THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CANADIAN BIBLIOGRAPHIES:  
Some proposals for its future

A report by the standing committee of the BCB, presented to the Council of the Bibliographical Society of Canada, 29 October 1976, and revised 24 May 1977.

In the past seventy-five years, the Canadian library community has made significant strides through its various library associations to identify areas in need of bibliographical control and to provide the appropriate control tools. Such tools, originally prepared to control a limited area or answer the needs of a specific institution or association, have frequently been expanded to meet larger national needs. Few individual institutions or associations, however, have sufficient financial or physical resources to create and maintain such controls at a national level without cooperation.

From its inception, the Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies was intended as a national resource tool, requiring for its preparation a large measure of cooperation and participation. A predecessor to the BCB¹ under that name had been compiled by the 1929 and 1930 classes of the newly established Library School at McGill University, under the direction of Miss Marion V. Higgins.

In a prefatory note, Dr. G.R. Lomer, Director of the Library School, indicated the community of interest which had motivated the work:

The importance of bibliography in library reference work, in individual investigation, and in special library service cannot be overestimated and should never be overlooked. In Canadian bibliography much remains to be done in the historical field and in the bibliography of subjects and individuals. The compilers of the present list felt that the most appropriate beginning, for a Library School contribution to the subject would be a classified and indexed bibliography of Canadian Bibliography (sic). (p.iii)

The McGill bibliography listed approximately 550 bibliographies of Canadian interest within thirty-one subject divisions, based on the resources of the McGill

University Library with the addition of information from “a Library of Congress depository catalogue, and lists of bibliographies by the librarians of all the larger libraries of Canada” (p.iv). The sources mentioned indicate both the limitations of the Canadian library system at that time, and the amount and value of possible cooperation in such a project.

By 1958 librarians realized that the McGill bibliography badly needed to be brought up to date. The Bibliographical Society of Canada, on the recommendation of its newly-elected President, Dr. Raymond Tanghe, at its twelfth annual meeting expressed interest in undertaking the work.

The dual position of Dr. Tanghe, as President of the BSC (1958-60) and as first Assistant National Librarian of Canada (1953-63), provided the basis for an eventual working agreement whereby members of both organizations could contribute to the project. The files, for the sake of convenience, were centralized in the National Library of Canada. This spirit of cooperation between the Society and the National Library was further indicated by the fact that the resolution to form a committee for the preparation of the BCB under the chairmanship of Dr. Tanghe was proposed by Dr. Lorne Pierce, a founder and Honorary President of the BSC, and supported by Dr. Kaye Lamb, the National Librarian. This cooperative spirit was to persist in full force for almost a decade.

The decade following World War II was the most critical period in the development of Canadian libraries and of bibliographical resource tools. The establishment in 1946 of the Bibliographical Society of Canada and the Canadian Library Association created for the first time respective national forums for bibliographers and librarians. In 1950 the Canadian Bibliographic Centre was established under the aegis of the Dominion Archivist; three years later this Centre by Act of Parliament, became the National Library of Canada.

The aims of the BSC as published in the constitution are: to promote bibliographical publications; to encourage the preservation, and extend the knowledge of printed works and manuscripts – particularly those relating to Canada; and to facilitate the exchange of information concerning rare books.

The first of these objectives has been continually emphasized throughout the Society’s existence, most recently in a speech by Professor D.G. Lochhead in which he referred to the need to strengthen the Society so that “its place [in bibliographical ventures] should be made clear and its role as a ‘publishing society’ given prominence” (4:10). The preparation and publication of two editions of the BCB clearly expresses the Society’s commitment to all three of its stated aims.

The basic role of the National Library of Canada is to act as a national clearing-house for bibliographical information through the creation initially, of a national union catalogue of library holdings and the production of a national bibliography. In achieving these ends the National Library has become not only a regulatory agency for the establishment and promotion of bibliographical standards but also a major library institution in its own right. Other goals and services have been added to support the Library’s basic role.

