

# **A Study of Bibliographies as Reference Tools**

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## **Abstract**

Knowledge of bibliographic sources is essential for both librarians and scholars. Bibliographies are used to answer a wide variety of questions and to further research by identifying resources on various topics. They are valuable sources among the different types of reference books. This study aims to provide the best knowledge of bibliographies as a reference tool and to identify its usefulness in doing research. This paper studies different types of bibliographies, their importance and how they are evaluated to be effectively used. The required data are collected through various documentary sources. This paper will be useful for those who search for the required information in their studies.

**Key words:** bibliographic sources reference books documentary information

## **Introduction**

Knowledge of bibliographic sources is essential for both librarians and scholars. Bibliographies are used to answer a wide variety of questions and to further research by identifying resources on various topics.

A historian studying the Civil War may seek a better understanding of plantation life by locating and reading novels written by women in the South during that time period. A school librarian may wish to select books on dinosaurs for the library's collection to satisfy the scientific interests of the students in the school. A rare-book librarian may need to study book published in a particular place during a particular period to identify a fragment of work. A library user wants to read the best translation of a literary work originally published in German. In each case, a bibliographic source would be consulted to achieve the desired result.

A reference librarian has to prepare various types of bibliographies on demand of anticipation. It is an important part of his job. The description of compilation has been given keeping in view the requirements of librarians. However it may also be found useful for subject experts who intend to compile a bibliography.

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### Meaning and Definition of a Bibliography

The term "bibliography" was first used by Louis Jacob de Saint Charles in his *Bibliographia Parisiana* (1645-50), and became popular in the eighteenth century. It is derived from two Greek words, "biblion" and "graphein." "Biblion" means "books" and "graphein" is "to write." The scribes who copied books were the first bibliographers. This meaning was in use as late as 1761, as is indicated by the definition of the word "bibliographer" in Fenning's English Dictionary of that date as "one who copies books."<sup>1</sup>

The transition from the meaning of writing of books to that of writing about books dates from the eighteenth century; the latter meaning is in use today.

In the sense of writing about books, the term bibliography has several uses:

- (i) It is the systematic description of groups of books, manuscripts, and other publications as to authorship, title, edition, and imprint, and their enumeration and arrangement into lists for purposes of information.
- (ii) It is the name given to a list of books, manuscripts, and other publications, systematically described and arranged, which have some relationship to each other.

Thus, there are several kinds of bibliographies.

- (a) General - not limited to one author, subject, country, or period of time
  - (b) Author - listing the works by and about one author
  - (c) Subject - restricted to one subject or to one subject field
  - (d) National or regional - including material relating to one country or to one region
  - (e) Trade - directed to the book trade and supplying information needed in buying and selling books
- (iii) It is the science of books, that branch of learning concerned with the historical and technical examination of written works, in which books and manuscripts are examined to discover or verify their origin, dates, number and order of pages, authorship, and textual material.

A bibliography may be complete, including all works of a particular kind, or it may be selective, containing only a part of the works. It may be descriptive, having only a brief descriptive note (annotation): it may be evaluative, that is, with critical comment; or it may be both descriptive and evaluative.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Key Gate, *Guide to the use of book and libraries*. (New York: Mc. Graw-Hill, 1962), 129.

Bibliographies may be found in individual books, in periodical articles, and in encyclopedias and other reference books. In addition to this type of bibliography, compiled for a specific book or article, there are bibliographies both of a general nature and in the subject fields, to aid the researcher in his quest for material. Bibliographies are useful sources in any search for material on a subject.

According to **Greg Walter**, bibliography means to study of books as well as material objects. It is the science of books and transmission of literary documents.

**George Schneider** defines bibliography as the science of books of literature, the list themselves are generally terms bibliography.

According to Lewis Shores, he defined bibliography as a list of written, printed or otherwise produced records of civilization. The records may be books, serials, pictures, maps, museum objects, manuscripts and any other materials of communication.

