

## Conference BC 2021

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### ABSTRACT

This article is a compendium of some of the presentations made during the BC2021 conference.

### KEYWORDS

Bibliographic control; Metadata; Research data; Open access; Authority control; Research libraries; National libraries; Musicology collections; Artificial intelligence.

The Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC), as indicated by professor Mauro Guerrini (Università degli studi di Firenze, IFLA Bibliography Section, chair of the Conference) in his opening remark, is an exercise that intellectually begins, at least, with Conrad Gesner's *Bibliotheca Universalis*. We are confronted with a panorama that allows more than ever to advance towards IFLA's objective of making catalogue records available immediately, an exercise in which libraries have always excelled in its two aspects: thoroughness in document description and willingness to share knowledge in any of its stages.

The Conference on Universal Bibliographic Control (BC 2021) touched on key aspects for, in a digital ecosystem, making the maximum of resources available, opening interesting debates on new standards (or the evolution of current ones). Some aspects, formats or objects take on greater significance such as data, authority control, multilingual collections, or artificial intelligence. These aspects, although key, are not new to the librarians. As Mauro Guerrini reminds us, already in 2014 during the IFLA conference in Lyon (France) he raised the key question that librarians have still do not solved: "Digital age: Golden opportunity or Paradise lost?"

Mathilde Koskas (Bibliothèque nationale de France, IFLA Bibliography Section, chair) proposed the ideal departing point, starting from the relationship between local work (Italy, for the case) as the basis for a, step by step, more global approach. Koskas raised key questions for the UBC, such as the role of the national libraries in this ambition. Both, Guerrini and Koskas, emphasised basic aspects to UBC today such as interoperability, multilingualism or the international cataloguing practices in local. The democratic role of UBC overcomes the barriers that mass information seems to want to impose as more universal, since it compiles information in a complex context where *mass* means quantity without quality assessment or veracity control. Mathilde Koskas proposes a [maybe] new role of responsibility for the librarian – role that she opposes precisely to that of the automated systems, where we still have to learn what kind of results they give or will give and what benefit they offer in terms of knowledge organisation.

Renate Behrens (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Germany) opened fire with a central issue: standards. Standards and their meaning in this new bibliographic framework. Behrens described the current library environments as challenging, because of the need for (still another) transition, as well as promising because of the role of librarians as mediators that guarantee participation in social development. Standards help on this objective by "putting the world of things in order", but as Behrens indicates "standards do not establish the order of the things themselves". Standards are crucial for those libraries that want to exchange information and share content, or for those that have a common goal that they want to advance on. Behrens reminds us of the importance of keeping the standards up to date, otherwise, they lose the aim for what they were created (and maybe even all the work behind them).

Standardisation was also the key aspect that Andrew MacEwan (British Library, UK) touched upon. He focused more on authority control and name identifiers. His presentation, about the International Standard Name Identifier, started by posing for discussion the huge amount of metadata models that libraries use today that, for sure, make life easier to many but that present a complex playground for the interconnection of knowledge. MacEwan did not see a big challenge though, due to the variety of metadata silos from where crosswalks are created, but he raised concerns about the quality of the metadata and the need to count on *this quality* at the beginning of the supply chain.

The International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) is an ISO standard that the British Library uses as a registration agency as a tool to unequivocally identify creators that can play different roles along with their creative career. But despite the fact that ISNI presents itself as a standard and it is precisely an ISO, Andrew MacEwan warned of important challenges in order to go further, such as to become a tool for the collaboration with LoC or to be adopted by all UK publishers.

The British Library was not the only national library to address the topic of music in relation to bibliographic control. The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Germany) has one of the largest collections of music and musicology in the world, and Klaus Kempf explained how the application of the RDA in different specific cases has been implemented in the Bavaria National Library. The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek has brought the search of music documents to another level, with its project Melody Search; an optical music recognition search engine.

