



## 50 years of Indian National Bibliography (1958-2008): A critical study

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### Abstract:

*This article discusses the strength and weakness of the bibliographic coverage of INB, multiplicity of language/script; and compares INB with few prominent bibliographies in the world. Indian National Bibliography is affected with the disease of sluggishness in publication and incomplete coverage. The author narrates ICT application and level of success that INB has achieved with regard to its update ness, comprehensiveness; international usage and traces the workflow in publication process viz. use of Libsys version IV (customized); transliteration using diacritical marks and use of GIST (Graphics and Intelligence based Script Technology) to overcome language problems etc. Currently Central Reference Library is working towards implementation of UNICODE and discarding GIST to facilitate international cooperation and data exchange. The author tries to examine all aspects with special emphasis on remedial measures to be followed to improve currency and coverage.*

### 1. Introduction:

India is a multilingual country with rich cultural heritage; the large number of multilingual materials reflects India's diverse culture and social history which make the task of developing an efficient national bibliographic system difficult. A country with one language and single script has obvious advantages in producing the national bibliography more economically than a country where the national imprint appears in several languages and multiple scripts. Indian National Bibliography (INB) has been conceived as an authoritative bibliographical record of documents published in 14 major languages in India (Assamese, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Sanskrit, Oriya, Urdu, English and Punjabi) received by National Library Kolkata under D.B. Act (public libraries), 1954. It is said that without bibliography the records of civilization would be an uncharted chaos of miscellaneous contributions to knowledge, unorganized and inapplicable to human needs. It is the duty of all nations to provide a national bibliography which includes all the published materials in the country, only then it would be possible to obtain a survey of the world's literary population. It is huge tasks for a country with diverse language and script to achieve comprehensive bibliographic control of significantly high literary output. INB's objective is to document the nation's published heritage to make the publication known to present and

future generations. Over the years, unprecedented growth has occurred in publication output of regional languages in India; it's of utmost importance to document all the resources published in vernacular languages. There are number of problems associated with the publication of a national bibliography; for a vast country like India (with language and cultural diversities); Indian National Bibliography started publishing in 1958 completed 50 years of its publication in 2008 and this study intends to summarize the major events in the publication process, current status and trace future growth. The author has special interest in this topic as she prepared MLIS dissertation (submitted at University of Mumbai [Bombay]) in the year 1994 entitled "Indian National Bibliography: a study"; the period covered 1958-April 1994. A literature search on the topic revealed that literature on INB is very scanty and very little or no research is conducted or published documents are available from 1994 onwards; this study seeks to fill the gap. In the changing bibliographic control system a fresh look on INB is very much essential for future improvement. This study is subdivided into manual phase till 1999 and automated production of INB since June 2000. The author takes a broader view of the production of INB, in particular, receiving of documents from NL, compilation, publishing and advocacy to bring awareness.

Hussain(2006) mentioned any current national bibliography vis a vis INB differs with respect to four important factors:

- ✚ The issuing agency
- ✚ Scope
- ✚ Format
- ✚ Frequency

"The National Library in Calcutta has recently taken the initiatives by inviting representatives from all national libraries of South Asia and from the Library of Congress to agree the standardization of romanization of all India scripts(includian Tibetan) and all Islamic scripts" \*

CRL is responsible for compilation and sale of INB and Index Indiana the index of periodical literature appearing in the Indian Language periodicals.

## **2. The term defined:**

The importance of bibliography is well understood in countries where there are large as well as organized libraries as centres of research. A national bibliography has to be a bibliography of books published within the geographical boundaries of a country, irrespective of the language in which it is printed. The first use of the term in its present day sense occurred in proposals made by Frank Campbell in 1896 for England "a national system of bibliography" to comprise list of works based on copyright deposit, the list to be issued in parts 'in convenient form at convenient intervals"<sup>1</sup>

"The national bibliography of any country is ideally intended to provide a complete. Accurate and current bibliographic record of materials published within a specific national geographical entity"<sup>2</sup>

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\*Biswas, S.C (1991) Standardization of bibliographic control in South Asia. In Standard for the international exchange of bibliographic information/I.C. Mc Ilwaine (ed.), London: The library Association, 1991, pp.114.