Both organizations in 1958 were agreed that the McGill bibliography needed to be updated. The National Library was then preoccupied, however, with the development of its collection of bibliographical resource tools and the achievement of bibliographical control over the Canadian portion of such materials. In addition, the progress of the “Canadiana 1867-1900” project was dependent to
some extent on improving the BCB as a control tool. As these activities formed part of Dr. Tanghe's responsibilities in the National Library, his influence ensured the participation of that institution.

There is little need to rehearse in detail the methods used to prepare BCB:1 (see the appended "Chronological List of Sources Relevant to the Development of the Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies"). It should be stressed, however, that the successful outcome was due to the establishment of a formal pattern of cooperation among Canadian libraries exemplified in the working agreement of the BSC and the National Library of Canada, and to the maintenance of the necessary files in a centralized location. Similar methods were used in compiling the McGill bibliography, but in 1930 the possibilities for national cooperation were more restricted.

The first edition of the Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies, published in 1960 owed much to its predecessor as the McGill authorities generously allowed the Society to use both the title and the contents of the earlier work (6:2). Expanded from about 550 to 1,665 entries, it continued to follow the subject classification arrangement of the McGill bibliography. At an early stage in the compilation, Dr. Tanghe had restricted the scope of bibliographies to be included for the most part to monographs. Access to the entries was provided through three separate alphabetical indexes for the author as subject, the compiler, and the broad subject areas, rather then by an author-subject index in single alphabetical sequence as in the McGill bibliography.

Supplements to the main volume appeared for 1960-61, 1962-63, 1964-65 through the continued efforts of Dr. Tanghe and his research assistant, Miss Madeleine Pellerin (7a-c). Following Dr. Tanghe's retirement from the National Library in 1963, by which time copyright in the BCB had been confirmed in the name of the Bibliographical Society of Canada alone, the research necessary to the supplements was almost the sole responsibility of Miss Pellerin. Her preoccupation with the "Canadiana 1867-1900" project immediately before her death in 1969 made it difficult for the National Library of Canada to continue its collaboration. After 1969 the Society assumed sole responsibility for the continual updating of the BCB, and the cooperation of almost a decade was at an end.

By 1968 the BSC was already considering the preparation and publication of a second, revised edition under the direction of the Society's Chairman of the Publications Committee, Professor D.G. Lochhead (8). The growing number of bibliographical resource tools now made it unnecessary to establish a formal group of regional collaborators. Through an expanded Canadiiana and other published bibliographical sources, it was possible to keep in touch with major Canadian libraries and library schools to ensure that the proposed revised edition would be as comprehensive as possible.

Research for this second edition of the BCB ended in June 1970. The entries were enumerated and given a final editing before the entire bibliography was indexed. Two editorial decisions modified the arrangement of the work. The subject classification divisions were eliminated as unnecessary because of the extensive subject index, and the 2,323 entries were arranged in a single enumerated alphabetical sequence by author or title (where an author statement was lacking). The second modification was, in a sense, a reversion to the McGill model. The
three indexes considered necessary to BCB:1 were combined into a single alphabet. Finer subject distinctions were provided in the index, and title and corporate entries were added to the established author as subject and compiler entries. Both of these major modifications to BCB:2 will be retained in the next edition.

Following publication of BCB:2 in 1972 the Council of the Bibliographical Society of Canada appointed a Standing Committee on the BCB of two members, Professor D.G. Lochhead and Mr. Peter Greig (9:12). This committee has continued to collect information for BCB:3, and to consider the scope, structure, and format for possible improvement. The following changes are now recommended in the terms of reference for the content and structure of BCB:3 prior to its full preparation for publication:

