within a stated period of time, in a specified part of the world, or in a particular physical form.

World War II clearly pointed up the fact that the country was deficient in desperately needed data about peoples and parts of the world with which there were new and urgent relationships. It also made clear that the sources of information about the publications of these countries were inadequate. The military necessity for facts regarding topography, languages, peoples, climates, and other physical characteristics of lands across the sea was so pressing that extraordinary steps were called for to bring together the needed data. The result was the accumulation in many government agencies of a completely new body of literature, which required constant supplementation to keep it current and up to date. Government libraries joined in very special efforts to repair gaps in their collections and to secure, from parts of the world theretofore neglected, the materials essential to assist the agencies directly involved in prosecuting the war.

With the end of hostilities the urgency for collecting materials from all parts of the world still existed, but for a new set of reasons. The re-establishment of normal conditions of living became the first order of the day in Europe, while war returned to Asia. A new scientific age had arrived, characterized by greatly expanded facilities for research and by a resultant multiplication of important scientific discoveries.

The United Nations began its turbulent existence in temporary quarters, started the publication of a complicated and massive set of documents, and settled gradually into the routines of a functioning organization. Concurrently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization began functioning in its substantial and diverse program. International meetings of experts in the fields of science, motion pictures, bibliography, copyright, and the arts discovered ways of working together towards mutually desirable ends, though these were colored and complicated in every conceivable way by national interests. The specter of atomic warfare remained to give impetus and urgency to all movements in the direction of international good will and peace.

Never before has there been so great necessity for the easy avail-
ability and rapid communication of new discoveries, new facts, and prevailing ideas within and between the nations of the world. Never before have bibliographers had to deal with a mass of such proportions. It has become increasingly evident that libraries cannot exclude from their purview many of the nonbook materials now beginning to hold important segments of the total body of knowledge available. In the struggle for world leadership it has become of the utmost importance for the nation to have efficient means for the acquisition, evaluation, mastery, and dissemination of information. The need for bibliographic control of subject data of all kinds has called for completeness, specificity and comprehensiveness, and rapidity of distribution.

For the analysis required in this survey it has seemed desirable to isolate, as far as might reasonably be done, those movements which point towards the shape of bibliographic achievements to come. Certain bibliographies produced by government libraries will be cited as examples, but no attempt is made to evaluate individual projects or to describe their characteristics. Mention of a particular bibliography will appear when it illustrates, through one of its complex of features, the trend under consideration.

It is undoubtedly true that the roots of many current movements in the work of federal libraries lie in the changing role of government in the social and economic life of the country. As has been indicated, the federal libraries have been faced with a growing need for prompt, efficient service, often in fields which extend beyond the normal limits of their own activity. There has resulted a tendency towards ever-closer coordination of library activities within agencies, and more effective cooperation among the libraries of various agencies.

This has been true not only with respect to interlibrary loan, but has been perhaps the most significant single factor in the production of bibliographies. The Library of Congress occupies a dominant position in this development, not merely because of the size of its collections or because it "pours out an endless stream of bibliographies" and other materials, but also because it is aware of the necessity for cooperative action. In introducing a valuable report on its recent bibliographic work the Annual Report for 1952 reviews the situation:

For almost a century librarians have sought ways to take advantage of each other's work and collections. They have had successful experience with cooperative indexing projects, cooperative cataloging, inter
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library loans, union lists, and union catalogs. . . . At no time, however, has there been such a multiplicity and variety of cooperative projects undertaken by libraries as during the period since World War II.

Of late this cooperative effort has been more and more imperative. The resources of even the largest libraries have been strained almost to the breaking point by attempts to acquire ever-increasing masses of research material and to meet the needs of those who use such material with no corresponding increase in staff or funds. Cooperation—pooling resources—was the only answer. Thus there have been [among many others] projects to acquire books and other library materials more effectively and more efficiently; . . . to describe library resources and list holdings; to catalog books and special materials, such as motion pictures and phonograph records; . . . to prepare bibliographies, indexes, and abstracts; and to develop cataloging rules that will make cooperative cataloging possible and catalog cards interchangeable.

Certainly one of the most interesting developments of this nature has been the arrangement under which a government agency having need for a specific bibliographic service, but neither the physical plant nor trained personnel to produce it, contracts with another agency equipped to provide the service, through transfer of funds. As this relationship has evolved, it has expanded to include not only federal libraries, but also libraries—and other research installations such as laboratories—in universities and within industries. Such cooperative activity is a direct outcome of needs which arose in World War II and which have continued to spring from defense requirements.

