



Date 2nd version : 04/07/2006

National Bibliographies: the Chinese Experience

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Meeting:	109 Bibliography
Simultaneous Interpretation:	Yes
<p>WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 72ND IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL 20-24 August 2006, Seoul, Korea http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla72/index.htm</p>	

Abstract

The printed version of the China National Bibliography was first published in 1987 and ceased to be published in 1994. It is replaced by the online services provided by the National Library of China. Because of the present situation of legal deposit policies in China, the national bibliography has narrow coverage. There is another kind of “national bibliography” with wider coverage, but not done by librarians. In China, there are also problems of different forms of name authorities and different MARC records. The National Library of China is considering a National Union Catalog to improve the national bibliographical services.

China National Bibliography: History

China National Bibliography (中国国家书目(1985)) was first published in 1987.

It was compiled by the National Bibliography Compiling Committee under the National Library of China. It included 17,000 titles, covering all the monographs published in 1985, some monographs published in 1984 and some new and renamed periodicals. An index volume was also published at the same time¹.

The printed version of the *China National Bibliography* ceased to be published in 1994 because of the financial problem. Now, it is almost impossible to publish a printed version of China National Bibliography, because:

1. There are about 120,000 new titles every year in China. We will have to print about 10 volumes for every year's new titles.
2. Cost of the publications.
3. Limited market.

Now, most Chinese libraries use library automation systems and use MARC records in cataloging, and the online database of the National Library of China can be used by most libraries and can serve as an electronic version of the National Bibliography.

National Bibliography: Printed to Electronic

Since the ending of the publishing of printed *China National Bibliography*, there have been some problems of the National Library of China as a national bibliography agency in the last few years.

First, the low legal deposit rate doesn't allow NLC's catalog to cover all publications in China.

Second, since NLC doesn't collect children's books and school textbooks, the coverage is even narrower.

Third, because of the lack of cataloging cooperation between NLC and other Chinese libraries, NLC cannot include some titles not collected in the library and other OLCC (Online Library Cataloging Center) participating libraries.

We are considering a new way to provide electronic national bibliographical services. The Online Library Cataloging Center (OLCC, 全国图书馆联合编目中心),

which is a part of the Acquisitions & Cataloging Department (图书采选编目部) of NLC, is discussing with Ex Libris to make an online cataloging module in its Aleph500 system. If we receive bibliographical and holding records from other libraries, we will form a real national bibliography.

At present, we regularly collect records from other libraries to make the National Bibliography database as complete as possible.

China National Bibliography: Retrospective Database and Online Services

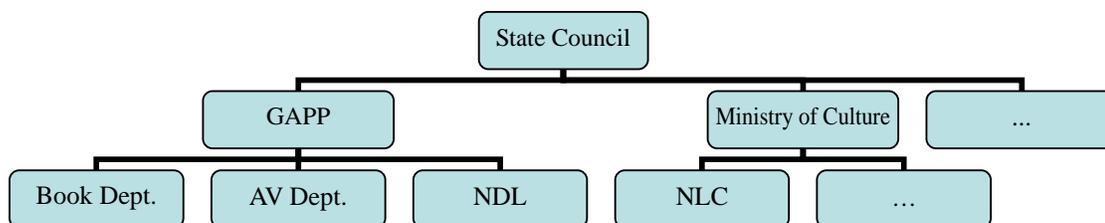
The National Library of China began to create the National Bibliography database in 1988, and began to distribute MARC records in 1990. During May 1995-July 1996, the National Library of China completed the retrospective database of bibliographical records for publications during 1975-1987 (with ISO 10646 character set comprising 20902 characters), and released the CD-ROM version during the IFLA General Conference in Beijing in August 1996². In 1998, the National Sci.-Tech. project “China National Bibliography Retrospective Database (1949-1987)” was completed. It was cooperatively done by the National Library of China with Shanghai Library, Guangdong Provincial Library and Shenzhen Library. It includes about 400,000 records, covering more than 80% of the publications in the period³.

Now, OLCC is responsible for the distribution of CNMARC records of the National Bibliography based on the bibliographical records of NLC and records from other participating libraries. Users can access the bibliographical database through Z39.50 either directly from OLCC or from provincial subcenters.

There are about 1.2 million bibliographical records for all the monographs and about 100,000 records for new monographs every year.