The Biblioteka Nazionale Centrale di Roma (Italy), for its part, added solutions to working with digital materials, including also Open Access objects. The paper, by Fabio D'Orsogna and Giulio Palanga, was centred on the example of a final front end that uses form standards for description, but also the long path still pending to walk in collaboration with other libraries. It was a constant by the different national libraries that presented at BC2021 to do not only describe their internal procedures or methods, but to illustrate the results by using clear front-ends where professionals and users see the application of standards or models; which is more than welcomed.

Continuing with national libraries, Osma Souminen presented an example on how to bring bibliographic description to another level, combining artificial intelligence (AI) with manual text code used in classification. The National Library of Finland has created an Open Source solution, *Annif*, that has evolved into Finto AI. Finto AI integrates semi-automated subject indexing into metadata workflows, a tool that it is already used by libraries in Finland. Introducing automated subject or bibliographic description is not the sole objective of the Finnish. Also in Germany, Elisabeth Mödden (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek) and her team have worked on the automated assignment of Dewey Decimal Classification numbers.

For Renate Behrens, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, collaboration continues to be crucial. National libraries do not only have the role in guiding libraries and librarians of their nations, but the commitment to seek collaborative solutions in relation to the use of standards, in that case those used in bibliographic description.

Collaboration – when applied to national libraries – means, precisely, internationalisation. Vincent Boulet, (Bibliothèque nationale de France) mentioned the need to define identifiers' policies, be them for international – again – or even local models. And still from the BNF, Françoise Leresche recalled the transition from ISBD and Unimarc to new models like LRM that IFLA has sponsored. The BNF is a provider of metadata for cataloguers beyond the walls of the national library and beyond the boundaries of France.

We also saw how national libraries are concerned about final services, for which they rely on bibliographic control to assure the quality of the information involved in services. Oddrun Pauline Ohren (Nasjonalbiblioteket – National Library of Norway) addressed the need for solid use of bibliographic control standards to be able to cover “every corner of Norway” with digital material, media podcasts or streaming events (among others), straddling – thus – the back office and the front office of library services.

Professionals from academic libraries addressed as many different issues as the national libraries'

ones. Tiziana Possemato (Università di Firenze) put together the Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) with the semantic web. She advocates for a dialogue between systems in the form of the exchange of records that overcomes cultural, linguistic or geographical limits. Similarly, the University of Alberta Library, represented by Ian Bigelow and Abigail Sparling, presented the conversion of standards (RDA and MARC) to BIBFRAME as examples of collaborative innovations. There was also time for research datasets, not covered by any other speaker, Thomas Francis Bourke (European University Institute Library, Italy) explored how the bibliographic control function has been expanded to embrace research data in the social sciences and humanities. Bourke claims that data librarians need to work closer to research data management (RDM) units by using formal bibliographic control functions. The relation between wikidata and UBC was discussed by Lucia Sardo and Carlo Bianchini (Universities of Bologna and Pavia [Italy], respectively). Sardo and Bianchini offered a theoretical but also a practical approach, arguing that wikidata shows that we need to overcome the only approach of the national libraries to embrace more co-operative approaches.

Another crucial and interesting aspect addressed during this edition of the Conference on BC was multilingual collections and UBC by Pat Riva, from Concordia University Montréal (Canada). Institutions like Riva's, with users that represent a variety of native languages amongst their community, may find it difficult to search by using the library discovery tools in their own languages when the description of the objects has been solely made in one of the languages of the society in play (the predominant one). CUM has integrated some strategies by using linkages between authority files in English and French.

We have had red flags raised about the wrong or too limited use of metadata that librarians do. Richard Wallis warned us that, while many other actors in the information industry use metadata to make others aware of their resources, libraries tend to hide these metadata in the back-office. With this practice, we lose potential users and customers.

And as a final remark, and leaving some other interesting presentations unmentioned, as Michele Casalini (Casalini Libri) said talking about the future for an international audience, there is the need for connected services and automatic processes to help enrich the information we provide to our users. This challenge needs to be addressed not only with interoperability but with international cooperation.