There are many other instances in which interlibrary cooperation has been productive in the field of bibliography. No better example could be found, perhaps, than the practice among research libraries of supplying cards for their holdings to the Union Catalog, and of furnishing cataloging copy for Library of Congress printed cards. The collaborative production of the Author Catalog of the Armed Forces Medical Library (previously the Army Medical Library), as a supplement to the Library of Congress Catalog, also shows the effectiveness of such action.

The story behind the medical Author Catalog includes, in fact, many other instances of cooperative effort. Other aspects of the bibliographic undertakings which preceded it are pertinent, however, and in other ways. The steps taken to provide bibliographic control of medical literature illustrate reasonably well the changing role of government libraries in the production of bibliographies.
The first series of the Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General’s Office appeared in 1880, in sixteen volumes. The object of its founder, John Shaw Billings, was to provide the medical fraternity with a permanently useful catalog, to be kept up to date by supplements, of the holdings of the largest medical library in the world, and, in addition, to supply a bibliography of the more important articles in the medical journals which formed a significant part of the collection. It evidently seemed reasonable, particularly since he had chosen to arrange the entries alphabetically under subject, and to subdivide systematically and alphabetically by specific subjects, to include both periodical articles and monographs in the same list. Probably, however, the main reason for the eventual failure of the Index-Catalogue was the combining of materials largely of immediate interest with those of less timely but more permanent concern, in a publication scheme suited chiefly to long-continuing uses. It was a compromise between "current" and "retrospective" bibliography in the sense in which these terms are used in this paper.

Another compromise between basically different concepts was related to the completeness of coverage. Comprehensiveness was the objective in listing monographs, though even this end was frustrated by the time involved in compilation and printing. Selectivity was the aim in listing periodical articles; the important journals were well represented by index entries, whereas those of less importance received little consideration. Comprehensiveness and selectiveness are opposing purposes, seldom successfully combined in the same work.

While Billings ingeniously provided a systematic subject approach that was also alphabetic in arrangement, it very probably contributed substantially to the difficulties of compilation, and consequently to the cost of publication. In spite of its excessive cost and the delays it caused, it continued through three series and part of the fourth before a decision was reached, in 1950, to bring the entire enterprise to an end.

The periodical-index aspect of the Index-Catalogue was not intended, even at the outset, to satisfy the need for current listings of new writings on medicine. This was the function of the Index Medicus, a Monthly Classified Record of the Current Medical Literature of the World, which first appeared in 1879. Although conceived, planned, and compiled by Billings and his editor, Robert Fletcher, it was published commercially until 1903. From then until its merger with
the American Medical Association’s Quarterly Cumulative Index in 1927 it was supported partly by Carnegie funds.

Under a new title, Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus, the American Medical Association carried on the current service from 1927 until 1931 with the assistance of the Army Medical Library, and thereafter by itself. However, the Library resumed publishing, in 1941, a current service, privately sponsored, in an effort to compensate for certain weaknesses in the QCIM. Difficulties mounted during the war years until it became evident that extraordinary measures were required.

In 1948 a Committee of Consultants for the Study of the Indexes to Medical Literature Published by the Army Medical Library was formed under the chairmanship of Lewis H. Weed. Chauncey D. Leake succeeded as chairman the following year, when illness required Weed to withdraw. Composed of experts in the literature of medicine and government librarians having experience in the production of bibliographies, the Committee recommended the discontinuance of the Index-Catalogue and the formulation of a new publication plan. The general features of this were announced to the medical profession in 1950.3

The plan as announced by Major (now Lt. Colonel) Frank B. Rogers, Director of the Army Medical Library, recognized the basic bibliographic and service differences between books and periodical articles. First, the current index was to be limited to selected articles from the medical journals of the world and a few “unpublished” research reports, and was to be issued monthly under the title Current List of Medical Literature. The monthly numbers contain, in the first place, a listing of tables of contents of the various journals indexed, arranged alphabetically by title of journal; and second, a subject and author index. A cumulated author and subject index is issued annually.

The other important segment of the publication program of the Armed Forces Medical Library was concerned with monographs. A current service was provided by rendering available to subscribers catalog cards for titles not already represented by Library of Congress cards. Arrangements were made for distribution by the Card Division of the Library of Congress. Further, the plan involved an annual compilation of the titles in question as a supplement to the Library of Congress Catalog. This catalog, the Author Catalog of the Armed Forces Medical Library, now exists in four annual volumes, for the years 1949 to 1952. The more recent volumes contain a subject index.