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, P. R (1982) The fall and rise of national bibliography. Bangalore: Sarada Ranganathan Endowment for library Science; pg 6.

<sup>2</sup> Gorman, G.E and Mahoney, M. (1983) Current national bibliographies in developing countries of the commonwealth, Libri, 33(3); pg 177.

Harrod's librarians' glossary gives the following definition of a national bibliography: "A bibliography which lists all the books and other publications published or distributed in significant quantity in a particular country. Sometimes the term is used in request to the new publications published within a specific period and sometimes in respect to all those published within a lengthy period of many years. It is also used to indicate a bibliography of publications about a country (whether by its nationals or not) and those written in the language of the country as well as those published in it"<sup>3</sup>

"Bibliographic control comes from the systematic and comprehensive collection, organization and dissemination of information about documents; and its purpose is to enable all potential users of the document to identify, locate and access to every document useful for their particular purposes"<sup>4</sup>

"National bibliographic control is needed to identify items of recorded information in all media, to provide intellectual access to each such item of information and to standardise the processing and communication of relevant data"<sup>5</sup>

"Three main objectives have been traditionally assigned to national bibliographic services. The first is to assist cost-effective cataloguing in libraries. The second is to facilitate libraries in their selection and acquisition activities. The third is to further information searching and retrieval for document supply. These objectives are still valid. What is changing today is the environment in which such objectives are implemented."  
(<http://archive.ifla.org/VI/3/icnbs/vitg.htm>)

By a current national bibliography we mean one, which comes out on a periodical basis and which is likely to be continued, particularly at national level. Provided that a national bibliography is current its primary use is likely to be for selection. An ideal current national bibliography relies entirely upon the existence of legal deposit laws and their effective operation; it includes entries of books within one year of their publication. The compilation of a current national bibliography involves:

- The establishment of a permanent machinery with adequate financial resource
- Complete publications are available to the compilers through legal deposit law
- Basic policy on arrangement, structure of bibliography, frequency and physical format

### **3. Objectives and methodology**

The objectives of the study are as below:

1. to study the existing situation of INB
2. to compare present condition of INB with some select bibliographies (e.g. BNB, Canadiana)
3. to make recommendations/suggestions for improvement of INB

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<sup>3</sup> Harrod's Librarians Glossary of terms used in Librarianship, documentation and the book crafts and reference book 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Ray Prytherh (compiler) London: Gower publishing company Ltd, 1990; pp 415-416.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, P.R (1987) The future of the national bibliography, Library association record, October, pg 616.

<sup>5</sup> National Commission on libraries and Information Science. Towards a National Program for Library and Information Services: goals for action, Washington: NCLIS, 1975,pg 39.

The ideas that are explored in this critical study include:

How collaborative initiatives between National library of Calcutta and Central Reference Library (CRL)-the national bibliographic agency for India will bring substantial improvement in current situation? How effective the current legal deposit law is? Does INB follow international standards when describing documents? Is INB arranged in a user-friendly way? Are there enough indexes or search possibilities to enable efficient information retrieval? Is there a user-friendly introduction that describes the INB properly as to what is included and how the information is arranged? What would make INB a better national bibliography?

For the field study the author visited National Library and Central Reference Library Kolkata. The descriptive as well as diagnostic research methods are used to make this study complete. Descriptive research studies are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular item, whereas diagnostic research enables researcher to determine the frequency of occurrence of an event or its association with others. Both the studies are deeply related; a diagnostic study is concerned with an existing problem its basic nature and cause. The main concern of a diagnostic design is to acquire knowledge, in those fields where knowledge is less developed. This article critically examines the growth and development of INB since its inception and discusses some of the major challenges in its publication process with special mention to retro conversion projects of INB. An attempt has been made to diagnose the problems of INB along with remedial measures. The structure of entries in BNB and select national bibliographies will be analyzed to visualize the similarities and differences with INB.

