MAJOR PROBLEMS OF
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT
PUBLICATIONS

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This article discusses the serious problems involving bibliographical
control of government publications in both developed and underdeveloped
countries. The researcher analyzes some of the major bibliographical tools
and reviews the most important related articles. The study shows the
inadequacy of the bibliographical control of government publications and calls
for the revision of the objectives, policies and techniques of government
information.

The beginning of government publications starts at the dawn of recorded
history. The civilizations of the ancient Near East, the Indus Valley, and China, to
mention just a few, were very much concerned with the keeping of written records,
primarily for administrative and tax purposes. For example, clay tablets inscribed
with cuneiform writing and containing bits of information on economics and
administration are known from Sumerian civilization as early as 300 B.C. ¹ Credit for
the development of actual printed documents belongs however to Chinese civilization.
The only extant copy of the first known printed government document was authored
by Chen Kuel (1128-1203). This document set forth government policies and regulations
during the Sung dynasty.² However, as James B. Childs points out, it was really
the invention of printing from movable type in the mid 1400’s that really determines
the beginning of government publications.³

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Throughout the period from the invention of printing until the nineteenth century, early government publications were concerned primarily with internal administrative functions of state bureaucracies, with information necessary to protect themselves from foreign invasions, or with conducting international commerce. These publications were found mainly in the administrative libraries of capital cities and were used only by the officials of the government. It was not until the beginnings of government involvement with centralized planning in the 1900's that government publications began to contain information on the educational, industrial, and research efforts of the nation. In the United States the process of the inclusion of more information has resulted in the creation of the largest publisher in the world.

Thus the importance of government publications becomes most evident when we look at modern governments. They are no longer only concerned with the state, or with the maintenance of law, but provide countless services and sponsor valuable research. The results and findings of these are to be found in their publications. As stated by Laurence F. Schmeckbier, government publications "are not mere dry statistical records but touch all facets of human life".4

An examination of today's government publications, particularly those of developed countries such as the U.S., reveals that they contain all types of subjects and are of great importance for general public information and for scientific knowledge. As Anne Morris Boyd and Rae E. Rips point out "They reveal and explain the phenomenal scientific and technological developments of modern times; they open up great treasures wherein man has attempted to give expression to his artistic impulses. They contain the history of civilization itself in all its aspects".5

At the same time that governments are involved in planning at the national level, they have also expanded their activities to include regional and local planning. As a result of this concern with regional, state, and local levels, new agencies and regulatory bodies have been created. These agencies not only have produced their own reports but have also sponsored a great deal of research into various social problems. Out of this expansion of government activities has come a tremendous increase in the number of government publications.

The implication of this expansion in government publications for libraries should be obvious. Boyd states "It is not too strong statement to say that no modern library can give adequate reference service without access to the publications of the United States Government".6
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But even though government publications are of tremendous importance to libraries, it has been stated that government publications "have long been been the terror of librarians and the despair of almost everyone who has attempted to make use of them".\(^7\) This situation has only worsened with the development of the exchange of government documents between governments themselves and with international agencies. In addition to all of the problems associated with the publications of one's own government, there are serious problems of bibliographic control and language as a result.

The major problem with the study of government publications is how to define them. As Childs points out, there is no universally accepted definition of government publications.\(^8\) A definition that is accepted in one country does not necessarily apply to any other because of differences in political and administrative systems and activities. Distinctions between what constitutes a government agency and what is a quasi-governmental or official agency also pose problems for bibliographic control. Even the documents themselves contribute to the problem in that they come in all shapes and sizes, from leaflets to multi-volume reports.

This problem becomes clearer if we examine the definition of government publications in various countries.

In the United States, a government publication is defined as a publication (1) bearing the imprint of the Government Printing Office or printed at the Government Printing Office for the use of a government agency; (2) or a publication bearing the name, imprint or seal of a government agency and recognized and used by such agency in its operations or distributed officially in the course of its operations or distributed officially in the course of government business...(3) a publication which is issued by a commercial establishment, organization, journal, or individual and of which an edition or reprint is obtained by a government unit provided the reprint or official edition bears the printed name, imprint, or seal of the agency concerned; it shall not include reprints which are purchased by the government.\(^9\)

In the United Kingdom, government publications are divided into two groups "parliamentary" and "nonparliamentary". James G. Olle' states that government publications mean "those which are published by H.M.S.O."\(^10\)

In Australia, the term "government publications" has been defined "as publications issued by or on behalf of the colonial (after 1901 - State) government and its instrumentalities".\(^11\) It is surprising that certain categories such as plans, maps,
films, and black forms were excluded.