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Thus the Armed Forces Medical Library now supplies comprehensive bibliographic coverage for monographic works in the general field of medicine currently by means of cards, and retrospectively through the Author Catalog. It also furnishes a selective but comprehensive coverage of articles in medical journals, and for some unpublished research reports, currently through the Current List of Medical Literature and retrospectively through the cumulations of that work.

It is not possible to review here many case histories of bibliographical publications, even though it would be helpful in emphasizing present-day problems. Other substantial enterprises having their origin in the nineteenth century include the Bibliography of North American Geology and its successors, begun in 1886 by the Geological Survey; the Catalog of Copyright Entries, originally issued by the Treasury Department, which dates from 1891; and the Monthly Catalog and Catalog of the Public Documents, issued by the Superintendent of Documents, which began publication, respectively, in 1895 and 1896.

Bibliographic undertakings of substantial size were not especially numerous during the early years of the twentieth century, but some were remarkably virile. The Library of Congress began its Monthly Checklist of State Publications in 1910, and its List of American Doctoral Dissertations in 1912. The latter gave way in the thirties to an Association-sponsored publication which is now itself apparently in process of transformation.

The new field of aeronautics received sustained attention from government libraries beginning as early as 1910. The first of three bibliographies in the field of agriculture began publication in 1925 and continued until 1942, when the three were incorporated into the Bibliography of Agriculture. This was issued by the Department of Agriculture Library, on a plan which furnished much guidance to the Army Medical Library in the study leading to the reorganization of its bibliographic program.

While all of these were serial publications, providing mainly a current comprehensive service limited to large subject areas or certain form groups, other bibliographies were essentially retrospective in content and substantial enough in scope to warrant mention. Dramatic Compositions . . . 1870 to 1916 was issued by the Copyright Office in 1918; The Tariff by the Tariff Commission in 1934; Guide to Manuscripts Relating to American History in British Depositories by the Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, in 1946; Catalog of
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*United States Census Publications, 1790-1945* by the Census Library Project, Library of Congress, 1950; and *Motion Pictures, 1912-1939* by the Copyright Office in 1951.

Responsible officials of the government are inevitably cautious about undertaking projects without a clear mandate to do so. The preparation of bibliographies, particularly those on a continuing basis, may be conducted with all other conditions favorable—evidence of need, access to materials, a qualified staff, effective techniques, adequate printing funds, an efficient distribution system—and yet be unsound if authorization is not clearly stated and incorporated in federal law.

Two illustrations will serve to show how widely such legislation can vary between the general and the specific. The existing copyright law requires that the Register of Copyrights "shall fully index all copyright registrations . . . and shall print at periodic intervals a catalog of the titles of articles deposited and registered for copyright, together with suitable indexes. . . ." This section has not changed since 1909, when the last complete revision was passed. Preceding the congressional action which produced it, however, were years of drafting, after consultation with representatives of various interests concerned. In the original version prepared by Thorvald Solberg (then Register of Copyrights) not later than 1906, the form and substance of the needed cataloging and indexing operations as he saw them were delineated in considerable detail. The language was substantially changed and abbreviated in the Act as passed, for reasons which can only be conjectured. In effect, however, it provided the legislative authority for the continuation of the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, which had been begun in 1891, as the result of special legislation, to prevent the importation of books infringing works of United States authors.

A recent legislative enactment handles a similar situation in quite a different manner. This law provides the authority for the publication activities of the Office of Technical Services in the Department of Commerce, and encompasses the following: (1) the purpose of the legislation (i.e., "to make the results of technological research and development more readily available to industry and business, and to the general public . . ."); (2) the establishment of a "clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of scientific, technical, and engineering information"; (3) the specification of the functions to be performed and the kinds of publication forms which might be em-

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ployed (i.e., "abstracts, digests, translations, bibliographies, indexes, and microfilm and other reproductions . . . "); (4) the delineation of other rules, limitations, and standards necessary to make the program effective. This rather elaborate legislation at least has the merit of providing the administrator with a clear statement of purpose and considerable freedom in selecting the devices required for the job.