The following techniques are used for data collection:

- Existing document sources
- Questionnaire and personal interview
- Visit to National Library Calcutta and CRL to study INB on the spot.

#### **4. Organizational structure of INB**

The National Bibliographic Centre named as Central Reference Library the organizational unit for INB. CRL was established in 1970 functioning under department of culture, Government of India. INB is still the only operative element of Central Reference Library. The main strings behind the publication of INB are the 16 assistant editors and 19 sub editors (SEs), including four vacant post, who are qualified librarians. The two divisions viz. Technical and administrative are headed by librarian. There is approximately forty staff working in CRL; majority of them are professionally qualified and few are semi/non professional.

##### **4.1 Retro-project**

INB data since 1958 has been retroconverted to suit to the automated system. At present all bibliographical data since 1958 till date is available on electronic format. The process of making available INB database online and CD-RPM version is near completion. Customized Libsys version IV is used to generate monthly and yearly volumes.

## 5. Structure of entries

INB listed only material received and catalogued by the National Library. There is an obvious desire to create a witness to a national memory and to follow international standards in doing so. AACR2 in UNIMARC format with some modification is used by INB. Different languages and scripts have been used and developed to make compatible with cutting edge technology. Diacritical mark is a mark or sign used to distinguish different values or sounds of the same letter or character.

Dr. Ranganathan was very critical in use of roman script for a multilingual bibliography like INB. His views could be summarized as follows:

- It is difficult to accustom the Indian language user to the Romanized version of his language
- A Romanized version can't adequately represent all the nuances and sounds of our scripts
- The national bibliography is not an esoteric instrument, meant only for few; it is an instrument of references to all classes of readers. The adoption of roman script would inhibit its effective use. \*\*\*

Table 1: The order of bibliographical information in the entry is gives as below:

(1) Call no	181.4
(2) Main Entry Area	Raman Maharshi, 1879-1950
(3) Title and subtitle area	Essence of Enquiry : vichara sangraham/ translated from Sanskrit with commentary in English by
(4) Statement of responsibility	I.M Nome
(5) Edition (6) place (7) Publisher	Bangalore: Raman Maharshi centre for learning,
(8) date (9) publisher address	Feb. 05
(10) pagination (11) Physical description (12) Dimension	659p.; 24cm.
(13) Series area	
(14) General note	Includes bibliography
(15) Standard no area (16) binding (17) Price	ISBN 81-88261-26-2 Rs. 150.00
(18) Language symbol (19) C C	(E) 2x M79

The CC numbers are given with a view that many Indian Libraries are still using colon classification.

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\*\*\*Venkatachari, P.N (1992) Ranganathan's views on Romanization of Indian Scripts for the Indian National Bibliography, IASLIC Bulletin, 37(3), pp. 183

## 6. An analysis of coverage and currency

Since June, 2000 INB volumes are generated through computers; 14 Indian languages have been transliterated into roman scripts using Graphics and Intelligence based Technology (GIST). During the period 1958 and 1963 the bibliography was published as quarterly and then cumulated annually. Since 1964 it is being published every month and the cumulated every year. But the regularity of the publication has suffered due to various reasons. There are no publication of INB for the period of 1968, 1969 and 1970. For the period of 1994 to 1999, only annual volumes are being published.