In India, government publications are defined as follows:

(1) 'All those publications whose thought contents is the result of the efforts of government agencies, whether physically produced by a government agency or not,

(2) any publication physically produced by a government agency, which means approved by the government authority and issued with its imprint.'"12

In addition to the problem of a lack of a definition of government publications, there is the problem of the extreme decentralization of the production and distribution of the documents. The expansion of government agencies and administrative staffs and the development and use of modern printing techniques such as multigraphing, offset printing and xerography by these agencies has resulted in a decentralization of printing and distribution. This has greatly affected bibliographic control in that it is now much harder to keep track of what each agency is printing and how it is being distributed.

Even though government publications have increased in both number and quality in many countries of the world, there are only a few countries that maintain special bibliographies of official publications. According to the UNESCO bibliographic study, bibliographical services throughout the world, 1965 — 1969, out of 104 countries only 27 maintain special bibliographies for such publications.13 Moreover, even in those countries which have special bibliographies, not all of government publications produced by that country are listed. In some cases, like the Arab World, this is the result of a lack of a depository law. In others, such as the U.S., this is due to the fact that some government agencies circumvent their depository laws by classifying publications for official use only so that they only circulate within the agency.

Further problems with the bibliographic control of government documents have been outlined by Childs. In the first place government agencies have undergone numerous name changes. For example, the United States government organization manual 1964 - 1965, listed some 550 changes over a thirty year period. Some of these will undoubtedly affect entries in the Monthly Catalog. In the second place, there are changes in the publications; some are discontinued, new ones are started, or old ones have their titles changed. Finally, there is a need to assign authorship of individual reports to the appropriate committee chairman or topic under consideration.14

These problems have greatly affected bibliographic control on both international and national levels. Internationally, a careful examination of bibliographical
tools of government publications reveals many deficiencies. For example Winifred Gregory's List of Serial Publications of Foreign Governments 1815-1931 is as the title suggest, limited only to serials. Moreover, it is hopelessly out of date. Similarly Child's Government documents in the United States and Elsewhere is not only out of date, but also is lacking in its coverage of the Arab countries; Iraq, Kuwait, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia are not included. Everett Brown's Manual of Government Publications: United States and Foreign is also out of date and is limited to coverage of international affairs. But even so its coverage is not thorough. the Middle East, for example, rates only one paragraph in this source and this paragraph refers the reader to the Middle East Journal for further publications. A Study of Current Bibliographies of National Official Publications is inaccurate. For example the study states that there is no official newspaper of the government of Saudi Arabia but that a semi-official newspaper is being published in Jeddah. In fact, the publication that they referring to, Umm-al-Qura, is the official gazette of the country and is published in Mecca, not Jeddah. Finally, although Child's article entitled Government Publications studied bibliographic control in the United States and Western Europe adequately, its coverage of the Middle East was sketchy. For instance, he stated that the Monthly Accession List: Middle East, "includes official publications of the U.A.R., and also, to the extent available, those of Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and of the Leagues of Arab States". However, an examination of the volumes 1963 to 1972 revealed only 9 titles in 10 volumes of this work.

At the national level bibliographic control is no better. Even in technologically developed countries such as the United States, there are problems. As LeRhy C. Schwarzkopf points out "Major Criticism of the Monthly Catalog over the years has been directed at its index, or lack of it, especially the cumulations". Furthermore, "one of the major complaints with the Monthly Catalog for the past forty years has been its failure to list a significant number of so called "non-GPO" publications".

At the same time that more government services have come into being, bibliographic control has suffered. There are instances of duplication of citations in some tools but a lack of citation in others. As Clifton Brock stated "thus the government itself does not have a complete listing or collection of its publications, even in the Library of Congress".