Legal Deposit Policies in China

In China, there isn't any legal deposit law, but there are some regulations promulgated by the State Council and the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP, 新闻出版总署) under the State Council. According to these regulations, legal deposit copies of books, journals, newspapers and A/V materials should be sent to the GAPP departments (1 copy), the National Depository Library (NDL, 中国版本图书馆) under GAPP (1 copy) and the National Library of China (NLC, 中国国家图书馆) (3 copies). Sometimes, however, these regulations are not very effective.



Because NLC is not responsible for the ISBN registration and there is no legal

deposit law, NLC is very hard to acquire all the new publications of China. Publishers give their top priority to the legal deposit copies to GAPP departments and then to NLC under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, and there is a lack of coordination between GAPP and the Ministry of Culture. Acquisitions librarians have to contact publishers every year to remind them to send legal deposit copies and prepare reports to GAPP, so that GAPP can pay more attention to the NLC legal deposit issues in their management of publications. Taking books as an example, the legal deposit rate of NLC is about 70%, not including children's books, juvenile books, school textbooks and teacher's manuals. To make the collection and the bibliographical databases as complete as possible, NLC has to pay extra money to purchase books without legal deposit copies.

In recent years, NLC discusses the legal deposit issues regularly with GAPP to ask them to implement related regulations more strictly. We expect to see a higher legal deposit rates in the future. We are also appealing to draft a national library law, which should include legal deposit issues. Because there are too many laws to be passed by the National People's Congresses, a national library law will be considered later.

Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan

Although Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, and Macau returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999, they are special administrative regions of the People's Republic of China and have some independent powers. Therefore, they haven't considered the issues of legal deposit copies to the National Library of China, and the China National Bibliography cannot include Hong Kong and Macau Publications. Publications from Taiwan region cannot be included, too. It is because of political reasons, not technical ones.

In Hong Kong, legal deposit copies are sent to the Hong Kong Public Libraries and some university libraries.

In Macau, the Macao Central Library (Biblioteca Central de Macau) is in charge of ISBN registration and receives legal deposit copies.

As to Taiwan publications, the Bureau of International Exchange of Publications is in charge of ISBN registration and also receives legal deposit copies from publishers in Taiwan. It provides ISBN, ISSN, ISRC, and CIP services.

People can contact the above mentioned institutions for information about "national bibliographies" in these regions.

OLCC of the National Library of China can provide CNMARC records of monographs published in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan in the collections of the National Library of China. However, the present China National Bibliography database doesn't include publications from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

Bibliographical Formats and Classification Systems

In China, libraries use two MARC formats, i.e. MARC21 and CNMARC.

CNMARC is based on UNIMARC and was released in the early 1990s, it has some special fields for Chinese publications in addition to UNIMARC fields. Most small-sized libraries use UNIMARC-based CNMARC for all materials. For large-sized libraries that have sizable collections in foreign languages, they prefer USMARC/MARC21 to CNMARC with the consideration of international compatibility and easy record downloading.

In the National Library of China, we use CNMARC, *Chinese Library Classification* and *Classified Chinese Thesaurus* for Chinese publications, and we use MACR21 for foreign publications, including Western languages, Japanese and Russian. For publications in Western languages, we use AACR2, LC Subject Headings, LC Name Authority File and *Chinese Library Classification*.

The Aleph500 system allows us to maintain two separate databases respectively in CNMARC and MARC21 formats. There isn't any relationship between the two databases now. We are considering the possibility to establish the relationship of the two authority databases respectively in CNMARC and MARC21.

Different MARC Formats and Description Rules in Different Regions

In the mainland of China, most libraries use UNIMARC-based CNMARC for Chinese publications. In Hong Kong, most libraries follow the practices of the Western countries and use MARC21 for all publications. In Macau, some libraries use CNMARC and some use MARC21. Large libraries in Taiwan use CMARC (also based on UNIMARC and similar to CNMARC) or LCMARC/USMARC; mid-sized libraries favor CMARC.

For libraries using UNIMARC-based formats, they also have different description rules, especially for name headings and authority control.

As to Romanization, most libraries use Pinyin now, but they sometimes use different ways of segmentation, for example “mao ze dong” or “Mao Zedong” for “毛泽东”.

CIP, BIP and National Depository Library

The NDL under GAPP is responsible for the compilation and release of CIP data. Also because of the lack of coordination between the Ministry of Culture and GAPP, there is a lack of coordination between NLC and NDL. There are also some problems in CIP:

1. CIP is based on the prepublication reports of publishers to GAPP. Some titles are changed immediately before their publication, and therefore CIP data cannot reflect the actual situation of the books. CIP is just a prerequisite for publishers to apply for ISBNs.
2. CIP is not done by professional librarians.
3. CIP doesn't release MARC records.