Table 2: INB coverage

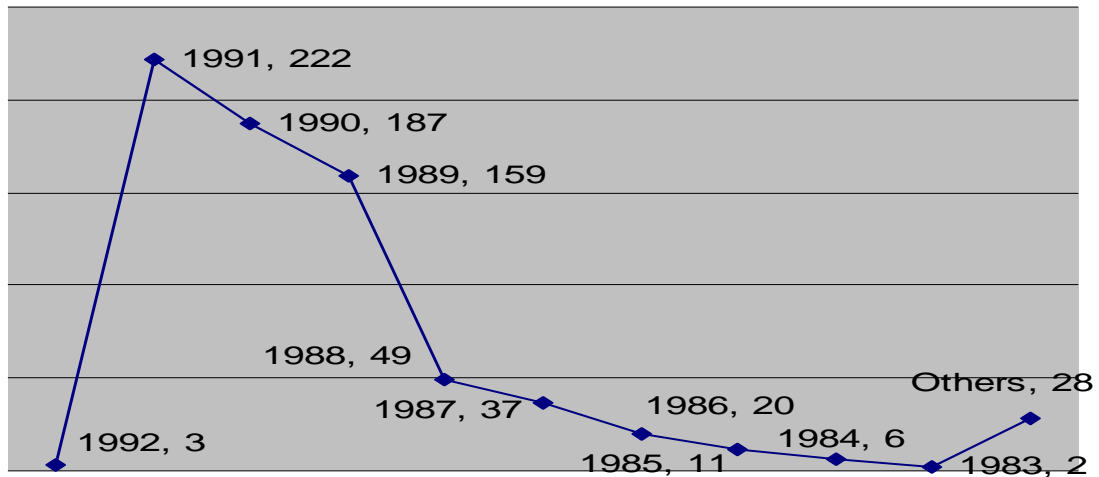
<p><i>THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS ARE EXCLUDED:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Maps</li><li>b) Musical scores</li><li>c) Periodicals and Newspapers (except the first issue of a new periodical and the first issue of a periodical under a new title)</li><li>d) Keys and Guides to Textbooks</li><li>e) Ephemeral and other such materials.</li></ul>
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The coverage of INB is solely dependent on the receipt of publication at National library under D.B. Act 1954. As such gaps in coverage are glaring; moreover the scope and coverage of INB as a current national bibliography has not been well planned and well defined. During the preparation of MLS dissertation in the year 1994 the author sent a list of 21 books published during the year 1992 to national library Calcutta and it was found that only five books have been deposited till the end of 1994.

Mondal & Abuzar (2006) stated that out of 100325 publications received by the National Library during 2000-2004 only 45213 publications were included in the INB. This means that an average of less than 50 per cent of the books have been included in the INB.

Currency of recording INB entries is poor; the delay between the date of publication of a book and its subsequent appearance in INB monthly issues often caused by publishers who delay in depositing newly published copy to NL. During the course of study three monthly issues were analysed viz. January 1988, December 1991 and entries in Social Sciences of July 2007 issue.