Therefore, bibliography may be defined as: especially a compilation of books, information related to a particular person, place, subject or period.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The main of this study is to provide the best knowledge on bibliographies as reference tools.

The objectives of the studies are

- (I) to inform the usefulness of bibliographies in doing research
- (II) to identify: the bibliographies as highly valuable sources in the field of research in various disciplines
- (III) To show the significant features of bibliographies in libraries
- (IV) To know the role of bibliographies in retrieving information

### **Types of Bibliography**

Bibliography is divided into two types:

- (1) primary Bibliography
- (2) Secondary Bibliography

### **Primary Bibliography**

They are original records of material. Some of the examples are incunabula (rare book), universal bibliography, national bibliography and trade bibliography, etc.

### **Incunabula (rare book)**

The book of the 15<sup>th</sup> century that is up to the end of 1499 is called incunabula. It is very difficult to compile incunabula publication or bibliography, because in many cases, the documents are either missing or mutilated. The descriptions of these materials need much knowledge, interest and investigation.

These bibliographies are valuable because they include rare materials and restricted to that period only. This type of bibliography is governed by time factor.

- e.g. (1) Index to the early printed books in the British Museum by Robert proctor, 4 vols.  
This there are about, 10,000 incunabula material in available.
- (2) Earl Indian Imprints compiled by Katherine Smith, West Bengal.

### **Universal Bibliography**

It is a list of all documents of all forms of materials produced in all countries. It is a comprehensive bibliography. It is not limited by time, place, subject, languages, other etc.

- e.g. (1) Catalogue of scientific paper published by Royal Society, London, since 1831. It has 19 vols.
- (2) International catalogue of scientific literature published by Royal Society, London.
- (3) International Issue of Bibliography (FID), published by Universal bibliography.

### **National Bibliography**

These are lists of books published in a given country. It is almost a complete record of printed output in a particular country with no limitation of subject and forms of literature. These are also enumerative bibliographies. There are two types of national bibliography. They are (a) current national bibliography and (b) retrospective national bibliography.

#### **(a) Current National Bibliographies**

It is include the latest publications. These bibliographies are compiled periodically covering current titles. These may be brought out by Trade Agencies or National library, bibliographic centre.

- e.g. (1) INB (Indian National Bibliography) published by Central Reference Library. Calcutta, 1958
- (2) CNB or BNB published by Council of BNB, London, since 1950
- (3) CBI (Cumulative Book Index), published by H. W. Winster Compau, New York, 1898

### **(b) Retrospective National Bibliography**

It is a list of world publication covering in a particular. Like current once these may be brought out by Trade Agency, National library Bibliographic center.

- e.g. (1) National Bibliography of Indian Literature since 1901-1952, published by Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 4 vols.
- (2) Catalogue of British Museum.

### **Trade Bibliography**

It is a list of books or other reading materials for sale. These are issued by commercial organization like book selectors, distributors, publishers, printers, etc. They are usually appeared as weekly, monthly, annually.

Trade bibliography is also divided into current and retrospective bibliography.

### **Secondary Bibliography**

They are further divided into three groups:

- (1) Elective or selective Bibliography
- (2) Subject Bibliography
- (3) Bibliography of Bibliographies

The secondary bibliographies are those in which the materials registered elsewhere are rearranged for the convenience of the researchers which are derived from primary bibliographies.

### **Elective or Selective Bibliography**

This lists only the best or selective books for certain types of libraries or users. These may be either current or retrospective. These are best tools for the selection of materials for small libraries as well as for individuals, who want to read the best books. This can be categorized to (1) special Reading list, to meet the special requirement of the user. (2) The

books are devoted to different type of readers like children, adult, students, etc. (3) Guide to reference books.

- e.g. (1) Standard catalogue for public libraries published by Wilson, New York, since 1989.
- (2) The readers' adviser and book-man's Manual published by Booker Company, New York, since 1864.
- (3) Guide to reference Book by Walford

### **Subject bibliography**

It is comprehensive list of materials on a given subject. The subject may be a person, place, topic, etc. It includes books, periodical articles and other reading materials that are appeared on a given subject.