4. There is no authority control for CIP records.

In China, some companies are considering to use CIP records to create BIP (books in print) information. Now, the private bookseller Rentian Bookstore (人天书店) is trying to establish a “Chinese Books in Print” system.

It is said that the Information Center of GAPP is also considering a kind of BIP. However, we haven't seen any results yet.

In October 27, 2005, China Publishing Group established a new company to develop “Chinese Books in Print” to compete with Rentian Bookstore in this market. As the largest publishing group in China, CPG is ambitious and plans to realize its objective in about five years. We hope to see some good results in the future.

Another “National Bibliography”

Because GAPP is the ISBN registration authority in China, the National Depository Library (NDL) under GAPP publishes *National Register of Books* (全国总书目) annually. It is a kind of national bibliography partly based on CIP information, but it is mainly used by acquisitions librarians. Since there isn't any “books in print” in China, acquisitions librarians sometimes use it to find new book information. The *National Register of Books* has also CD-ROM version, but without any output functions. Because it doesn't strictly use library cataloging rules, it is almost impossible for library catalogers to use such kind of information.

Authority Control

The National Library of China began to create a name authority file in 1995 and is now maintaining a name authority database with about 600,000 records. NLC drafted a rule for the description of name authority records according to GARR (Guidelines for Authority Records and References). However, the rule is not so complete and has not been revised for many years. Besides, there are controversies over the name authority control and the selection of name headings in bibliographical databases among various libraries in China, especially between the National Library of China and CALIS based in Peking University Library. The controversies are mainly focused on the internationalization and Chinese characteristics.

For example, there are three forms of personal name headings:

程伟元(?~约 1818) (Name + Date)

程伟元(清) (Name + Dynasty)

(清)程伟元 (Dynasty + Name)

For corporate names, some libraries use the full names, while others use structured forms with subdivisions:

中国共产党中央委员会 (Full name)

中国共产党. 中央委员会 (Structured form with subdivision)

NLC plans to correct records in its name authority database and the corresponding headings in bibliographical records in the near future. However, financial and human resources are required for such a job.

NLC is also making efforts to realize coordination with other libraries to use a single rule, but there will be a long way to go. In the future, we will consider the drafting of a national name authority standard.

For subject authorities, the National Library of China uses *Classified Chinese Thesaurus* to build a subject authority database for Chinese publications.

Problems

We are still faced with some problems.

1. Two “national bibliographies”: One (*National Register of Book* by NDL) is more complete but not for libraries, the other (*China National Bibliography* by NLC) is not complete but is for libraries.
2. No foreign languages in the China National Bibliography: Since Chinese publications and foreign language publications are separately stored in two bibliographical databases respectively in CNMARC and MARC21 formats, the China National Bibliography doesn’t contain publications in foreign languages.
3. Narrow coverage: NLC’s database doesn’t include school textbooks, and children’s and juvenile literature, which are included in some national bibliographies of other countries.
4. Services to foreign libraries: We would like to provide bibliographical records to foreign countries. However, we are faced the following problems:
 - a) Conversion from CNMARC to MARC21 formats: manual intervention is required; simple and not one-to-one mapping exists.
 - b) Conversion from *Chinese Library Classification* to DDC: Full conversion impossible, part mapping possible, manual work required;
 - c) Conversion from Chinese characters to Pinyin Romanization and creation of 880 fields for Chinese characters: Possible for most parts, but human intervention required for proper names;
 - d) Manual and automatic conversion: If we decide to provide MARC21 services to foreign countries, we will need financial and human resources, because additional manual work is required for full bibliographical records.

Conclusions

The National Library of China is trying to consolidate its position as the national bibliographical agency. It will make the National Bibliography Database more complete and include more records from other sources, it will also try to collect Chinese publications from all parts of the world, and provide bibliographical records to users, and it is considering finding a way to provide records with different formats for different users.

Thank you.

¹ 林尘：“简评《中国国家书目》(1985)”，《黑龙江图书馆》，2(1988)，p. 22-23.

² 苑克俐：““中国国家书目回溯数据库(1949 - 1987)”之建立”，《北京图书馆馆刊》，1(1998)，p. 104-111.

³ ““中国国家书目回溯数据库(1949 - 1987)”鉴定及研讨会召开”，《北京图书馆馆刊》4(1998)，p. 137.