Chart 1: Statistics of December 1991 issue published in June 1993



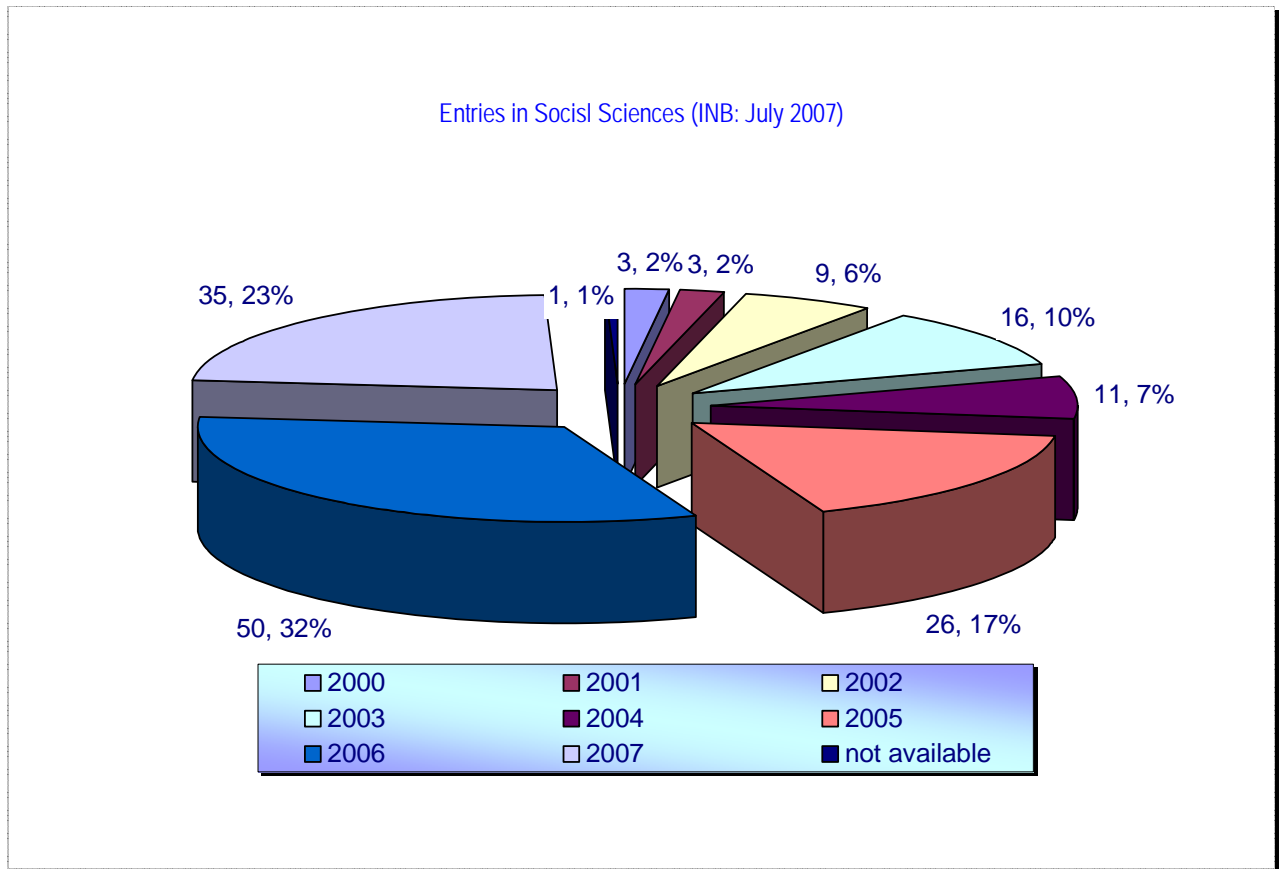
Findings:

Total number of entries= 724

0.41% books published in 1992; 30.66% in 1991; 25.82% in 1990; 21.96% in 1989; 6.76% in 1988; 5.11% in 1987; 2.76% in 1986; 1.51% in 1985; 0.82% in 1984; 0.27% in 1983 and others 3.86%

July 2007 issue published in January 2008; total 154 entries under Social Sciences DC class 330 shows the books published from 2000-2007 are included in this issue.

Chart 2: Currency of entries under DC class 330



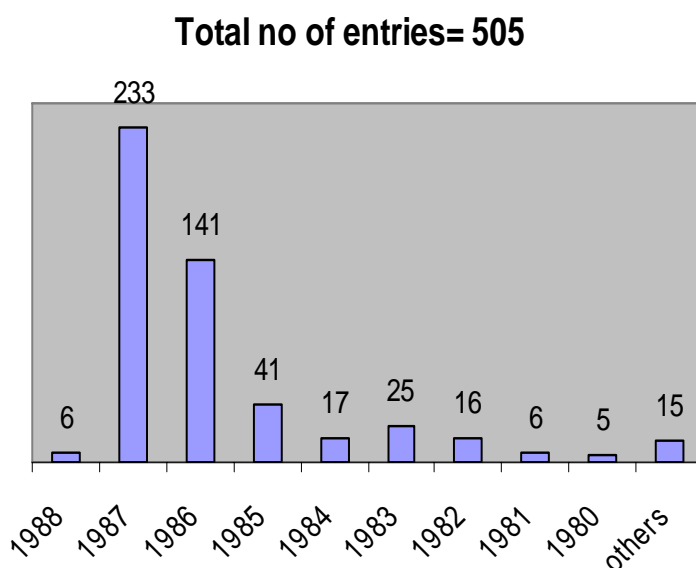
“Despite some evidence of operational improvements in recent years, the rate at which this is being accomplished is not significant enough to satisfy the requirements of either librarianship or the book trade, whether at home or abroad”\*\*

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\*\* Downing, J. C. (1984) The Indian National Bibliography-Its present state and future prospects Library resources and Technical Services, Jan-Mar, pp. 21.