That the scope of BCB:3 be extended beyond monographic bibliographies to include a) bibliographies appearing as articles in serials (bibliographies which form an integral part of a greater non-bibliographical whole to be excluded) b) catalogues of significant collections held in institutions, by an individual, or which are offered for sale by a bookseller;

that only published and/or near published bibliographies be included (including bibliographies produced in a non-book medium);

that all unpublished bibliographies, such as those commonly prepared in library schools, presently included in BCB:2 be excluded and considered for publication in a separate volume (note: it is strongly recommended that such a list be compiled only on the basis of a centrally located collection of such unpublished materials to ensure their availability on demand);

that all indexes, published or unpublished, presently listed in BCB:2 be excluded, and that the Indexer to the BSC expand and consolidate this list for separate publication by the Society;

that all items to be recorded in BCB:3 must have been actually seen by the compilers and have a known location;

that consideration be given to listing locations for each record in BCB:3 on at least a regional basis, particularly for scarce or near unique materials;

that all entries in BCB:3 be annotated (length and uniformity to be given further consideration)

that the bibliographical style for all entries be consistent with current developments in standards for bibliographical description at both the national and the international level;

that the entries continue to be arranged in a single numbered alphabetical sequence by author or title (where no author statement is available);

that the index continue to provide full access to the entries in a single alphabetical sequence.

In 1975, at the first meeting of the Committee on Bibliographical Services for Canada, the National Library announced that if finances permitted, it intended
to establish a special clearinghouse for the control of information relating to bibliographical activities in Canada (10). It was agreed that a bulletin should be established to disseminate this information "beyond the normal library centres" (11:4). At the same time it was noted that the Bibliographical Society of Canada "maintained a Standing Committee on the BCB which exercised a function similar to the proposed National Library clearinghouse with regard to published Canadian bibliographies" (11:4).

No immediate consideration was given to the renewal of cooperation between the BSC and the National Library although this would be of benefit to the Society's Standing Committee on the BCB and to the National Library's proposed clearinghouse. As a published list of available Canadian bibliographies, the BCB provides a unique retrospective control, but it cannot provide current information on bibliographical activities in progress.

The Bibliographical Society of Canada therefore proposes that a formal agreement be made with the National Library of Canada whereby,

1. the files created for the proposed third edition of the *Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies* be deposited in the National Library of Canada;
2. the General Editor of the BCB and the National Library maintain and update these files in such a manner, consistent with mutually agreed upon standards, that the material can be made readily accessible for bibliographic inquiry;
3. the Bibliographical Society of Canada have access to these permanently deposited files for any new editions of the BCB;
4. the National Library of Canada have full freedom of access to the files for information but copyright for the publication of occasional editions of the BCB will remain vested in the Bibliographical Society of Canada/ Société bibliographique du Canada alone.

Respectfully submitted
(Signed) D.G. Lochhead
P.E. Greig

NOTE: These proposals were accepted by Dr. Guy Sylvestre, National Librarian, on 14 June 1977. The files for BCB:3 will be deposited in the National Library following publication of the work.

Olga B. Bishop
President BSC
CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF SOURCES RELEVANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CANADIAN BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Note: (1) numbers in parentheses refer to citations in the text;
(2) entries with a common chronological facet are sub-arranged alphabetically;
(3) entries with only an annual date are placed at the end of the file for that year, following more specifically dated entries;
(4) abbreviations used:
BCB — Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies
BSC — Bibliographical Society of Canada
NLC — National Library of Canada


“B.C.B. publication grant.” BSC. Newsletter. v. 2, no. 4, June 1959. p. 3.
“B.C.R correspondent in Newfoundland.” BSC. Newsletter. v. 3, no. 1, September 1959. p. 11

1960


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1961


1962


“Supplement to the B.C.B.” BSC. Newsletter. v. 5, no. 4, June 1962. p. 3.


1962

“Minutes of the 1962 annual meeting.” BSC. Papers. v. 1, 1962. p. 15


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1975 “*Bibliography of Canadian bibliographies.*” BSC. Bulletin (n.s.). 
   No. 4, May 1975, p. 2.

10 National Library Advisory Board. Committee on Bibliographical 


1977 Lochhead, Douglas G. “National bibliography: Retrospective.” in 
   *National Conference on the State of Canadian Bibliography: 
   Vancouver, Canada, May 22-24, 1974: Proceedings,* edited by 
   p. 1-16.