According to S.R. Ranganthen , a subject bibliography is a document bibliography confined to a specific subject only, instead of covering the entire universe of subject. It may be published as a current or retrospective at regular intervals.

- e.g. (1) Library Literature

It covers only library science but also on allied areas like printing, publishing, automation, information science, etc.

- (2) ASLIB, Booklist Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureau published by ASLIB, London.

### **Bibliography of bibliographies**

It is also known as bibliography index. It is primarily a list of bibliography recording in some logical arrangement of all bibliographies like subject, authors, title, etc. These kinds of bibliographies are also available in current and retrospective.

### **Other Types of Bibliography**

In addition to the above types, there are other types of bibliography.

#### **Analytic Bibliography**

Analytic bibliography uses detailed study in order to discover evidence regarding the facts of authorship, publication, and derivation of text.

### **Critical Bibliography**

Critical bibliography has two meanings. Critical bibliography, the science, is equivalent to analytic bibliography- bibliography in the service of textual criticism. A list called a critical bibliography, however, is a bibliography that appraises critically the books it lists.

### **Descriptive Bibliography**

Descriptive bibliography is used to denote the defined methods of description required for analytic bibliography rather than the grosser methods more usually employed in systematic bibliography.

### **Systematic bibliography**

Systematic bibliography represents bibliography for the most part as art rather than science. Its immediate aim is to identify and describe in a systematic arrangement the books that may be suitable for a particular purpose or that have other common characteristics.

### **Enumerative Bibliography**

Enumerative bibliographies, whose primary purpose is to present an inventory, may be contrasted with subject bibliographies, where the primary purpose is content. But enumerative bibliographies can, and often do, provide information about the contents of the books that they inventory.

### **Bio- bibliography**

Bio- bibliographies ordinarily record the principal facts in the lives of the authors, along with lists of their publication, such as Claudius Frank Mayer's Bio- Bibliography of XVI Century Medical Authors (Washington 1941).

### **Importance of Bibliography**

In the world of research and development, bibliography is a significant; in fact, it is a key to resources to find out the particular in the treasure of knowledge.

- (1) It provides information about particular record available in the country.
- (2) It serves as a guide to the literature of the subject.
- (3) It helps to verify given collected information in a given subject.

- (4) It helps in the process of book selection.
- (5) It helps in the preparation of subject bibliography.
- (6) It not only shows how the subject has developed over a period of time, but will also indicate the trends of document.
- (7) It helps to the researcher to know what materials available in particular subject.

### **Information That May Be Located In Bibliographical Tools**

The data elements in a bibliography entry depend largely on the intent of the publication. The following are information that may be located in bibliography tool.

- (i) Research Bibliography of Books, Documents and Pamphlets on Burma.
- (ii) Bibliography of research findings on Liver Diseases in Myanmar in 2005.
- (iii) Bibliography of Early Printed Books, published in Burma, 1816 to 1886.
- (iv) Bibliography of Myanmar Art and Archaeology.
- (v) Bibliography of Independent Myanmar.
- (vi) Annotated Bibliography of Burma.
- (vii) Burma: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography.
- (viii) The Living Bibliography of Burmese, Studies.
- (ix) Bibliography: Bibliography, Burmese, Cambodian.
- (x) Burma: An Annotated Bibliographical Guide to International Doctoral Dissertation Research 1898-1985.
- (xi) Annotated Bibliography of MSc Thesis Accepted by the Science Department of University of Rangoon and Arts and Science University, Rangoon.
- (xii) Annotated Bibliography of Books and Research Paper on Banking and Finance in Burma.
- (xiii) Year of publication of the first book written by W.C. Berwick Sayers on library classification.
- (xiv) Recent Books on information retrieval.
- (xv) Address of Oxford University Press at New York.
- (xvi) Bibliographical details about any suitable book on literature of natural science.
- (xvii) List of best novels in English.