While many other bibliographic enterprises are authorized by specific legislation of this nature, particularly those that have a continuing function, most single works achieve publication, if at all, only as by-products of other activities. The majority of brief, highly selective bibliographies are prepared by government librarians in response to some specific demand made upon them by a staff member or unit of the sponsoring agency in connection with its work. With the specific demand satisfied, bibliographies then either are discarded, filed away for future reference, or duplicated in few or many copies, depending upon the value of the lists and the known or presumed interest in them. For many years a list of bibliographies produced in federal libraries was published as a regular department of D.C. Libraries; though this department has been given up, the bibliographies are currently reported to the Bibliographical Index.

It is always a matter of concern to the federal library whether a particular bibliographic activity can properly be extended to general public use, particularly where such an extension involves a substantially larger amount of money than would otherwise be necessary. As Rogers and Adams point out, Billings met this question in the 1870's, and sought and obtained public funds for the Index-Catalog; he did not attempt, however, to secure an appropriation for the current service, Index Medicus, but turned instead to the commercial bibliographic publisher of the time, Frederick Leyboldt. As a result, the status of the indexing of the current periodical medical literature remained uncertain. In 1951, the problem was squarely faced by the Committee of Consultants, and its final summary report recorded one of its policy recommendations, as follows:

The Committee formally expressed its opinion that the cost of a medical indexing service is properly a Federal responsibility. Within the past hundred years there has been in this country and throughout the world increasing recognition of governmental responsibility in the health field; medical services and related activities are fundamental to the national welfare. Over the years the Army Medical Library has
amassed the most important collection of medical literature in the world; the quantity is too great for any private organization to handle, and it is incumbent upon the Government to provide those indexing services which will make useful the great collection it has assembled.4

While comprehensive bibliography presents the most challenging of problems, selective bibliography constitutes a major activity of federal libraries. The preparation of selective lists is almost always undertaken in response to specific demand. Many are duplicated in anticipation of future requests, or are made available generally when general public interest can be gauged. At the same time numerous others, requiring quite as much labor and knowledge, are made solely in response to the immediate need, and are never published. Typical of the hundreds of such bibliographies produced in one library in a year, and delivered to the consumers on typed sheets or simply as a file or as separate entries on cards, are the following: "American views on France, 1870-1951; a list of current periodicals of the United States, selected for the National Library of Pakistan at Karachi; a reading list for State Department employees going to Japan; economic and social conditions of Asiatic Russia; and the Indochina-Thailand border dispute." 8

Examples of those which reach publication may be found in the index of any issue of the *Monthly Catalog* of the Superintendent of Documents. The following subjects are typical: agricultural publications; angling and fishing equipment; atomic power; automotive reports; modern Chinese law; German and Japanese technology; glassmaking and the optical industry; health and safety in mineral industries; heating problems; home-building and maintenance; housing; jet propulsion; polymers; psychology; rectifiers, selenium; research in foods; the Tennessee Valley Authority; gas turbines; personnel administration in the TVA.9

So much of such publication is a by-product of normal service demands upon federal agency libraries that its appropriateness can hardly be questioned, and there is no reason to expect any immediate diminution of it. Nevertheless, the situation tends to be chaotic, and to produce lists varying greatly in selectivity and value.

The compilation of selective bibliographies has tended to be confined within the rather narrow limits of works currently available in print, of items in a particular agency library, or of works within a broad or, more often quite specific, topical field. The subject approach to materials in book form, through classification or subject headings or
both, remains, as it doubtless always will, the primary means of divid-
ing into manageable segments the whole realm of knowledge.

Materials in the shape of books, however, no longer hold exclusive
claim to the bibliographer’s attention. True, such products of printing
techniques as maps, prints, books for the blind, and even photographs,
long have been acknowledged passively, albeit grudgingly, to have a
marginal place in the librarian’s sphere, although as a rule not a suffi-
ciently important one to receive bibliographic attention for their own
sake or in their own terms. Even microfilm has found a place, for
while it could be used only with the aid of a machine, it could be
described bibliographically in spite of its physical form.

The motion picture, however, was definitely an interloper. A machine
was required in order to use it, and someone had to learn how to
operate the machine. It could be used only under certain lighting
conditions. It presented completely new and quite horrific storage
problems. It virtually defied description in the familiar bibliographic
terms. It seemed to have its own perverse way of failing to conform
to familiar subject concepts. The spectacular growth of government
film collections during and after the war finally forced the issue—some
means of bibliographic control had to be found.