In less technologically advanced countries the situation is worse. The
researcher in the field of bibliographic control cannot even find enough information to form a picture of bibliographic control in these countries. Looking at India, for example, Taverekere Sricantaiah noted that "there is no single bibliographical tool that includes all the publications of the Indian government. The bibliographical control over publications is highly decentralized. Most of the catalogs are mere price lists and do not measure up to professional standards. Often they are inconsistent, inaccurate, and appear only after considerable delays".25

For Indonesia Zubaidah Isa States "Indonesia has had inadequate bibliographical control over government and commercial publications since independence"26

A similar situation exists in Africa. Government publications are not included in the national bibliographies of Nigeria. There is also a lack of any comprehensive retrospective bibliography.26

In the Arab world, bibliographic control is the worst. This is probably due to the fact that bibliographical services are not that well developed in that there are no union catalogs, periodical indexes, serial union lists, or inclusive national bibliographies. Moreover, government publications are so neglected that there is a real "Iron Curtain" between government publications and the users. As Mohammed Aman points out "Arab government publications do not always find their way into the right hands. Unfortunately, old documents are often destroyed before thought is given to keeping these materials in the proper manner by a responsible agency".27 Aman goes on to say, "This situation reflects upon Arab librarianship in the sense that there is as yet no investigation as to the problems of cataloging, distributing and using of Arabic government publications".28

Other common problems that affect the mechanism of bibliographic control of Government publications have been outlined by J. Cherns, that the majority of government agencies "work under conflicting directions to cover costs but not to inhibit dissemination".29 This is considered to be one of the major problems that librarians are facing, particularly in the developing countries where government information are produced and are destroyed within the building of the government agency. Another problem is the absence of "Government Publisher"30 in the developed and underdeveloped countries.

Finally, because of the inadequacy of the present mechanism bibliographic control in various countries of the world, John Pemberton has called for "the
establishment of a comprehensive system of control".\textsuperscript{31}

Now, the objectives, policies and techniques of the government information should be reviewed, and every possible effort should be made from both sides, the governments and libraries in order to control the publications of governments.
REFERENCES

6. Ibid.
16. Childs, James B. *Government Document Bibliography in the United States and


21. Ibid., p. 90.

22. Ibid., p. 96


28. Ibid., p. 253


30. Ibid., p. 353

 أهم مشاكل الضبط البليوجرافي للمطبوعات الحكومية

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ملخص البحث

يهم هذا البحث بالمشاكل الأساسية المتعلقة بالضبط البليوجرافي للمطبوعات الحكومية في الدول المتقدمة والناشرة. ويجعل الباحث تحليل بعض الأدوات البليوجرافية الخاصة بهذه المطبوعات وراجعهم المقلات التي تتناول موضوع الضبط البليوجرافي.

وأخيراً، توضح الدراسة عدم صلاحية بعض الأدوات الحالية في الدول المختلفة والتي يتطلب دراسة وراجعها الأهداف، السياسات والأساليب التي تتعلق بالمعلومات الحكومية.

10. Bibliography and the sociology of texts. Such comments, although seeking to accommodate bibliography to semiotics as the science of signs, are oddly out of touch with such developments as, for example, the founding of The Center for the Book by the Library of Congress, the American Antiquarian Society’s pro-gramme for the History of the Book in American Culture, or proposals for publication of national histories of the. The exchange of government publications presents special problems. Because of the expense involved, lack of bibliorical information, restrictions on distribution, limited demand, and space requirements, few libraries have been able to develop adequate collections of publications of foreign governments. Nevertheless, research workers are intensifying their interest in the official documents of other countries, doubtless stimulated by the current emphasis on international organizations of all sorts.

Any effective scheme of bibliographical control must depend upon such records. The principal value of union lists and union catalogs from the point of view of inter-library cooperation is to make materials known and available after they have actually been received in libraries. Bibliographical references: ECB guidelines for authors. 1 Model bibliographies. 2 The individual elements of a bibliographical reference “detailed overview.” Guide to bibliographical references for authors. Bibliographical references: ECB guidelines for authors. Contributors to the Statistics Paper Series should follow the conventions for Model 2 bibliographies outlined in Section 1 below. (A model bibliography can be found in Section 1.2.2.). If required, more detailed information on how to present the individual elements of a bibliographical reference can be found in Section 2. 1 MODEL BIBLI...