Chart 3: Statistics of entries in a monthly issue (January 1998)



One of the main reasons for the delay is identified as time gap between books received by NL Calcutta and subsequently at CRL after cataloguing. Therefore the currency of recording the INB entries is poor

Findings:

Year wise percentage of entries

1988=1.19; 1987=46.14; 1986=27.92; 1985= 8.12; 1984=3.37; 1983= 4.95; 1982=3.17; 1981=1.19; 1980=0.99 others= 2.97

<i>Language</i>	<i>Number of Publications</i>	<i>Percentage to total no</i>
Assamese	10,340	2
Bengali	46067	9
English	151701	30
Gujarati	19006	4
Hindi	70358	14
Kannada	18041	4
Malayalam	27223	6
Marathi	36840	8
Oriya	16112	3
Punjabi	7689	2
Sanskrit	4329	1
Tamil	51918	11
Telugu	19867	4
Urdu	10530	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>490021</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1:

Language wise statistics of books included in INB during the period 1958-2006

Source:

Golden Jubilee Souvenir (2007-08; annexure-III)

## 7. International initiatives:

In 1977 UNESCO sponsored the International Congress on National Bibliographies and made recommendations that have influenced the development of national bibliographies over the last 20 years and which are responsible for a significant improvement in the quality of bibliographic exchange among libraries throughout the world. IFLA sponsored another International Conference on National Bibliographic Services (ICNBS) to review and update the recommendations of the 1977 International Congress on National Bibliographies in the light of new developments.

The ICNBS was held at the Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen, on 25-27 November 1998 under the auspices of IFLA and agreed recommendations that took into account changes in format, technology and communications since 1977.

RDA is a standard for Resource Description and Access, built on the foundations established by AACR2, RDA provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and instructions on resource description and access covering all types of content and media.

For the purpose of development of bibliographic description, IFLA commissioned a study to define the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR); the final report published in September 1997 as one of the objectives is to recommend a basic level of functionality for records created by national bibliographic agencies. The study group recommended for basic data requirements for national bibliographic record.  
<http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/frbr/frbr.pdf>

Table 5 shows the format, availability and issuing agency of selected National bibliographies

Country/ Issuing agency	National Bibliography	Print	Microfilm Microfiche	CD-ROM	Online
India CR Library	INB	✓			
Canada, NL	Canadiana			✓	✓
Great Britain BL	BNB	✓	✓	✓	✓
Australia, NL	ANB	✓		✓	✓
USA, library of Congress	NUc		✓		✓
Germany	Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (DNB)	✓		✓	<a href="http://dnb.d-nb.de">http://dnb.d-nb.de</a>
China, NL	China National Bibliography			✓	✓
Singapore, NL	SNB	✓		✓	

A number of overseas national bibliographies are now produced on CD-ROM, and others are available online or free of charge on the Internet. Several other countries, including Canada, have ceased producing a printed version of the national bibliography. National Bibliographic Agencies are continuously trying to improve currency and coverage of their national bibliographies for example, BNB includes information on new titles up to 16 weeks ahead of

their announced publication date and subscription can be delivered as a weekly MARC Exchange File or a weekly printed publication.

## **8. Observations and discussions:**

The Indian National Bibliography is at the crossroad of its development; the low legal deposit rate doesn't allow INB to cover all publications in India. The National Bibliographic Agency (CRL) is working in conjunction with National Library to bring regular issues and to avoid the pitfalls and workout modalities to suit current requirements and complete bibliographical control. As one of the major book producing countries of the world, India is far behind to other nations in effective bibliographic control. Names of Indian origin continue to get different treatment in spelling in Asia or different parts of the world. It is apparent that the online publication of bibliographies is the dominant distribution method; and most desirable form of delivery is its online delivery. INB should be promoted as the primary, authoritative and up-to-date source of the nation's literary output.