Cooperative action provided the answer. As a result of improve-
ments made after 1945 in the cataloging of motion pictures in the
Copyright Office (which had been publishing separate listings of such
pictures in its Catalog of Copyright Entries since 1912), and of the
impetus provided by the then-existent Motion Picture Division of the
Library of Congress, the Library was approached by the Office of
Education for cataloging assistance when assigned responsibility for
the recording and distribution of all government-produced film avail-
able for public use. Working together, representatives of these
and other agencies formulated rules for the cataloging of motion pic-
tures. The results were accepted as standard by the American Library
Association, and now are the basis of the printed cards distributed by
the Card Division of the Library of Congress.10

Direct bibliographic outcomes of this activity have included, in
addition to the semiannual motion picture catalog of the Copyright
Office, the reorganization of the Library of Congress Author Catalog
into a new format. After careful consideration of the problems of
production and the merits of possible publication plans, the decision
was to provide separate listings for the author alphabet for books,
films, maps, and music and phonorecords, but to continue to provide a
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subject catalog for books. Although printed cards had been made for maps and music for some time, there had not previously been motivation for their removal from the Author Catalog. The completion of a preliminary set of rules for phonorecords, and the production of printed cards for them, rendered the separate listing of music and recordings desirable beginning in 1953.

Explorations into this problem have refocused attention upon the other not-quite-book materials, such as music, prints and photographs, and manuscripts. It is apparent, of course, that the task of describing many of these works in a simple entry, coordinate with those used for books, is new to librarians. Much more important bibliographically, however, is the fact that the author-title relationship so characteristic of books is not by any means so clear or so pertinent in some other materials.

On the whole, it seems logical to assume that the predominant use of nonbook materials will proceed initially from an interest in or concern with the physical form, rather than otherwise. The inquiry will be “I want a motion picture on . . .” or “I want a map of . . .” The most likely secondary approach would seem to be that of subject, assuming that users ultimately will be prepared to employ materials freely in more than one form. Author and title approaches will have scant favor, especially with pictorial matter, for a long time to come.

Among the book-like materials there is another intruder. The bibliographical services which have been set up since the war to provide scientists and technicians with reports on current happenings in their special fields have been built around “research and development” reports. These are written, they have authors and titles, and they are eminently capable of subject analysis. Very often, however, they are not publications within the usual meaning of the term, even though many are produced in quantities by some duplicating process. Most are “unpublished” in that they are not freely distributed, being available only to a limited or restricted group; nor have they undergone the editorial scrutiny and acceptance which is ordinarily a prerequisite to scientific “publication.” Their essential purpose is to make known, within the confraternity of scientists and technicians working predominantly on contractual projects, the results and techniques of experiments and tests, in order that research once performed need not be duplicated. As concerns bibliographical control these reports are a special form of material.

It is very difficult indeed for a nonscientist to assess and evaluate
the phenomenal development of research reports, and of the elaborate bibliographic machinery for their dissemination which has been developed. The illustration cited earlier regarding the legislative authorization of the bibliographic functions of the Office of Technical Services constitutes also a demonstration of the important place the operation occupies in the federal scene. It is a phenomenon, at all events, of the scientific revolution ushered in with the atomic bomb.

Dating from 1945, reports of experiments conducted in dozens of research centers have streamed forth, first for distribution to carefully circumscribed lists of agencies under security classification, and later to the general public, after restriction no longer was needed. With various agencies having responsibility for different parts of the research program the problem of securing effective diffusion early became critical. Bibliographic control of these materials has been recognized as an appropriate function of bibliographic centers; hence the reports issued by many of the research agencies have been handled for some time by the Library of Congress. During fiscal 1952 such agencies transferred more than $2,135,000 to the Library for the conduct of research studies and the dissemination of reports, and for bibliographical controls.11

At the present time the principal bibliographies of research reports which are available for public distribution are the monthly Bibliography of Technical Reports, issued by the Office of Technical Services, and the Monthly Catalog of the Superintendent of Documents. Reports which emanate from research installations of the military services, and which are restricted in their distribution, are listed in the Title Announcement Bulletin, prepared at the Library of Congress but distributed within a group of authorized users by the Central Documents Office of the Armed Services Technical Information Agency at Dayton, Ohio. Nuclear Science Abstracts, issued by the Atomic Energy Commission, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, also is a restricted service, as in considerable measure is that furnished by the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics. A number of other agencies still retain control of the distribution of their own reports.12

Here again the peculiarities in the form, purpose, and use of the materials tend to place them in a special category. Within this limitation, the bibliographical services rendered are current and comprehensive; subject content is controlled, of course, by the specific assignments undertaken.