### **Evaluative Study of Bibliography**

In order to make the best use of bibliographies, it is essential to acquire a thorough understanding of them. This can be achieved to a large extent by evaluating such sources, and laying down criteria for their evaluation.

The checklist for the evaluation of a bibliography for the purpose of its study should consist of authority, scope, arrangement, entries and items of information, special features, format and conclusion.

#### **(i) Authority**

The work should be authoritative. In other words, it should be accurate and dependable. The authoritativeness of a bibliography can usually be judged on the basis of the reputation of the sponsoring body (if any), publisher, distributor, author or compiler. In this regard, it is useful to know the subject, and the academic and bibliographic qualifications of the author or compiler.

#### **(ii) Scope**

The scope of a bibliography can be understood properly by finding answers to the following question:

What is the purpose of the work as stated by the compiler himself?

What are the limitations with regard to subject, kinds of materials, language, place, time, etc.?

Find out whether it is comprehensive or selective, current or retrospective.

#### **(iii) Arrangement**

Arrangement is of utmost importance. A bibliography, howsoever authoritative, is useless unless information can be located easily and quickly. Arrangement should be such as to encourage rather than discourage the use of bibliography.

A good bibliography should allow approach by subject, author and sometimes by title, by geographical area (if thought necessary) or any other suitable item, This can be achieved by providing a variety of entries. As regards arrangement there are a number of possibilities.

Alphabetical by author, subject, publisher or geographical area, etc., or any such combinations.

Dictionary-wise, where author, title and subject entries are merged together in a single file.

Classified arrangement, where subject entries are arranged according to some scheme of classification. An alphabetical index consisting of author, title, cross-references, series and subject entries is a must.

Chronological arrangement is based upon the period covered by the document itself. For instance, bibliographies on history can be arranged in this manner.

A classified bibliography with indexes is highly useful for a research scholar. A reading list on a subject for the average user of a public library might be arranged alphabetically by author.

#### **(iv) Entries and Items of Information**

A Good bibliography should provide author and collaborator, subject, series and title entries, as well as cross references. The main entry should give information about author(s), collaborator(s), full title, edition, series, number of volumes (in case of a multi-volume set), illustrations, bibliographies, imprint, annotation or abstract. The value of a bibliography is enhanced if it includes an annotation or abstract.

#### **(v) Special Features**

Questions as to whether the work is new, the only one of its kind or unique may be raised. What for instance, is its distinctiveness? This can be ascertained by comparing it with other bibliographies in the same field, which will also highlight any other variations.

How reliable is the work? For this a few items may be checked for accuracy. One can also find out whether certain items which should have been included are covered or not.

Read the preface and introduction-these will also give an idea about the special features of the bibliography.

#### **(v) Format**

Format refers to binding, quality of paper, typeface, page make up, illustrations, plates, diagrams, etc. Thus, the following questions are to be made for evaluation.

Are the headings and subheadings bold enough to stand out clearly?

Are the typefaces clear and legible?

Has a suitable difference been made between different types of headings or not?

### **(Vii) Conclusion**

Conclusion should provide overall judgments about the work. Is the work to be recommended for a library or not? If so, specify the kind of library (small, large, medium, special, public and academic).

## **Conclusion**

The basis of all librarianship is bibliographic. It is a foundation of all library activities. The enumerations of that material, its analysis, its detailed recording, its history, its authentications of that material, its analysis, its detailed recording, its history, its authentication are all problems relating to its use, of which no librarian dare be ignorant. This indicates the role of bibliography that plays in the field of librarianship. It serves as the basis of various activities and must be given the importance it rightly deserves. The concept of bibliography has changed a great deal.

Currently, in our context, it may be considered the technique of systematically producing descriptive lists, such a list being called a bibliography. Bibliography forms basic material in any reference collection and is of fundamental importance. This importance is increasing with the passage of time.

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12. သော်ကျောင်း၊ ဦး။ ၁၉၈၅။ မြန်မာရည်ညွှန်းစာအုပ်စာတမ်း(ပတွဲ)။ ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေဗိမာန်။