An ideal current national bibliography is one which makes its appearance in time and at regular intervals. The language competent personnel for 14 different languages are difficult to get and deployment of staff in vacant positions is not always possible due to lack of language competencies.

KochuKoshi (2006) identified three main drawbacks as follows:

1. Erratic frequency in its appearance
2. Lack of comprehensiveness or low coverage
3. Lack of online accessibility

National bibliographies can only be considered alerting tools, and need to be used with reviews, subject bibliographies, standard lists, and guides to the literature. There are disadvantages that can result from using INB to do collection development, with the primary one being the incomplete nature of the published materials included; there have been considerable delays with getting items listed in the INB, nearing two-three years. One implication is that prices could have changed in the meantime; shortage of cataloguing staff at national library, coupled with the increase in the sheer numbers of volumes being published currently, enhances this problem of delay in inclusion in monthly issues. INB is integrating all the 14 languages and English in one sequence in Roman script, the transliteration through diacritical marks for language entries also faces problems. Although INB has improved dramatically during the last few years (especially after computerization in the year 2000 resulting in smooth publication and opportunity for data exchange)also, it is heartening to see that INB has recovered from the illness of sluggishness in publication; but its currency and comprehensiveness is not at all satisfactory. To make INB comprehensive we need cooperation from the publisher and strict implementation of D.B.Act 1954. It is revealed that the lag between dates of publication of works and inclusion in the national bibliography is between one to three years and in cases it is even five/six years. At present INB fulfils most of the recommendations of International conference on national Bibliographies, Paris 1977 but it is lacking comprehensiveness in coverage, furthermore, e-books and e-journals are not included therefore necessary amendments is required in Legal deposit Act.

In earlier times, bibliography mostly focused on books. Now –a-days bibliographies are in formats including recordings, motion pictures and videos, graphic objects, databases, CD-ROMs and websites the catalogs of some national libraries effectively serve as national

bibliographies (for example BNB can be searched through British library's integrated catalogue), as the national libraries own almost all their countries' publications. BNB has been extended to electronic publications following the extension of legal deposit to this class of material in 2003. The BNB also contains details of forthcoming books. Under the Cataloguing-in-Publication Programme (CIP) information on new titles appears up to 16 weeks ahead of the announced publication date.

It may be argued that, maps, musical scores, periodicals and newspapers, keys and guides to the text books, ephemeral publications such as trade catalogues, telephone directories, reports of commercial bodies, publicity pamphlets, etc. are not included in the INB. Thus the coverage of INB does not match with the receipt by the National Library.

INB needs to change its outlook from book only to all format publication. It is further observed that librarians/book lovers have vague awareness about INB and important libraries in India have not subscribed INB as reference source. There is need for proper advocacy building to bring awareness amongst community. The step has been taken to move from the hard copy to the electronic medium and CD ROM publication of INB and only the time will tell us when our national bibliography will be accessible electronically also there is need to encourage the use of acid-free paper and ink suitable for preservation and to assure that storage conditions are conducive to preservation.

As stated earlier India has very large number of languages although many have comparatively few speakers. The INB covers only 14 languages including English. The Indian constitution has already recognized 22 languages and also the publication in smaller languages are increasing day-by-day. Therefore it is of utmost importance that INB should include all the language materials received under D.B. Act. There is also need to appoint a chief editor, qualified and experienced in editorial work.

The number of subscribers in India is small due to several reasons. There has been no survey regarding the use of INB by Indian scholars and institutions. CRL works in isolation and not much known in the country. A cooperative venture or collaboration within professional community, proper mindset and technological advancement is the need of the hour to streamline the process of developing an efficient bibliographical system for INB.

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<http://www.moyak.com/papers/collection-development-national-bib.html>

BNB online catalogue:

[http://catalogue.bl.uk/F/?func=file&file\\_name=find-b&local\\_base=BNB](http://catalogue.bl.uk/F/?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=BNB)