In view of the rapidly expanding services being offered in libraries
through new media of communication, including works other than those printed from type, it would appear that the novel materials require recognition of physical form as a basic bibliographic subdivision, at least for the immediate future. They cannot be shelved like books, described like books, or used like books; before films and recordings will reveal their contents they must be decoded by machines. Knowledge of its physical nature is usually prerequisite to a search for a specific work. Approach by subject, on the other hand, does not necessarily imply restriction of interest to any particular physical form, and consequently argues for the extension of existing subject controls to provide coverage of all library materials without regard to form.

As was noted in the case of the Armed Forces Medical Library, a characteristic of most government bibliographies is that they locate copies—they usually are, in fact, lists of works available in a given library. Recognition of the appropriateness of this function, and of its value to the research worker, has helped considerably to provide a sound rationale for bibliographic production.

In the reorganization of the *Library of Congress Catalog* which became effective at the beginning of the present year the concept of the *Catalog* as a list of national library holdings was considered basic. For the Library of Congress the decision clarified considerably the role of the *Catalog* within the fabric of its bibliographical activity. Recognition of the function at once made plain that the *Catalog* should become one of the most important aids to national and international scholarship; that it might, indeed, aspire to the status of a national union catalog in book form. By providing for the separate publication of parts devoted to maps, motion pictures, and music it acknowledged the need for access by form of material. By providing a topical approach to all resources through the use of uniform headings it acknowledged the universality of subject interest regardless of physical form.

The production of bibliographies has always been among the most costly kinds of publication. Chiefly for this reason the major government bibliographies are now produced by techniques which take full advantage of economical production methods. The widespread development of the nearprint processes has provided publishers of research materials with inexpensive substitutes for letterpress printing. Consequently, they have been widely employed in the government.

Such printing methods do entail limitations. From the bibliographer's
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point of view a major one is imposed by the typewriter keyboard. Lack of typographic variety often poses a problem, although it has encouraged simplification of bibliographic entries. While some progress has been made in this direction, formidable obstacles remain.

It has been found practical, however, to extend economical techniques to cards as well as book pages. More significantly still, it has been found possible to use the cards themselves as typographic units in the compilation of bibliographies, rather than type. A substantial part of all government production of bibliographies is accomplished in this manner today.

In addition, many government agencies have explored the application of new machine techniques to the issue of bibliographies. One currently published compilation, for example—Serial Titles Newly Received—is produced by means of an electric typewriter actuated by IBM punched cards. The use of such techniques, even though in a limited way, has received a great deal of attention in the library press and holds promise for the future. It must be granted, however, that the catalog card and the book-form bibliography continue to be the favored forms of bibliographic publication.

The development of nearprint printing processes has made it possible for thousands of items to be issued by the government which in earlier days might never have been published. One result has been to increase to a substantial degree the number distributed directly by the agencies themselves rather than by the Superintendent of Documents. From the librarian's point of view this certainly has not been entirely desirable, since it complicates very greatly the problem of ordering and securing the documents desired in a particular institution. All agencies, as well as the Superintendent of Documents, continue to struggle with this problem, and all realize its unfortunate features; nevertheless, it has seemed in most instances that the best interests of the public would be served by special arrangements for certain publications. In any event, the common objective both of the Superintendent and of the issuing agencies is to render the results of their work available as widely as possible.

The never-ending struggle to make services widely accessible, at the lowest possible cost, has recently had beneficial results at least in promoting the use of rapid communication systems. Active experimentation on the part of the government itself, and in cooperation with manufacturers of communications equipment, continues to go forward at a steady pace. Certain agencies closely related in function
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but situated many miles apart have successfully and efficiently em-
ployed such different devices as teletype and the transmission of
facsimiles by wire.

The role of the federal library community in national and inter-
national bibliographic production has been the topic of recurring in-
vestigation. A brief review of some of the important developments
of recent years will illustrate the forward-looking view of librarians,
both within and outside government service.

In his report to the Advisory Committee on Education in 1937,
Carleton B. Joeckel, chairman of the Special Committee on Federal
Relations of the American Library Association, recommended the
establishment of a Federal Library Council “to coordinate the policies
and procedures of the libraries of the Federal Government”; the ex-
pansion of cataloging and classification services with respect to cover-
age, speed, and simplification; and the organization of a National
Library Information Center at the Library of Congress to become a
“central headquarters for bibliographic information.”

A proposed indexing and abstracting service was outlined in 1945
by Barbara Cowles, chairman of the Joint Committee on Indexing
and Abstracting, to be located at the Library of Congress and financed
by subsidy from learned societies, the government, and grants-in-aid.
The plan of the Committee provided for the indexing on a current
basis of books, general periodicals, society publications, and docu-
ments; and for cumulations, as well as for abstracting, in each of
fifteen subject disciplines.

In November of the following year the Conference on International
Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchanges, held at Princeton Uni-
versity, invited the Library of Congress to formulate and present to
the library associations of the country, for study and review, plans
for the production of a complete current national bibliography of the
United States, including proposals not only for the coordination of
existing government and private efforts in this field but also for the
inclusion of materials not otherwise under bibliographic control. In
June 1947, Luther H. Evans, Librarian of Congress, transmitted to the
Executive Secretary of the A.L.A. a review of some of the problems
involved in achieving this goal, prepared by Paul Vanderbilt of the
Library staff. This paper further indicates the remarkable degree to
which the Library's Cumulative Catalog (now the Library of Congress
Catalog) is suitable for forming the nucleus of such a bibliography.

In preparation for a conference on the state of bibliographic services
throughout the world, called by Unesco and held in Paris in 1950, the Library of Congress undertook to prepare a working paper. This effort resulted in the publication in 1950 of Bibliographical Services, Their Present State and Possibilities of Improvement. In response to Unesco's request, official contribution of the United States to the work of the meeting was contained in The United States Report on National and International Bibliographic Problems, prepared by Jesse H. Shera, chairman of the American Library Association Bibliography Committee.

These and other reports, and the discussions which ensued, led directly to the Conference on Bibliographic Organization, conducted by the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago in July 1950. In their entirety, the papers presented at this conference are most impressive.

While Unesco's Libraries Division was gathering data on bibliographic organization, its Copyright Division was preparing for the meeting held in Geneva in August 1952 to consider the drafting of a Universal Convention which would be acceptable to copyright interests generally. At this writing one nation has ratified the Convention, and work is in progress in the United States preparatory to the presentation to Congress of legislation required to secure U.S. adherence to the Convention. Ratification by the various nations should strengthen present systems of copyright or legal deposit, and encourage the establishment of such systems where they do not exist.

While Unesco has not yet published a final report on its findings with respect to the bibliographic machinery available in the several countries, announcement has been made that a manual, based upon them, has been prepared by Knut Larsen and will be issued in 1953, entitled National Bibliographic Services, Their Creation and Operation. It is possible to report that, based upon partial returns from the survey, at least twenty-four of forty nations responding possess laws requiring the deposit of literary and artistic works with one or more governmental agencies, usually a national library. In at least fifteen cases legal or copyright deposit copies now form the basis for existing national bibliographies.

This rapid survey respecting improvements in the bibliographic services of the nation—improvements which would, of course, contribute vastly to the international scene—at least indicates the earnest interest in the problems involved on the part of American librarians, whether in government service or not, and of their desire to achieve
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more effective controls. Much of the structure needed already exists, chiefly in the bibliographic publications of government libraries. But it is loosely assembled, and lacks a unified plan. It is a structure produced by a group of architects, each with virtually complete control over a portion of the whole and each with his own set of blueprints. The occupants of the building have so far failed to demand coordination and direction.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs. The urgencies of World War II were satisfied by the creation of new services for the control and dissemination of scientific and technical information. These continue to undergo change as technical advances are made in recording and reporting systems. The professional experts still argue the merits of opposing theories of bibliographic organization—comprehensive versus selective coverage, alphabetic versus classified arrangement, card-form versus book-form publication, and other details of technique. Because of successive airings of divergent points of view—or perhaps in spite of them—progress has been made toward greater definition of the purposes served by bibliographies of the past and of the needs to be met in the future. With the growing importance of non-book items has come consciousness of the particular problems they present, and of the necessity to provide for them appropriately in library collections. Increased diversity of materials has been accompanied by an increase in their volume sufficiently substantial to require the exploitation of new techniques, as well as devices for lowering the production costs of bibliographies and indexes. And there has been a growing recognition of the values—and economies—of joint effort in bibliographic production, which may well determine the future of the nation's bibliographic progress.

References


